Web Based Teaching Tool Evaluation Report

Prepared for

The Web Based Teaching Tool
Early Screening and Intervention Program

by

The Centre for Community Based Research

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Acknowledgements

The completion of this evaluation reflects the efforts of a number of people. The Centre for Community Based Research would like to acknowledge those who shared their experiences and insights to ensure that we were able to achieve our research objectives. Our thanks go to the WBTT team and all the participants who gave their time to come to focus groups and answer interview questions.

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Executive Summary

The evaluation of the Web Based Teaching Tool was conducted by the Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR) from March 2010 to June 2010 (see Appendix A for further description of CCBR). In order to complement the WBTT evaluation work conducted in past years, the current study utilized a qualitative research design and interview-based methodology. As such, interviews and focus groups with teachers, principals and school board contacts were designed to gain their insights and experiences with WBTT, and to develop a deeper understanding of how the tool is used in practice. The evaluation focused on the implementation and use (process) of WBTT as well as its impact (outcome) on early identification and referral.

As part of the evaluation design, a project logic model was developed in collaboration with the WBTT team for the purpose of guiding the overall evaluation focus, including tool development, data collection, data analysis and reporting. As a standard tool in program evaluation, logic models are used to illustrate and summarize the flow between project activities, project indicators, short-term outcomes and long-term goals. The resulting model is contained on page 10.

Altogether, 84 people participated in this evaluation. They included 30 primary school teachers, 10 principals, and 44 school board contacts. We spoke with participants across 39 school boards including 9 French boards and 30 English boards. Telephone interviews were conducted with teachers and principals, and focus groups were held with school board contacts at WBTT meetings.

Data was collected, transcribed and analyzed for key themes and trends in responses. Initial data was reviewed and a list of descriptive codes was created while a more abstract category was attributed to several observations with similar themes. After the creation of descriptive codes, we created a conceptual structure for coding to tie the evaluation questions and logic model directly to the data. During this process we were careful to remain open to emerging themes and codes that varied from this structure.

Results of our evaluation suggest that WBTT is a valuable tool for educators to support student achievement. It is also valued as an effective screening and data management tracking tool. Several participants indicated that WBTT is user-friendly, comprehensive and promotes data driven instruction. The tool also supports teachers’ use of a classroom based model, where screening, interventions and progress monitoring take place by the classroom teacher.

Through our process evaluation, we aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how WBTT is being used in everyday practice and divided these findings according to how WBTT is used and its perceived strengths for teachers, principals and school board contacts. We also found specific facilitating factors and challenges to effective implementation for each participant group.

Results of the process evaluation indicate that WBTT is used primarily:

- By teachers for all activities in the DSIM process and to follow through with flagged students
- By principals for WBTT administration of classroom profiles and tracking school data
- Inconsistently by board contacts, some of whom are just starting to use WBTT data to track student achievement
Participants also shared their thoughts on facilitating factors that promote and influence usage. These factors consisted of:

- Buy-in, commitment and support from all levels including teachers, principals, school boards and the Ministry of Education
- Access to resources to increase support to teachers and students
- WBTT training to promote increased knowledge and awareness

While the majority of teachers we spoke with appeared to be actively using WBTT, there seems to be a need for increased uptake among principals and at the school board level. Participants from all three stakeholder groups provided their thoughts and ideas about the challenges to increased use of WBTT. These challenges included:

- Time for teachers to implement WBTT screening and intervention strategies, and manage other teaching tasks and responsibilities
- Lack of support, resources and funding to implement WBTT and increase support to students who need it

The Outcome Evaluation focused on the impact of WBTT on early identification and referral as well as student outcomes. The findings of this evaluation indicated that majority (80%) of teachers (n=24) and principals (n=8) have seen an impact of WBTT to increase support to students who need it, further understand students’ areas of need and promote discussion between parents and teachers.

Our evaluation findings have implications for how to move WBTT forward as a program and for the kind of strategies that are needed to further support the process of early screening and intervention. Sharing findings from this report may promote understanding of how WBTT can be successfully integrated into teaching and education practice. The evaluation points to a number of key issues which the WBTT team may consider addressing as they continue with implementation and improvement.

- Increase support for teachers within schools and from school boards
- Share best practices for effective implementation
- Improve training
- Promote principal buy-in
- Update and improve screening measures
- Advocate for recognition of WBTT as a universal screening tool

This evaluation has demonstrated progress and improvement of WBTT from previous evaluations, as well as ongoing challenges and issues. Participants identified several strengths and benefits of WBTT providing further evidence to support the notion that WBTT is a propitious practice to impact student achievement. Ongoing challenges and issues include the time investment of WBTT, competing demands from other assessments and initiatives as well as the need for increased support for teachers. Support, commitment and resources from all levels would assist to overcome these challenges and facilitate increased use and uptake in schools and boards across Ontario.
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Web Based Teaching Tool Evaluation Report

Project Background

In 1999 the Web Based Teaching Tool program started as a result of the Promoting Early Intervention (PEI) initiative in response to the McCain-Mustard Early Years Report. This report emphasized the importance of the early years and recommended that we pay closer attention to students during these years. The PEI initiative conducted a series of fourteen focus groups with School Boards across Ontario to examine the screening models Boards were using. It was determined that there was a wide range of practices in Boards regarding screening, no standardized approach to screening young students, and no guarantee that screening led to intervention with flagged, or at-risk, students. The PEI working groups determined that educators needed an organized system to help teachers differentiate between those students with long-term learning difficulties and those who require extra support in order to catch up to their peers. As a result of the PEI initiative, the Web Based Teaching Tool program was developed in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Education.

The Web Based Teaching Tool (WBTT) is an online early screening and intervention program for use by primary school teachers (JK – Grade 2) in Ontario’s publicly funded school boards. This online program helps teachers determine which of their students need additional support by identifying what areas they are struggling with, and how their areas of need can be addressed within the classroom. The WBTT process includes predictive screening tools to determine which students may be at-risk for future school difficulties, classroom based interventions to support those students, and formative assessment tools to measure their ongoing progress throughout the school year(s).

The WBTT team partnered with the Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR) to evaluate the WBTT program (for more information on CCBR see Appendix A: About Us). The evaluation is designed to develop a deeper understanding of how WBTT is used in practice, the challenges faced, its impact on early identification and referral, as well as opportunities for improving the tool.

About this Report

This report details the framework and findings of the Web Based Teaching Tool evaluation that was conducted by the Centre for Community Based Research from March 2010 to June 2010. This evaluation includes data from the perspective of three participant groups including teachers, principals and school board contacts involved with WBTT. School board contacts are representatives from participating school boards who act as points of contact with the WBTT team and the school board, principals and teachers. School board contacts work with the WBTT team to coordinate implementation of WBTT in their boards. This evaluation was primarily focused on understanding how teachers, principals and boards use the tool, what factors
influence their use of the tool, as well as challenges and barriers to effective implementation and impact.

**Evaluation Objectives**

In order to complement the WBTT evaluation work conducted in past years, the current evaluation was designed to develop a deeper understanding of how the tool is used by gaining perspectives and insights from teachers, principals, and school board contacts. The current project focused on the implementation and use (process) of WBTT as well as its impact (outcome) on early identification and referral.

**Key Purposes and Questions of this Evaluation:**

**Process evaluation:**

- To develop a deeper understanding of how WBTT is used, and the factors that influence the use of WBTT by teachers
  - What is the timing of use?
  - What role does training play?
- To develop a deeper understanding of how the data generated through the use of WBTT is used by principals, board planners, and provincial policy makers
  - How do we get principals to buy into the tool and support their teachers to use it well? What role does training play?
  - How does use vary across different types of boards?

**Outcome evaluation:**

- To build on lessons learned from past evaluations about who is using the tool and what impact it has on early identification and referral
  - Do connections between WBTT screening, referral and access to resources vary across types of schools?

Following a brief description of the Web Based Teaching Tool program, we present the evaluation framework, including the logic model, design and strategies. We then present the findings of the evaluation and conclude with recommendations for future WBTT development.

### I. Web Based Teaching Tool

The WBTT program is also funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education, and is available free to all publicly funded schools in Ontario. It provides teachers with quick predictive screening tools and a wide variety of interventions to enhance their teaching practice and benefit their students. The ultimate goals of the program are to close the early achievement gap and increase student achievement in Ontario.
More specifically, the WBTT program was created to help facilitate earlier intervention for struggling students by helping to ensure:

- A more systematic approach to screening young students in Ontario’s school boards
- A strong link between screening and intervention
- An acknowledgement of the diverse needs of young students
- Better resources for classroom teachers, and therefore students
- A better use of the special education system due to early screening and student monitoring over time

According to the WBTT team the Dynamic Screening and Intervention Model (DSIM) which is the basis of the tool, has been shown through research to increase student achievement and reduce the likelihood that flagged students will continue to struggle in the future\(^1\). The DSIM process is a circular one wherein a student’s abilities and trajectories are examined, interventions are used to target the student’s areas of need, and the student is continually tracked to measure progress (see also Figure 1).

Figure 1: DSIM process

This cycle continues as long as necessary. As a result, students who do not respond to targeted interventions are more likely to get the help they need as early as possible, thereby decreasing the achievement gap between them and their peers. For the DSIM to increase student achievement and reduce the achievement gap, it has to be implemented correctly:

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\(^1\) Accessed from [www.wbtt.ca](http://www.wbtt.ca).
1. All students in the class must be screened at the beginning of the school year. Universal screening has been shown to detect most students who will struggle in future.
2. Universal screening MUST be followed by intervention and continual monitoring.

The DSIM helps teachers implement data-driven instruction. In turn, this helps students succeed in school where they may not have otherwise, and also ensures that students who are not responding to interventions get extra support if they need it.

According to the WBTT team, WBTT aligns well with the Response to Intervention (RTI) model of instruction (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). The RTI model is based on a tiered instruction system with three tiers as noted below (see also Figure 2).

**Tier 1:** High-quality classroom instruction, universal screenings and group interventions

**Tier 2:** Targeted interventions (for flagged students)

**Tier 3:** Intensive interventions and comprehensive evaluation (for flagged students that are not responding to tier 2 interventions)
The WBTT program is based on research and evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of early screening and intervention in increasing student achievement. WBTT is used by teachers, principals and school boards to increase high-quality classroom instruction and track student achievement within classrooms, schools and boards. Principals and school board contacts support teachers in implementing WBTT to increase teachers’ abilities to implement data-driven instruction and make data driven programming decisions across classrooms and schools.

I. Evaluation Framework

CCBR’s approach to evaluation is participatory. Therefore, the first step in the Web Based Teaching Tool evaluation was to meet with the WBTT Program Manager to develop a program logic model to serve as a framework for the evaluation.

**Web Based Teaching Tool Program Logic Model**

Logic models are used in community-based program evaluation to communicate how a program’s activities are linked to both short-term and long-term outcomes. A logic model should reflect a program’s goals, resources and activities and can be used as a tool for identifying what is expected from a particular program over time. As a framework for evaluation, logic models describe and identify processes (activities or strategies to produce specific results), and outcomes (the impact on the people whom the organization wants to
benefit). Because a logic model is designed to thoroughly capture the connections between activities, outputs and outcomes (Patton, 2008), it should remain a flexible, living tool that can be re-worked as shifting priorities and conditions present themselves. Logic models provide an important point of reference for guiding and focusing evaluation questions and for informing appropriate evaluation methodology.

Working closely with the WBTT Program Manager, a program logic model for the Web Based Teaching Tool was developed (Figure 3). The logic model provides a high-level overview of the program, including the role of students, teachers, principals and school board contacts to impact student achievement and the capacity for high quality data-driven classroom instruction. Following is a brief description of the activities and intended outcomes depicted by the logic model (see Appendix B).

**Activities**

Students, teachers, principals and school board contacts are involved in the implementation of the program. Students participate in the activities while teachers, principals and board contacts administer the program. Students are involved in the program when their teacher(s) apply the DSIM process of screening, flagging, interventions and continual monitoring to track progress and determine if the student needs further interventions and/or extra help.

**Figure 3: Student activities**

Teachers, principals and school board contacts receive training to implement the WBTT program and track student data across classrooms and schools within the board. Board contacts and principals support teachers to access WBTT and follow the circular process of screening and intervention. Teachers collect and track student data for their classroom while principals track class profiles for each class in their school. The principals’ role is to collect school data and information on how each cohort of students is progressing each year. School boards can then access aggregate data for WBTT schools to monitor board and school progress and to make larger programming decisions. Training about WBTT pedagogy, rationale and embedded performance support tools are also available for teachers, principals and school board contacts. In addition, WBTT provides regular updates through two newsletters: The Bistro (for teachers) and The Gazette (for principals and school board contacts).
Figure 4: Activities for teachers, principals and school board contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers, Principals ad School Board Contacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training about WBTT pedagogy and rationale and user tutorial on using the SAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Contacts &amp; principals support teachers in implementing WBTT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers track student data for their class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals track class profiles for each class in their school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Boards track board data for WBTT schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bistro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gazette</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outcomes

Among students and teachers, there are several short term outcomes intended to follow from the screening, flagging, intervention and continual monitoring process. These include:

- Teachers further understanding students’ areas of needs
- Increased support to students who need it
- Increased likelihood of students getting the specific help they need
- Decrease the likelihood that flagged students will struggle in the future,
- Decrease wait times for student psychological assessments
- Increase discussion between parents and teachers.

The screening and intervention process and WBTT training and support for teachers can lead to increased knowledge about screening, intervention and support. Support for teachers, as well as principals’ ability to track school data, can lead to an increase in the chain of support when it is determined that a student needs extra help. Principal involvement can support teachers’ use of a classroom-based model, and when the Bistro and Gazette are utilized effectively. As such, these outcomes include:

- School Boards, teachers and principals increase knowledge about screening, intervention and support
- Increase the chain of support when it is determined that a student needs extra help
- Support teachers use of a classroom based model where screening, interventions and progress monitoring take place by the classroom teacher

When particular short term outcomes have been accomplished, additional intermediate outcomes are intended to occur. Increased high quality classroom instruction is facilitated when students receive the specific help they need and there is increased discussion between parents and teachers. Teachers’ ability to implement data-driven instruction is intended to follow when there is effective use of a classroom-based model and educators are knowledgeable about screening, intervention and support.
Achievement of short term and intermediate outcomes is then intended to collectively lead to, and sustain, longer term outcomes. These outcomes include a decrease in the early achievement gap and increased student achievement in Ontario.

**Evaluation Design and Strategies**

The Web Based Teaching Tool evaluation utilized a qualitative research design and interview-based methodology. The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue (Patton, 2008). As such, interviews and focus groups with teachers, principals and school board contacts were designed to gain their insights and experiences with WBTT, and to develop a deeper understanding of how the tool is used in practice. This section describes the participants and strategies for data collection.

**Participants**

Altogether, 84 people participated in this evaluation. They included 30 primary school teachers, 10 principals, and 44 school board contacts² (see also Figure 5). We spoke with participants across 39 school boards including 9 French boards and 30 English boards. See Table 1 for participant demographics and Appendix B for a list of participants and their school boards.

**Figure 5: Participant sample**

![Participant sample chart]

² We were unable to collect demographic data from one school board contact who participated in a focus group discussion due to technical difficulties with voice recordings.
Table 1: Participant demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Group</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Average years in School Board</th>
<th>Average years in Education Field</th>
<th>Average years involved with WBTT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board Contacts</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection Strategies

The evaluation used two qualitative research methods, namely focus groups and interviews. These methods were intended to collect data on program implementation and program outcomes. We aimed to be as inclusive of each of the key stakeholder groups as possible, outreaching to teachers, principals and school board contacts from English and French boards.

**Focus Groups.** Focus groups were held in English and French with school board contacts at a bi-annual provincial WBTT meeting. Five groups were conducted, four in English and one in French. This method worked well for collecting data from board contacts to elicit data on the norms of the school board and a broad overview of issues of concern about WBTT implementation across various schools and boards. We also asked participants to identify the primary facilitating factors and barriers that make WBTT accessible to teachers and principals.

**Interviews.** Interviews were conducted in English and French with teachers and principals from schools involved in WBTT. Thirty interviews were conducted with teachers who actively use WBTT in their classrooms. Twenty-four of these teachers were from school boards where WBTT is mandated. A majority of these participants were primary school teachers, many of whom taught Kindergarten. This group included a small number of learning resource and special education teachers. Ten interviews with school principals who may or may not use the tool were also conducted.

The interviews were open-ended and included questions about how the tool is used, supports available to use the tool, as well as any challenges and barriers to effective implement. Interviews for both groups of participants were similar, however teachers were asked more specifically about how they use the tool in their classroom, whereas principals were asked to share insights on how the tool is used in their schools. We also asked participants for their thoughts and ideas about ways to improve the tool for future development.

Analysis

The data was collected, transcribed and analyzed for key themes and trends in responses. Initial data was reviewed and a list of descriptive codes was created while a more abstract category
was attributed to several observations with similar themes. These abstract categories were used to make initial connections in the data and search for patterns and themes in responses. This approach is generally referred to as open coding and axial coding, respectively (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). After the creation of descriptive codes, we created a conceptual structure for coding to tie the evaluation questions and logic model directly to the data. Based on participants’ responses, the conceptual structure was used to consider activity and outcome variables according to the logic model. This structure was helpful in understanding the activities and outcomes participants discussed in order to respond to the process and outcome evaluation questions. During this process we were careful to remain open to emerging themes and codes that varied from this structure. Tactics used for drawing first conclusions involved noting patterns, themes, making contrasts, comparisons, clustering and counting. Initial conclusions were checked back against transcripts and notes to consider context, explore areas of uncertainty, and identify negative evidence or rival explanations in order to reach final conclusions.

II. Evaluation Findings

This section presents and discusses the findings of the Web Based Teaching Tool evaluation. It includes the perspectives of teachers, principals and school board contacts in relation to the process and outcomes of WBTT. First, we will present the findings related to the process evaluation in terms of how the tool is used, facilitating factors and challenges for each participant group. Next, we discuss the impact and outcomes of WBTT in order to present our recommendations.

Process Evaluation

Through our process evaluation, we aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how WBTT is being used in everyday practice. This section of the findings is divided according to how WBTT is used and its perceived strengths for teachers, principals and school board contacts. We will also describe specific facilitating factors and challenges to effective WBTT usage for each participant group. Table 2 provides an overview of the main themes and sub-categories.
Table 2: Process evaluation main themes and sub-categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Themes</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Board Contacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How WBTT is Used</td>
<td>DSIM Process</td>
<td>Administration and Tracking</td>
<td>Perceived Strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived Strengths</td>
<td>Perceived Strengths</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow Through</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timing and Frequency of Use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Factors</td>
<td>Support and Access to Resources</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Buy-in, Commitment and Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Board Support</td>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Attitude and Perceptions of WBTT</td>
<td>Lack of Support and Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of Support and Resources</td>
<td>Lack of Knowledge and Awareness</td>
<td>Integration with other assessments and initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitude and Perceptions of WBTT</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teachers**

1. **How WBTT is Used by Teachers**

The Majority of teachers we spoke with indicated that they use WBTT for all activities in the DSIM process and generally follow through with flagged students. The timing and frequency of use varied mostly according to teachers’ personal choice and preferences for use. A majority of teachers expressed positive feedback about WBTT. Usage by teachers was generally described as:

- Most frequently used for screening
- Helpful to “see where kids are at”
- Comprehensive and easy to use
- A valuable resource for teachers
- Helpful for report card writing and tracking student data
- Most commonly used in the Fall and Spring of the school year
a) The DSIM Process
The evaluation found that most teachers we spoke with utilize all activities in the DSIM process (screening, flagging, intervention, continual monitoring). Of these activities, screening was the most frequently indicated use of WBTT. More than half of teachers interviewed said that they conduct screenings and intervention activities. The majority of participants expressed positive feedback about WBTT and the overall DSIM process.

b) Teachers’ Perceived Strengths of WBTT
Teachers provided very positive feedback about WBTT as an early screening and intervention tool. Participants identified several strengths and benefits of WBTT to support their teaching practice. These strengths include:

+ WBTT screening tools and intervention strategies
+ Support for report card writing
+ Supports discussions with parents
+ Organization and tracking student data
+ Special education and learning resource programming and planning

Most participants told us that the screening tools and intervention strategies were a major reason why they use WBTT. Participants indicated that screening results support teachers to further understand student’s areas of need, to “see where kids are at”, thus providing incentive to use WBTT. Most participants said that the tool is “comprehensive” in terms of screening and intervention strategies. Interventions were commonly described as “easy to use”, able to target specific student needs and promote student progress. Overall, screenings and interventions from WBTT were viewed as valuable resources for teachers to support students’ needs.

Several participants also mentioned that they use WBTT for report card writing and discussions with parents about student’s areas of need and sharing information on support provided in the classroom, as well as suggested activities that could be done at home. Teachers said that they use WBTT to assist them in the organization of student data, as well as special education and learning resource programming and planning. WBTT is also used to track student data for the classroom. Several teachers noted that WBTT provides “a visual to see the whole class at one glance”.

c) Follow Through
The majority of teachers told us that they generally follow through with flagged students. See Figure 6 for an outline of this described process of follow through. Some teachers said they utilize WBTT interventions and monitor student progress within the classroom, while others said they may also access a chain of further support outside the classroom. Below are some examples of how teachers described the process of follow through.
I generally follow through with flagged students by revisiting areas of weakness [in the classroom], and I’ll send home games, usually tailored towards literacy. I try to work on skills with all students so as not to single out the flagged ones, and I might try to suggest that parents adjust the reading they do at home.

Yes, flagged students names are sent to the resource teachers or OT [occupational therapy] people. We can do speech or language referrals or psych referrals... Principals are also made aware of flagged students and the school may make more contact in the home. Students who are flagged might also get more time with a reading buddy.

Participants typically described the chain of support for flagged students to include learning resource teachers, educational assistants, special education consultants and principals. This chain of support was described as formal or informal and may have included one or several sources of support within the school. As such, in-school support staff work together to increase support to students who need it so they can get the specific help they need. A small number of teachers indicated that this support was formally facilitated by principals or the board to support WBTT implementation. Otherwise, these supports appear to exist naturally in the school environment and accessed by classroom teachers without support from the principal or board.

Figure 6: Teachers’ described process of follow through for flagged students.

- **Student is flagged**
  - Teacher is alerted to the student’s areas of need

- **Classroom based model**
  - Classroom teacher implements interventions and monitors student progress

- **Access chain of further support**
  - Classroom teacher may utilize additional support in the school
  - Support may include learning resource, special education, education assistant(s), principal

**d) Timing and Frequency of WBTT Use by Teachers**

The most commonly noted timing of use was in the Fall and Spring of the school year. According to teachers that participated in this study, school boards that have mandated WBTT usually mandate usage at least two or three times per year which may coincide with report card writing.
The frequency of use varies across classrooms, schools and boards. According to participants we spoke with, the frequency of use depends mostly on the teachers’ preference for use as well as board mandated policies. The frequency varied from two times per year, to more than 25 times per year and even daily.

2. Facilitating Factors for use of WBTT by Teachers

Facilitating factors are described as important elements that promote effective use of WBTT. Teachers described several factors that support their ability to implement WBTT in their classroom and school. Figure 7 portrays these factors which will be described below. Support and training are displayed as overarching themes that relate to specific factors and sources that support WBTT use by teachers.

**Figure 7: Facilitating factors that promote teachers’ effective use of WBTT**

![Facilitating Factors Diagram](image)

**a) Support and access to resources**

Support and access to resources for teachers were described as key factors for successful implementation of WBTT. These supports included the school board, principals and other classroom teachers, learning resource teachers, special education teachers and educational assistants.

**i) Board Support.** Most teachers said they receive some support from the school board. Commonly mentioned support referred to WBTT training usually when the tool is first introduced to teachers. A smaller number of teachers mentioned that the school board mandates WBTT and may send out reminder emails to complete screening, and/or provide release time for teachers. Figure 8 depicts the various ways school boards can support WBTT implementation.
Teachers frequently indicated that support from the board and principals in the form of release time and following up on WBTT results would be helpful. Principals also highlighted support from the board as an important facilitating factor that influenced use of WBTT by teachers. A few principals also indicated that their school boards provide WBTT training and may also provide release time for teachers to implement the DSIM process.

*The board provides [release] time for teachers to get training. The board has been very supportive to help teachers get training, if they expressed an interest. They came to the school when we had the training there, and brought a psychologist, the special ed. resource person, program services person all to the school to support the teachers. We can call the board if we have any questions, and they’ll come with the coordinator and help answer questions.*

School board contacts similarly indicated that there is a need for support at the board level to facilitate implementation, build capacity and set timelines for WBTT data collection in schools. Board contacts appeared to recognize that they have a key role in supporting teachers to access the WBTT.

*ii) School.* Teachers noted that support in the classroom and school is integral to their ability to complete WBTT screening and interventions. A few principals and board contacts echoed the important role of support within schools to implement WBTT. This support can help teachers manage other teaching tasks and monitor students while they implement WBTT activities (see also Figure 9).
Several teachers shared examples of working with other staff in the school to implement WBTT and follow through with flagged students. As one teacher who provides support for classroom teachers to implement WBTT told us,

*I think it would be much more difficult to be on top of WBTT if it was the responsibility of the classroom teacher alone.*

Some teachers have managed their time so they do not need this support. However, this appeared to depend on the number of students in the classroom, the teacher’s own knowledge and understanding of WBTT as well as other assessments and teaching tasks required.

Support within schools included (1) providing release time, (2) sharing of WBTT responsibilities with other teachers (screening or implementation of interventions), (3) WBTT technical support and (4) sharing ideas on how to increase support to address students’ needs. A few teachers and several principals also mentioned that they meet to discuss flagged students and early intervention strategy plans. Some principals mentioned that they also provide support with the administrative tasks of WBTT, such as entering classroom profiles. A small number of teachers indicated that they simply report student results and intervention plans to the principal, while others said they receive more support to discuss and brainstorm ideas on how to increase the likelihood that students receive the specific help they need.

In summary, all participant groups indicated there is a benefit and need for support from the school board, principal, other primary teachers and resource or special education teacher. This support assists teachers to use WBTT effectively and follow through with the complete DSIM process.

b) Training

A majority of teachers were satisfied with WBTT training if they had received it. Training appeared to clearly facilitate use of WBTT when teachers had the opportunity to learn how to use the tool and understand its purpose and value. According to teachers, training was most effective when it was practical and provided opportunity for teachers to input real student data with support from experienced trainers. Other teachers commented that WBTT was successful in their schools when several teachers in the school had training, knowledge and understanding about the purpose and components of WBTT. For example, one teacher from a school where WBTT is used in all primary grades told us,

*There aren’t any barriers to the [screening and intervention] process in our school... I think it’s because we’ve been using WBTT for awhile now and all the teachers know how to use it. So, it’s easy to talk with other teachers about WBTT because they are all familiar with it.*

3. Challenges

Teachers described several challenges for effective implementation of WBTT. These challenges were most commonly related to time to implement screening and intervention strategies, in addition to lack of support and perceptions of the purpose and value of WBTT. These issues coalesce and overlap to create challenges for teachers to effectively use WBTT (see also Figure 10).

*Figure 10: Challenges for teachers*
a. Time

The most frequently noted challenge was related to time. Time was recognized by all three participant groups as a challenge for teachers to effectively implement WBTT. Time was not described as a challenge because of the tool itself, but a result of other assessments and other teaching tasks and responsibilities.

The majority of teachers indicated that they have experienced challenges finding time to:

- become familiar with the tool
- search and prepare interventions
- learn about interventions available to meet specific student needs.

One teacher who is currently piloting WBTT in her school said,

*The kindergarten teacher and I are very excited about WBTT, but we just don’t have the time, and no one else has the time to sit down and talk about WBTT, so it’s not going to happen.*

As such, this teacher expressed that WBTT was unlikely to be successfully implemented in the school unless there was more time provided for teachers to learn and understand the process and purpose. This was also discussed by several principals who indicated that time was a barrier to the screening and intervention process. This was considered a barrier because of the time required for teachers to do screening, search individual interventions and implement them. One principal specifically noted that there are too many interventions to “filter through” in order to be used effectively. Another principal said that WBTT would be improved if more time was available to help support data driven instruction. This principal commented,

*It’s just that teachers are busy, busy and getting busier all the time. WBTT is something that they have to manage but it’s a positive thing because you can see the benefits of it very quickly.*

Interventions were described as time consuming when they require one on one teaching. This is because the teacher is removed from working with the whole class, or needs to monitor the other students while completing the intervention. Several teachers told us that they try to implement interventions with the whole class, while being mindful of the specific needs of flagged students to help mitigate this challenge. Another strategy involved grouping students who are struggling in the same area together to implement interventions with small groups, thus saving time by using the same intervention with several students at once. As such, release time to implement WBTT would benefit some teachers, especially those with large classrooms.
Board contacts also indicated that release time would facilitate use; however financial costs may be a challenge or barrier to pay another teacher to provide supply coverage.

b. Lack of Support and Resources

Lack of support and resources was described as another common challenge to effective WBTT implementation. Teachers and school board contacts shared the opinion that there are challenges to achieve student outcomes when there is a lack of support from the school board and principals. Lack of support was not discussed by principals as a challenge for teachers. This may be because most of the principals who agreed to participate in the evaluation were actively involved with WBTT and with teachers who provided them support. However, those principals who indicated they did not use the tool said that they were unfamiliar with WBTT, thus unable to support teachers. Similarly, only a small number of teachers indicated that their school principal was using the tool and the data for larger programming decisions. Several more teachers mentioned that they “did not know” if their principal used the data, but many “hoped” that the data was being used. One principal who does not use the tool specifically said,

'[WBTT] doesn’t help me support teachers or students because I’m not really familiar with it. I haven’t had the opportunity to really delve into it at this point in time.'

As such, it appears that principals who are unfamiliar with WBTT do not provide support to teachers who use the tool. Support from principals and the school board was described as essential in order to monitor the WBTT screening and intervention process and track student data. Teachers and board contacts indicated that a lack of support for teachers within schools can pose significant challenges to successful implementation when screening and intervention is the sole responsibility of the classroom teacher.

The teachers are isolated in terms that they are the only ones who are in on it, the principals are not involved, the LRT has no understanding of the WBTT, so it’s really up to each individual teacher to become involved and sign on to their WBTT profile. (Board Contact)

...there are significant barriers to the screening and intervention process when WBTT is the responsibility of the classroom teacher alone...teachers need support in their schools and from the board. (Teacher)

Attitude and Perceptions of WBTT

Some teachers appeared to have a clearer understanding than others of the purposes and components of WBTT. As discussed above, many teachers indicated several perceived strengths of WBTT that appeared to support their use of the tool. However, there were some noted differences in responses from teachers as some teachers said they “do not see the point” of WBTT in terms of how it further contributes to their ability to support students’ areas of need. For example,
I’ve looked at the interventions and found that they were pretty straightforward things that I already do. Really, there was nothing new beyond what I already use with students. So I haven’t gone on to WBTT to find interventions or implement any of them specifically. (Teacher)

WBTT is just another thing to get done. If we had to send in data and staff were expected to complete the screening that would make data more meaningful. If the board had a baseline where they want kids to be at, and teachers had to hand in scores and progress was tracked to see student improvement that might help teachers understand the value of WBTT. But, WBTT is not meaningful because you don’t have to use it, its just there. I wonder sometimes if WBTT is something the board is invested in. (Teacher)

These quotes highlight the impact of attitudes and perceptions of WBTT as a challenge to effective use by teachers. As these teachers have told us, they choose not to use WBTT to follow through with the screening and intervention process because they do not see the value of the tool. As such, negative perceptions of the purpose of WBTT deter some teachers from using the tool.

**Principals**

1. **How WBTT is Used by Principals**

We spoke with principals who may or may not use WBTT. Of those who indicated that they use WBTT, their primary use of the tool was for administration and tracking student data at the school level. Principals also indicated several perceived strengths of the tool based on their own experience and the opinions of teachers in their schools. When we spoke with principals who did not use the tool, they indicated that they would like to learn more about the purposes and benefits of WBTT. Usage of WBTT by principals generally included:

- Administration of classroom profiles
- Tracking class profiles for each cohort in their school
- Discussing flagged students with teachers
- Determining larger programming decisions
- Supporting teachers to assist students and communicate with parents

a. **Administration and Tracking**

We spoke with seven principals that use WBTT. These principals indicated that they primarily use the tool for administrative purposes to enter classroom profiles and track student data at the school level. These principals also mentioned that they discuss flagged students’ needs with teachers regarding increasing support to students who need it.
Principals said they use WBTT for larger programming decisions with special education teachers to place students in remedial programs (e.g. reading programs). Principals said they also use data for school improvement planning and allocation of resources. Several principals indicated that teachers in their school are using the data to support students and communicate with parents.

b. Perceived Strengths of WBTT by Principals

Principals noted some specific strengths of the tool. Some principals mentioned that the tool is “very, very navigable”, user-friendly and provides teachers an opportunity to work with “technology”. Principals identified the following strengths and benefits of WBTT:

+ User-friendly
+ Supports teachers to identify student needs and provides evidence of these claims
+ Comprehensive screening and intervention tool
+ Streamlined screening and intervention process

Several principals said they have heard positive feedback from teachers about the benefits of the tool to identify students’ areas of need and provide evidence to support their claims that students may need extra help. A few principals also mentioned that they have had positive experiences using the tool themselves. Below are a few quotes that highlight these perceived strengths of the program,

I think the tool is excellent, very user-friendly. I think the interventions are great. I don’t know who has designed them but they know a whole lot about education.

It’s probably the most comprehensive tool I have ever seen in regards to what information it gives and then the huge number of interventions that are available.

2. Facilitating Factors for WBTT use by Principals

According to the principals we spoke with, there are two key factors that promote effective use of WBTT including training and support from the school board. Training appeared to increase knowledge and awareness of WBTT for principals, and promote effective communication with teachers. Board support was often described as consultation and policies that mandate use within schools. These factors are outlined in Figure 11.
Figure 11: Facilitating factors that promote principals' effective use of WBTT.

- **Training**
  Principal training appears to play an important role in promoting increased use of the tool, increased awareness of the School Administrator Site (SAS), and effective communication with teachers about students’ areas of needs and support for early intervention. Principals who mentioned having received training demonstrated a deeper understanding of the components and purpose of WBTT and also indicated more use than those who did not have training or were unfamiliar with the tool. Principals that had received training discussed the benefits of increased understanding of the tool and how the training taught them to support teachers in implementing WBTT. As one principal said, he had training to learn how to complete some administrative set up for teachers which gave him “a good edge”.

A few principals who had received WBTT training said they were previously unaware of how they could use WBTT to support teachers and effective implementation in the school. As such, training facilitates the use of WBTT by principals and provided them with the knowledge to support WBTT usage by teachers.

Training supports principals’ understanding of WBTT so they are able to assist teachers with administration, problem solving, trouble shooting and increasing the chain of support when it is determined that a student needs extra help. Principals who had training noted the positive benefits of being capable of providing support for teachers for administrative purposes and discussion to support students’ needs, as well as the ability to view data at the school level and track student progress.
b. **Board Support**

Most principals told us that their board does provide support for WBTT implementation. Again, this support was described as training, as well as consultation and policy mandates. Below are a few examples of how principals have described effective school board support to schools,

*WBTT is supported by the special ed. department from the boards. We need to report back to board about the findings of the teaching tool. From that, there is usually an in service [WBTT training] that comes out of that, so good follow up [from the board].*

*Someone from the board helps out regularly and does a lot of work with the analysis, intervention plans, supporting teachers. Without that support from the board, I’m not sure if the tool could be used as extensively and as well as it’s being used now.*

3. **Challenges affecting use of WBTT by Principals**

Several principals identified key challenges that affected their use of WBTT. These challenges related to their attitude and perceptions of WBTT and lack of knowledge and awareness of the purpose and value of the tool. Several principals noted that they were unclear about the purpose and components of WBTT, and do not use the tool because of negative feedback from teachers. This relationship is displayed in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Interaction of challenges for effective use of WBTT by principals.

![](image)

a. **Attitude and Perceptions of WBTT**

According to a few principals we spoke with, their use of WBTT is also affected by their perceptions of the tool, as well as teachers’ opinions. A few principals mentioned that they do not use WBTT data because teachers have told them that WBTT does not contribute to their further understanding of students’ areas of need. One principal said that when they receive WBTT results, teachers will tell her that they “already knew that” and the results do not help them. One principal said she has only heard from Kindergarten teachers that it is a “good” tool but it is “extremely lengthy to do”. Other than that, she “does not know anything about it.”
One principal, in particular, said he has noticed that the interventions are more beneficial for new primary teachers than for those who are more experienced, indicating that the tool may have more value for teachers with less primary teaching experience because more experienced teachers have less need for ideas for interventions as they are already aware of the resources and activities to meet students’ needs.

b. Lack of Knowledge and Awareness

A small number of principals interviewed said they do not use WBTT and are not aware of its purposes or capabilities. However, these principals also said they would like to learn more about the tool and would be interested in training.

I would like to know what the purpose is [of WBTT]. Our view [at the school] now is that it’s used to get report card marks, but I’m pretty sure it’s more than that and we don’t know that.

As such, there appears to be an issue of misperceptions and misunderstanding among principals about the purposes and benefits of the tool. There was some variation in how data generated is used by principals, as well as variation in the level of understanding about the different components of WBTT and the School Administrator Site (SAS).

Board Contacts

1. How WBTT is Used by Board Contacts

Some participants said they intend to use WBTT data more in the future, and are in the process of collecting information from teachers and principals to determine how the data is being used at the school level. One board contact also told us that they are “just starting to use the data to track student achievement [and] are hoping that this tracking will promote WBTT among teachers and principals.” Some board contacts indicated they are:

- Promoting their interest in WBTT as a student data management system
- Starting to use WBTT data to track student achievement

a. Perceived Strengths of WBTT by Board Contacts

Board contacts did tell us that WBTT’s components, and the tool itself is a “good tracking tool for screening and interventions”, especially in the area of math. They also said that WBTT is a helpful tool for viewing student data for each class, school and across the board. WBTT was described as having the potential to be used in classrooms to create baseline student information that can be tracked over time and linked to interventions. WBTT was also described as an “easy to use assessment and data management tool” that helps inform “precision
teaching” such that assessment drives instruction. These strengths can be summarized in the following points:

+ Excellent tool to address students’ areas of need in math
+ Tracking student data across classrooms and schools
+ Easy to use
+ Promotes data-driven instruction

2. Facilitating Factors to promote increased use of WBTT

Board contacts identified the need for buy-in, commitment and support for WBTT as a key facilitating factor that would promote increase use of WBTT by teachers, principals and school boards. This commitment should come from multiple levels of the education system.

a. Buy-in, Commitment and Support

Board contacts emphasized the need for commitment and buy-in at all levels including teachers, principals and school board administration. Board contacts indicated that teachers, principals and the school board need to understand and see the value of WBTT to facilitate effective use of the tool. School board contacts told us that WBTT needs to be mandated by the school board and, ideally, by the Ministry of Education as well as aligned with the Literacy/Numeracy Secretariat. Board contacts indicated that mandating WBTT will promote use of the tool within schools but also highlighted that teachers and principals must see the value and understand the purpose of the tool in order for it to be effective. As one contact said,

When I talk about buy in, I’m talking about seeing value, and [principals and teachers] may be going through a paper exercise of doing what they have to because it’s mandated, but we’re seeing that if they don’t see the value and what it provides for their school, their students and their teaching, they’re just going through the motions.

In relation, a few board contacts recognized the important role of “in-school teams”. These teams were described similarly by teachers, principals and board contacts to include classroom teachers, learning resource staff, special education teachers and principals that support teachers to implement WBTT and increase the chain of support when a student needs extra help. A few contacts indicated that they can promote this support by facilitating the development of in-school supports. This would involve working with teachers and principals to develop supportive infrastructure and build capacity such that school staff could work together to share responsibilities and support one another to implement WBTT. Board contacts who have facilitated this support system, said they have assisted in schools to bring staff together and encouraged them to work together to complete the DSIM process and increase support when students are flagged. These contacts also said they have been involved in WBTT for several years and understood that there are time management challenges for teachers to implement the screening and interventions.
3. **Challenges to WBTT use for Board Contacts**

Most board contacts indicated that they are not currently using the WBTT data. The majority indicated that they are not using the data because of several challenges and barriers reported below. These include a lack of support and funding from senior board administration and the Ministry of Education, as well as a lack of integration of WBTT with other assessments and initiatives.

   a. **Lack of Support and Funding**

One of the primary challenges reported by board contacts relates to the lack of support and funding from senior board administration and the Ministry of Education for effective WBTT implementation. Most board contacts indicated that their school boards are likely viewing WBTT as a special education tool rather than understanding its value as a universal screening mechanism. As one board contact commented,

   \[
   \text{[WBTT] has to be endorsed by someone who is budgeting for the school year based on what they value as being important...if it’s being mandated by the board, do we want to keep moving forward with it and if we do, there are finances involved...[WBTT] needs to be endorsed or it won’t go anywhere.}
   \]

As a result, board contacts indicated that WBTT is delegated to the special education department and receives limited funding. This presents a challenge when schools attempt to implement WBTT without the funding for training, support and release time, as well as time for program planning and to use and implement the tool. Moreover, board contacts said this sends the message that WBTT is not a priority and negatively impacts on their capacity to follow through with data at the board level. Follow through of data at the school and board level was also discussed as a challenge to support positive attitudes and perceptions of WBTT. Board contacts indicated that there is a lack of follow through with WBTT data at the board level which presents challenges when trying to convince teachers and principals of the value of the tool. Thus, a lack of support and funding to assist teachers and follow through with WBTT data contributes to the challenges identified by teachers and principals in terms of time, lack of support and resources and attitudes and perceptions of WBTT. For example, one board contact said

   \[
   \text{Our board is very much focused around tracking, and if you’re not seeing success after an intervention, [teachers and principals] won’t support it. They would want to see that this intervention which took a lot of time is paying off.}
   \]

Budgeting and costs within the board to provide support was among the leading reasons for insufficient resources. Funding was described by several board contacts as a challenge to provide training for teachers and principals in their schools. In turn, this was described as a challenge to promoting WBTT in schools.
You can’t convince [teachers and principals] that it’s a really good thing unless you’re willing to put the money behind it. (Board Contact)

Further, a few board contacts also commented on the challenge of funding for release time. Although several board contacts indicated that release time for teacher would facilitate use, they also said they did not have sufficient funding to provide this time.

b. Integration with other assessments and initiatives

Board contacts also identified the need for a better connection between WBTT and other assessment tools and initiatives in order to promote increased uptake in schools and boards. They indicated that there are “too many other competing initiatives”, such that they need to “convince all levels [teachers, principals, school board and Ministry of Education] of the utility of the WBTT”. Board contacts noted that WBTT data “doesn’t fit” with school board databases, and therefore is not easy to track. According to participants, WBTT data needs to be more “meaningful in relation with other initiatives” to promote buy-in and commitment at all levels.

Participants indicated that WBTT data needs to be integrated with board data. As noted above, most board contacts do not currently use WBTT data, in part because it is a separate data piece disconnected from other sources of information based on other assessments and initiatives. Below are two quotes that highlight this perspective from board contacts.

Our collected data is stored in two places. The information in the WBTT is in a separate place and inaccessible to help inform the board.

We haven’t seen and don’t have the data. Data we collect is in two different places, not together…we don’t know that once a kid is flagged if there is any follow up.

Teachers, principals and board contacts also indicated that implementing WBTT is a challenge because of “all the other assessments” they are required to complete. As such, WBTT becomes “just another thing to do”. Several board contacts commented that WBTT should be mandated within all school boards to support implementation and compete with other initiatives in order to gain support and funding.

In summary, board contacts discussed the intertwining relationships between lack of support and funding to implement WBTT, lack of integration with other initiatives and the need for increased buy-in and commitment to WBTT at all levels of the education system. Participants described that the lack of support and funding is influenced by the lack of commitment to WBTT as a universal screening tool because there is a need for greater integration of WBTT with other assessments and initiatives. As such, these factors work together to present significant challenges to increased uptake of WBTT in schools and boards. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 12.
Figure 12: Facilitating factors and challenges to increased WBTT uptake.

Outcome Evaluation

The Outcome Evaluation focused on the impact of WBTT on early identification and referral as well as student outcomes. This section includes perspectives from teachers, principals and school board contacts regarding the impact and outcomes of WBTT for students and teachers.

The findings of this evaluation indicated that the majority (80%) of teachers (n=24) and principals (n=8) have seen a positive impact of WBTT to increase support to students who need it, further understand students’ areas of need and promote discussion between parents and teachers (see also Figure 13 and Figure 14). These impacts and outcomes appeared to be most common at the school level. School board contacts indicated that they have not seen a significant impact of WBTT at the board level primarily because they are not currently using WBTT data to help determine its impact and outcome.
a. Increased Support for Students

Evidence from this evaluation suggests that WBTT helps to increase support to students who need it so they get the specific help they need. The majority of teachers and principals told us that they generally do follow through with flagged students by utilizing interventions and monitoring student progress within the classroom, and/or accessing a chain of further support outside the classroom. Some teachers said that specific support for students could also lead to additional referrals such as speech pathology, occupational therapy, and psychological assessment.
A small number of teachers and principals indicated that they have seen a decrease in the likelihood that flagged students will struggle in the future as a result of increased understanding and support. For example, one teacher told us that when students are flagged in Kindergarten she tries to “solve the problem before they get to Grade 1”. She mentioned that she “has seen success” with this early intervention and “gives credit to the strategies from WBTT” to decrease the likelihood that students will continue to struggle past Kindergarten.

We asked all participant groups if there is a connection between WBTT screening, referral and access to resources. We were interested in learning if WBTT had an impact on referrals for students who need it, as well as access to resources to increase support to students so they can receive the specific help they need. Essentially, we were interested in understanding if the use of WBTT ensures that teachers and schools have more resources to support students’ needs.

Similar to previous evaluations which demonstrated that WBTT does contribute to referrals and access to resources, teachers and principals from this evaluation often indicated that WBTT is “one piece of the puzzle”. WBTT was considered one of the data sources that are reviewed and considered for referral, in addition to other assessment measures and support. In general, WBTT helps to flag students and provides evidence to support teachers’ claims that a student may need extra support.

*I absolutely see a connection [between WBTT screening, referral and access to resources]. We’ve noticed a high correlation between students who get red flags getting referred to our reading recovery program... I’ve also established a team meeting process with teachers where they talk about red flags, so WBTT screening is a great segue into the team meeting process. (Principal)*

*Some of it is a broad connection, like taking the [screening results] and expanding it out to consider OT support, although not all teachers might put those pieces together to make referrals based on the results... Teachers need to think about what kind of supports students need beyond the classroom, and consider other assessments and other factors that affect student results, like for instance is their apparent lack of attention and ability to follow instruction due to an auditory issue? (Teacher)*

Teachers indicated that the connection that flows from WBTT screening is facilitated by in-school supports to access resources and make referrals. Several teachers mentioned that when students are flagged they are referred to the learning resource or special education teacher. In some cases, it is the responsibility of the learning resource teacher to make an outside referral, thus requiring their involvement and support of WBTT. Effective communication with parents is also an important factor increasing support at home.

Focus groups with board contacts indicated that there is variation across school boards around the connection between WBTT screening, referral and access to resources. Some board
contacts indicated similar responses to teachers in that connections are facilitated when teachers follow the DSIM process and utilize support within their schools. Focus group discussions revealed that this connection may be difficult to determine at the board level because of other assessment tools that may also be used and could have an impact on the number of referrals. This reflects the overall view that WBTT is “one piece of the puzzle”.

b. Understanding Students’ Areas of Need

A majority of teachers indicated that WBTT has supported their further understanding of students’ areas of need. Teachers also indicated that WBTT helps to identify students who need help “right away in Kindergarten”. Several teachers noted that WBTT is helpful to learn “where students are at”. Teachers also commented that there is strength in WBTT as an early flag when teachers are first getting to know their students in the fall. As one teacher said,

*It gives you an early idea of who is at risk to begin with because those tests were done in the fall. WBTT provides an idea of where to start and which direction you should be heading with some of those kids.*

Several principals similarly indicated that WBTT has value in helping teachers re-evaluate their conceptions about student abilities and helps them ensure that the school has an accurate understanding of students’ skills and knowledge. Principals, as well as a few teachers, also said that WBTT provides a holistic view of the child, for example,

*WBTT gives us more information and a bigger picture of the child, not just academic and behaviour in classroom, but also a picture of where the student was when they came into the class and then again at the end of the year to see their progression. We get more information about students, earlier identification and early intervention and better communication. WBTT is a factor in overall improvement in early identification.* (Principal)

c. Parent Engagement

Many teachers and principals indicated that WBTT supports discussion between parents and teachers. Several participants commented that WBTT provides evidence to support teachers when reporting to parents that a student may be struggling in a particular area. WBTT was also described as a helpful tool to provide activities for parents to work with their children at home. Several teachers also mentioned that they will use WBTT around the same time as they have scheduled parent interviews to support them to discuss students’ areas of need and provide data to support them. Teachers also commented that they use WBTT to assist with report card writing to communicate students’ progress to parents. One teacher said that WBTT supports her organizing student data for her report cards.

Several other teachers said they engage the parents to increase support to students at home by providing them with WBTT strategies. Teachers mentioned that they will send home activities
that parents and families can do together with their children to help increase the likelihood that students will get the specific help they need. As one teacher said,

*I haven’t shared the actual [WBTT] results with parents, but I’ve been able to say “your child needs extra support in these areas. I’ve been doing some work with so and so, they’re having some trouble mastering these skills and this is how you can help them at home”. (Teacher)*

**Research Limitations**

There are a few important caveats to interpreting our evaluation findings. Firstly, our sample of participants did not represent all school boards that participate in WBTT. At times, we were able to recruit teachers, principals and school board contacts from the same board, however, because participants self-selected, we were unable to recruit participants from the same boards. Secondly, we did not capture the perspectives of provincial policy makers to further understand how the tool is perceived at the provincial level. Thirdly, this study utilized only qualitative data which limits the breadth of our findings due to smaller sampling sizes. However qualitative data does provide depth in findings to provide a deeper understanding how the WBTT program is used in practice, challenges and barriers to effective use and suggestions for improvement.

**III. Summary of Lessons Learned**

Results of our evaluation suggest that WBTT is a valuable tool for educators to support student achievement. It is also valued as an effective screening and data management tracking tool. Several participants indicated that WBTT is user-friendly, comprehensive and promotes data driven instruction. The tool also supports teachers’ use of a classroom based model, where screening, interventions and progress monitoring take place by the classroom teacher. We learned that WBTT has the capacity to support communication between teachers, parents and principals when effectively implemented. Participants indicated that WBTT also has an impact on further understanding students’ areas of need and increasing support to students who need it most.

While the majority of teachers we spoke with appeared to be actively using WBTT, there seems to be a need for increased uptake among principals and at the school board level. According to most principals, they are using WBTT for administration and tracking while board contacts indicated they are either just starting or are not using WBTT data at all. Participants from all three stakeholder groups provided their thoughts and ideas about the challenges to increased use of WBTT. These challenges included time, lack of support and resources, lack of integration with other assessments and initiatives, and perceptions of the purpose and value of the tool.
Participants also shared their thoughts on facilitating factors that promote and influence usage. These factors consisted of buy-in, commitment and support from all levels including teachers, principals, school boards and the Ministry of Education. Access to resources to increase support to teachers and students, as well as WBTT training were identified as additional factors that promote increased knowledge and awareness and uptake of the tool.

This evaluation has demonstrated progress and improvement of WBTT from previous evaluations, as well as ongoing challenges and issues. One of these improvements appears to be the perception of WBTT as a “user-friendly” website. In comparison to previous evaluations, participants from this evaluation indicated that they found WBTT to be easy to use and navigate, whereas past evaluations found that WBTT users identified technical problems as a challenge to effective use. Previous evaluations identified recommendations to increase the perceived benefits of WBTT, whereas many participants from this evaluation indicated several strengths and benefits of WBTT. These perceived strengths provide further evidence to support the notion that WBTT is a propitious practice to impact student achievement.

Ongoing challenges and issues include the time investment of WBTT and competing demands. Time related to implementing WBTT and managing other demands in the classroom was described as a challenge in this evaluation to implement WBTT and manage other demands. Competing demands were described in this evaluation as other assessments, initiatives, teaching tasks and administrative responsibilities. The need for increased support to teachers is another theme that carries over from previous years, particularly in terms of support from principals and school boards.

Based on these lessons learned, we propose the following recommendations for ongoing development of WBTT. These recommendations are intended to be concrete for the WBTT team, and to provide suggestions for higher level options for improvement of WBTT uptake at the school board and Ministry of Education levels.

**IV. Recommendations**

Our evaluation findings have implications for how to move WBTT forward as a program and for the kind of strategies that are needed to further support the process of early screening and intervention. Sharing findings from this report may promote understanding of how WBTT can be successfully integrated into teaching and education practice. The evaluation points to a number of key issues which the WBTT team may consider addressing as they continue with implementation and improvement. Table 3 provides an overview of these recommendations.
Table 3: Overview of recommendations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Main Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Increase support for teachers within schools and from school boards</td>
<td>● Could be facilitated by principals, board contacts, school boards and the Ministry of Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Provide funding and training</td>
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<td>● Facilitate networking and in-school support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Set timelines and priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share best practices for effective implementation</td>
<td>● Share relevant sections (i.e. for Teachers, Principals, Board Contacts) and executive summary of this report with WBTT users</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● “Hints and Tips for Successful Implementation” page on website</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve training</td>
<td>● Provide practical training with opportunity to input real student data</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Emphasize the purpose and value of WBTT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote principal buy-in</td>
<td>● Increase awareness and understanding through training on SAS</td>
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<td>● Increased support from the board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Update and improve screening measures</td>
<td>● Broader literacy screens</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Better indicators of students’ inherent skills and abilities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● More screening for Grades One and Two</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocate for recognition of WBTT as a universal screening tool</td>
<td>● Remove WBTT from Special Education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Promote and increase alignment with the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1) *Increase support for teachers within schools and from school boards.* Support for teachers to implement WBTT was identified as integral for effective implementation of WBTT. Support for teachers may include other teachers and the principal within the school, as well as support from the board to follow through with WBTT data. Consistent with previous evaluations, we similarly recommend the development of strong supportive infrastructure for teachers.

Support for teachers could be facilitated by:

- **Principals and Board Contacts**
  - Providing and participating in principal training. Results indicate that principals who are unfamiliar with the tool do not provide support to teachers who use WBTT. As such, teachers may have increased support...
from the principal if they are trained and knowledgeable about using the SAS and screening and intervention process.

- Facilitate networking opportunities for teachers to provide peer support, share ideas on how to manage time, brainstorm activities to support students’ areas of need, share resources and ask questions about WBTT screenings, interventions and checklists.
- Facilitate in-school teams of support by providing infrastructure and encouraging teaching staff to work together to conduct screenings and intervention activities.
- Some teachers said they would appreciate reminders or deadlines to complete WBTT as there are so many other assessments that need to be done as well. Other teachers have these deadlines and timelines for required screening where WBTT is mandated, thereby facilitating their ability to prepare and schedule time for these activities. These reminders would also support teachers to prioritize tasks and responsibilities.

- School Boards and Ministry of Education
  - Provide funding for release time to support teachers to effectively implement screenings and intervention activities

2) Share best practices for effective implementation. Participants from this study told us that they would like to know how other teachers and schools successfully implement WBTT. Other participants shared their strategies for effective time management and integration of WBTT into everyday practice. We recommend sharing the findings of this report with WBTT users. The report has been divided into relevant sections for teachers, principals and school board contacts to highlight specific uses of WBTT, facilitating factors and challenges for each group. As such, these sections could be shared to provide specific information for teachers, principals and board contacts. The executive summary could also be shared to provide further context and an overview of the evaluation.

We also recommend that the strategies listed below are shared with teachers that use WBTT as a “Hints and Tips for Successful Implementation” page on the WBTT website.

- Work closely with the learning resource and other teaching staff to support capacity to conduct screenings and implement intervention activities. Learning resource teachers can provide additional support for classroom teachers to work with students on screening and interventions as needed.

- Apply intervention strategies to the whole class, small groups of students, or set it up as an activity centre.
  - Some teachers said they will use the intervention strategies with several students at once while observing those students who were flagged and may need the extra support.
These grouping strategies have allowed teachers to monitor other students while working with flagged students. Grouping students together also supports teachers to include all students and avoids segregating particular students who may need extra support. In this manner everyone is included and works together so that no one student is isolated.

- Intervention activities can be implemented by education assistants, ECE’s and volunteers in the classroom, if they are available. This helps to free up teacher time to work with the whole class while some students receive the specific help they need.

- Send home intervention activities with parents to increase specific support at home. Parents may be a resource and support for teachers to intervene with students and decrease the likelihood that they will struggle in the future.

- Brainstorm and share ideas with other teachers and the principal to support students’ needs. Utilize support available in the school, especially if other teachers and/or the principal are familiar with WBTT. Work together as a team to increase support to students who need it.

- The number of students in the classroom may also help with time management as fewer students require less time to screen and support.

3) **Improve training.** Findings from this study suggest that training has a significant impact on knowledge and awareness of the purpose and value of WBTT. In general most participants were satisfied with WBTT training if they had received it. However, several suggestions for improvement were put forth by teachers and principals including,

- Provide “hands on” practical training where trainees can input their own students’ data. This respects the value of teachers’ and principals’ time, while they can participate in training and complete WBTT activities.

- Emphasize the value of WBTT to teachers and principals in terms of how WBTT helps them become better educators and how it helps students.

- Place emphasis on the holistic view of the student and consider all screening and assessment results to increase the likelihood that students will get the specific help they need.

- It is important to assess participants’ knowledge and abilities at the beginning of the training session Training should be consistent with participants’ level of computer literacy.

- Review and refresher sessions would be helpful once teachers have started using the tool to see how the tool is working for them and to provide them with an opportunity to ask specific questions.
Option to access a hard copy instruction manual for users who are more comfortable learning how to use the tool with hard copy materials rather than online. One principal suggested that providing “tip sheets” on how to use WBTT would be helpful as well.

4) **Integrate WBTT into Report Card writing.** Some teachers said they have used WBTT to help them write report cards and prepare for parent interviews. We recommend that WBTT be used as a tool for writing Report Cards or even replace the current Report Card, especially for Kindergarten. This suggestion could also be shared as a best practice for effective implementation. Data from WBTT can be used to:
   - provide evidence of students’ performance and baseline data,
   - clearly identify areas of need,
   - intervention strategies
   - demonstrate progress monitoring for reporting to parents.

Linking WBTT to report cards would provide evidence of the utility of the tool as a universal screening measure and integrate with other teaching responsibilities to demonstrate its value for teachers. This would also help to save teacher time as WBTT will not be “just another thing to do” as some teachers currently described the tool. Instead, WBTT will be the reporting tool for report cards. Further, this strategy would support the need for better integration of WBTT into the curriculum and, if used for all students, will unbind the tool from the Special Education department silo in which it currently exists.

5) **Promote principal buy-in.** Several recommendations to support principal buy-in can be interpreted from the results of this study.

   ➢ Overall increased awareness, support from the board, training on SAS and understanding of the value and benefit of WBTT for teachers, students and the school.
     - Training plays a significant role in understanding WBTT and the support principals can provide to teachers. Training also helps to raise awareness of WBTT. Principals who had training noted positive benefits in terms of providing support for teachers (WBTT administration and brainstorming to support students’ needs), and the ability to view data at school level and from there track student progress.

   ➢ Integrate WBTT data with school improvement plans. This would help to demonstrate the utility and purpose of WBTT for principals.

   ➢ Sharing examples of best practice and successful implementation within schools might also promote principals to buy into the tool and support their teachers to use it well. We recommend providing an opportunity for principals to network and communicate with each other about their use of WBTT in terms of support.
provided for teachers and integration with other initiatives. One principal told us how he has effectively implemented WBTT within his school. Here are some of the main points from our discussion:

- Uses WBTT to make larger programming decisions and meets to discuss student needs and interventions with teachers.
- Facilitated an in school team of support for teachers, has had SAS training, tracks school data, and uses WBTT as part of special education planning and programming.
- His school board provides release time and training for teachers.
- He notes that his school is successful in its implementation because they have a very strong team approach and thinks that “it would be very isolating for teachers who were doing it on their own. So having a team would be a big part of making this work at the school.”
- He also suggested that he could train other principals to use WBTT because, according to him, training takes time to review all the modules which could be a barrier for other principals to take time out of their schedules to learn the program. As such, he suggested that experienced principals provide training for other principals to reduce the time and cost of training provided by the school board.

We also suggest encouraging discussion between principals and teachers regarding students who are flagged to brainstorm and share ideas for increased support for students who need it. This appeared to benefit principals’ knowledge about screening, intervention and support for students in their school as they learned of specific student needs and became familiar with teaching interventions applied in classrooms within their school.

6) **Update and improve screening measures.** Some teachers did provide some specific suggestions for improved screening which consisted primarily of broader literacy screens and more appropriate indicators of students’ skills and abilities. According to some teachers, literacy screens and assessments are especially important when reporting to parents. These teachers said parents, especially in junior kindergarten, want to know a great deal about the literacy skills of their children. As a result, teachers need to have as much information as possible to provide a detailed assessment. Specific suggestions for improved screening are listed below.

- Broader literacy screens including letter names, letter sounds and early print concepts.
- More screens for Grades One and Two.
- Screens need to be objective and have clear benchmarks for success and progress to reduce teacher bias and subjectivity which could impact on student results.
Screens should include those that are already part of WBTT but also include tests that tap into inherent student abilities (e.g. memory)

Additional screens for sight words, phonemic awareness, concepts of print and Running Records

Some teachers felt that the Rosner Auditory Analysis in JK is outdated and needs to be replaced with a more consistent flagging screen. Several participants reported that the Rosner may not always identify students who should be flagged and receiving early intervention.

Need a better indicator for very young students (i.e. three year olds). A few participants commented that WBTT currently shows students as flagged although they are still too young to be eligible for screening

A place to enter exceptions for students that are flagged as a result of other factors unrelated to their skills and abilities (e.g. French as second language). A place to enter information from parents about children in their first four or five years before they came to school such as speech abilities or fine motor skills. Teachers suggested that this would give them a more holistic view of the child before they started school.

7) **Advocate for recognition of WBTT as a universal screening tool.** Results from this evaluation indicate there is a need for greater recognition of WBTT as a universal screening tool. WBTT was often described as a tool for special education programming and planning and linked with special education departments in many school boards. A majority of board contacts told us that teachers and principals lack sufficient opportunity to understand the purpose and value of the tool because the linkage to the curriculum is not always clear. Board contacts suggested linking WBTT with board databases, other assessments and initiatives to promote a clearer connection to the curriculum. As such, we recommend advocating for increased recognition of WBTT in the curriculum, and promote its use as a universal screening tool. This requires increased support from the Ministry of Education and senior school board administration. We recommend that WBTT should be aligned with the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat to become integrated with other assessments and initiatives and build capacity to support teachers.
References


Appendix A: About Us

The Centre for Community Based Research

The Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR) is an independent, non-profit organization with over 25 years experience in community-based research and program evaluation. Located in Kitchener, Ontario, our projects are local, provincial, national and international in scope. In all Centre work, we use a participatory, action-oriented approach which is well suited to developing relevant and innovative solutions to address important social issues and meet individual, organizational and community needs.

Our Mission

Our Centre is committed to social change and the development of communities and human services that are responsive and supportive, especially to people with limited access to power and opportunity. Demonstrating leadership through research, education and community involvement, our Centre stimulates the creation of awareness, policies and practices that advance equitable participation and integration of all members of our community.

Distinctive Features

Our organization is Independent. It is an incorporated non-profit organization guided by a volunteer board of directors, and is not permanently affiliated with any funder or institution.

Our approach is Collaborative. We collaborate with academics, service organizations and government to support innovations in human service policy and practice. We see research as an opportunity to give voice to less powerful stakeholders and as a means to foster social cohesion. Stakeholders set the agenda for each research project, and our approach emphasizes ongoing feedback in all directions throughout the process.

Our organization is Responsive. We design multi-phase research projects so that our methodologies can be adapted to changing situations. We apply lessons across different projects and communities, and disseminate findings through our newsletters, workshops, and web pages.

Our organization is Experienced. It was founded 27 years ago, and has an established reputation for managing projects successfully. Our team includes experienced researchers, facilitators and academic instructors, and we have produced a body of published scholarly and popular writings.

Our team is Multidisciplinary. It includes members with graduate degrees in social work, community psychology, developmental and social psychology, women’s issues, sociology, and planning. Our team has content expertise in diverse issues including, immigration and cultural diversity, settlement and integration, social housing, family support, community mental health, disability issues, community safety and violence prevention, poverty and international development.

For more information about CCBR, visit our web site at: www.communitybasedresearch.ca
### Appendix B: Participant List

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*One board contact indicated affiliation with both Superior North Catholic and Superior-Greenstone school boards