

# Program Evaluation in Schools: Experiences and Lessons Learned

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# Presentation Focus

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- Some context around program evaluation.
- Three questions...
  1. How does HWDSB approach program evaluation?
  2. What challenges and successes can be anticipated in completing program evaluations in an educational setting?
  3. How are the results of program evaluations used to inform decisions and practices in a school board setting?

# What is ...?

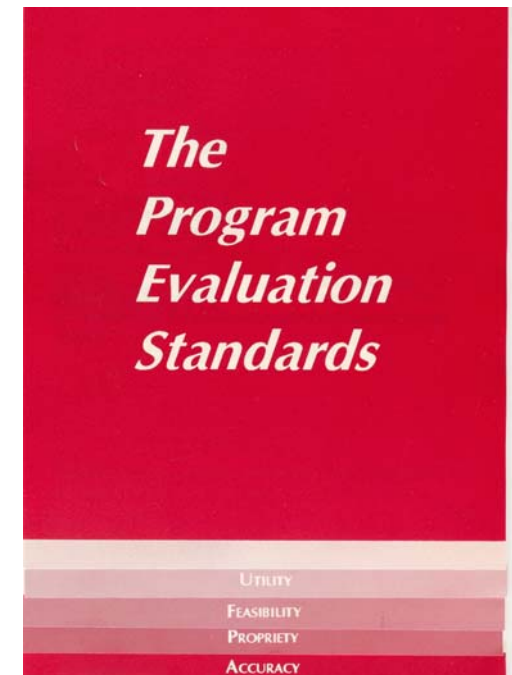
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- “A program is any organized or purposeful activity or set of activities delivered to a designated target group”.  
(Myers, 1999)
- “Program Evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming”.  
(Patton, 1997)

# The Program Evaluation Standards

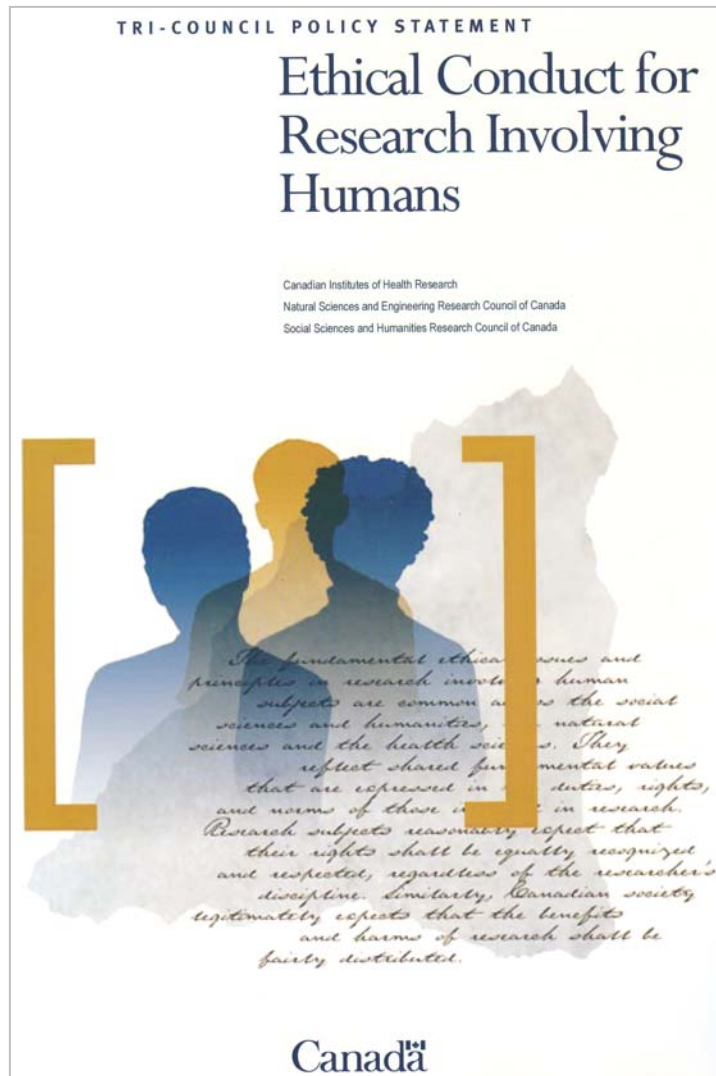
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- Utility
  - ...will serve the information needs of intended users.
- Feasibility
  - ...will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal.
- Propriety
  - ...will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results.
- Accuracy
  - ...will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth or merit of the program being evaluated.



(American National Standards Institute, 1994)

# Tri-Council Guidelines



- Developed by:
  - Canadian Institutes of Health Research
  - Natural Sciences and Engineering Council of Canada
  - Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
  
- Goals for use:
  - To establish high standards for research and program evaluations within the board.
  - To offer a consistent protocol for reviewing internal and external research.
  - To ensure that students, staff and the school community are well-protected.

# Purpose of Program Evaluation in Education

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- ❑ To systematically try out new programs or evaluation tools on a small scale.
- ❑ To verify that program delivery is consistent and accurate.
- ❑ To track program delivery and usage.
- ❑ To identify strengths and weaknesses of program components.
- ❑ To assess program outcomes.
- ❑ To examine effective programs for duplication elsewhere.

To provide the best possible programs in education!



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How does HWDSB approach  
program evaluation?

# E-BEST

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- Evidence-Based Education and Services Team.
- Program Evaluation is one of our core services.
- Staff with a Program Evaluation focus (starting in Sept. 07).
  - Program Research Analyst
  - Teacher Research Consultant



# The Requests We Receive (some examples)

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- From individual schools.
  - YogaEd
  - Sports Academy Program
  
- From departments or groups.
  - Making it KLLIC! (Communication Services Department)
  - Balanced School Day (Principals)
  
- From Superintendents.
  - Empower Reading Program
  - All Day Every Day Kindergarten Program
  
- From MOE/CODE (through SOEs).
  - Education for All
  - Model Projects to Support Positive Student Behaviour



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At your tables, please record the program evaluations that are currently taking place or have recently taken place in your board.

# How We Support Program Evaluation

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- Some of our services.
  - “Office Hours”.
  - Committee Work.
  - Ongoing consultation.
  - Demonstration Project.
    - Making it KLLIC! (Kindergarten Language and Literacy in the Classroom)
  - Training/Workshops.
  
- Our approach.
  - Friendly, accessible, listen to needs/requests
  - Involvement of stakeholders.
    - Do it with them, not for them.





# E-BEST

Evidence-Based Education  
and Services Team

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## “Making it KLLIC!”

2004-2005 Demonstration Project



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**Passion. Precision. Proof.**

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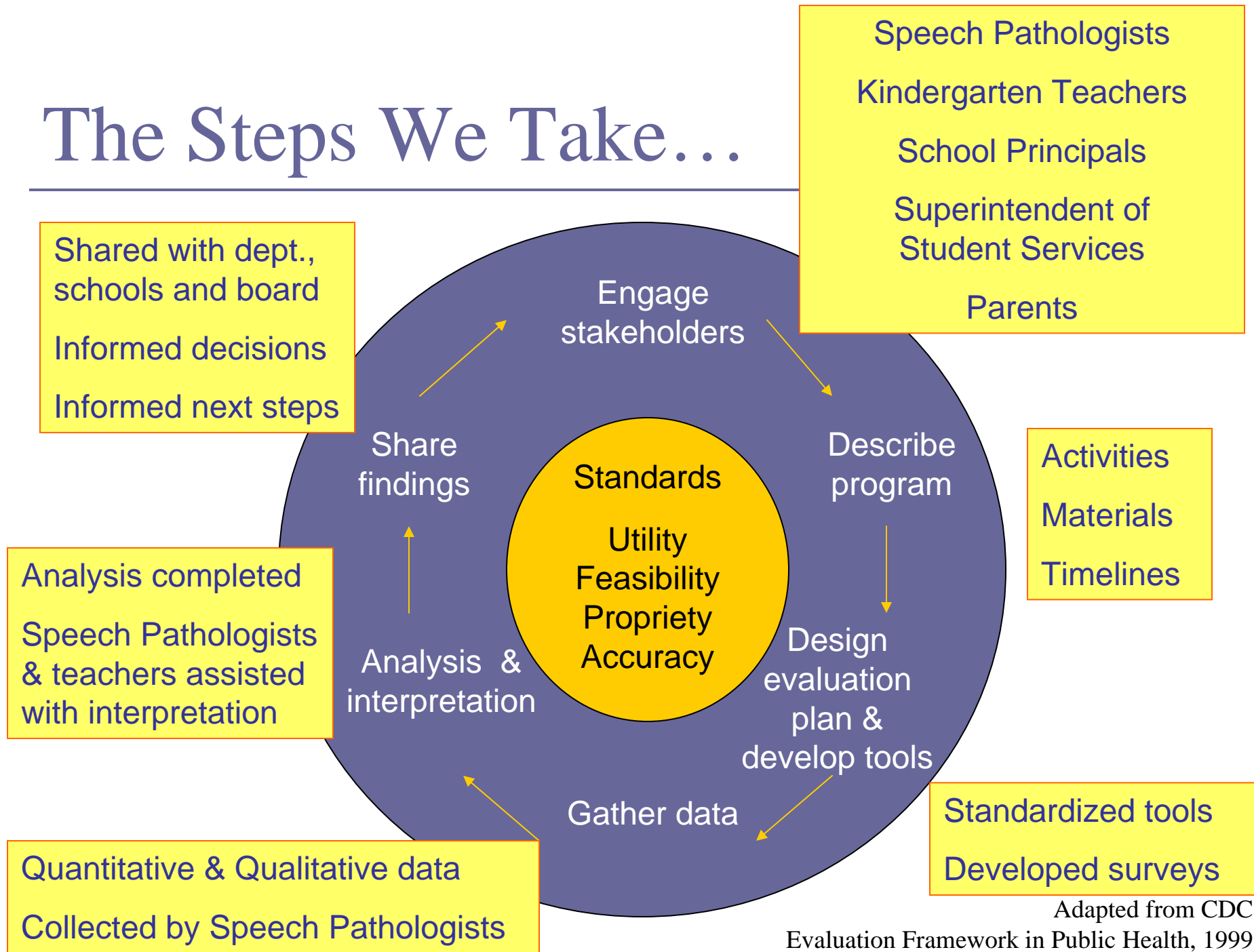
# Enablers

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- Time – to learn, practice, advance
- Schools are data-rich
- Ambassadors and champions
- Partnerships
- Board dedicated to research (committed staff)
- Support by Senior Administration and Trustees
- MOE Leadership



# The Steps We Take...



Adapted from CDC  
Evaluation Framework in Public Health, 1999



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What challenges and successes  
can be anticipated in completing  
program evaluation  
in an educational setting?

# Challenges Faced

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- Competing demands in schools.
  - Program evaluation is not their first priority
- Tension between methodological rigour and real world demands.
- Pressure to move too quickly.
  - Type of evaluation
- Need for a clearly articulated and standardized intervention across settings.
- Not a content expert.

# Challenges Faced

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- School readiness.
  - May not want program to be evaluated.
  
- Teacher readiness.
  - “participation in doing research lies outside of the conventional role of the teacher” (Cousins, Walker, & Patsula, 1995).
  
- Costs to complete evaluation.
  - Teacher release, assessment instruments, etc.
  
- Strong advocates for program.
  - Especially if encouraged by senior administration.

# Summary of Main Learnings

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- ❑ Involve stakeholders.
- ❑ Gather as much information as possible about the program and evaluation needs.
- ❑ Start small, have patience.
- ❑ Varied level of support required.
- ❑ Need to continue to educate staff.
  - Build capacity.
- ❑ Always follow professional standards.
  - Results in high quality evaluations!



# Successes

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- Increased interest (and in some cases passion) and ownership for evaluation.
- Findings used to make decisions.
- Change practice and/or advocate for change.
- Increased funding.
  - Successful grant applications
  - Internal funding
- Internal and external requests for information.



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How are the results of program evaluations used to inform decisions and practices in a school board setting?



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**If the goal of evaluation is to  
improve a program....**

**... then no evaluation is good unless  
findings are used to make a difference**

# Sharing the findings

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- Written reports:
  - '1, 3, 25' page reports
  - Publications in professional magazines and academic journals
  - Website
  - Newsletter
  
- Oral reports:
  - to program stakeholders, Superintendents and Board of Trustees
  - at professional conferences
  
- Celebration Night
  
- Exploring other methods of knowledge mobilization

# How the findings are used...

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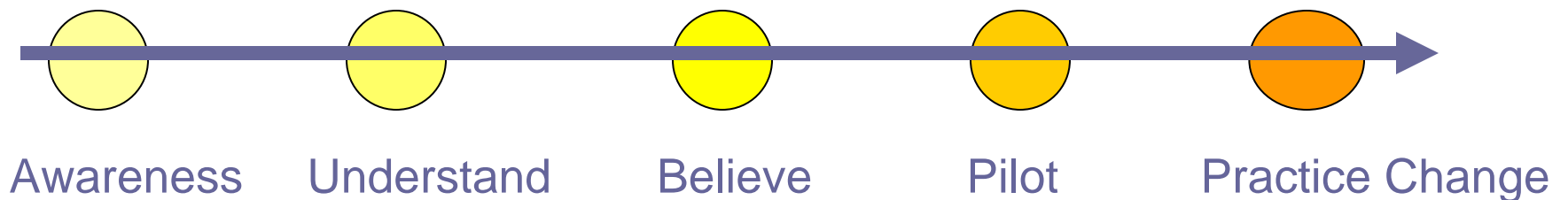
- To make decisions about programs...
  - Program improvements/refinements
    - 'Making it KLLIC!'
  - Program expansion
    - Literacy Improvement Project
  - Continuation of program
    - All Day Every Day Kindergarten Program
  - Discontinue program
    - JK School Ready



# Challenges to Using the Findings

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- Sparse literature about how to present results to various audiences in education.  
(e.g., teachers, parents, professional support staff, supervisory officers, board of trustees, community, funders....)
- Awareness does not always equal action.



# Our Program Evaluations

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## Current Evaluations

- ❑ CHAT – Depression Prevention
- ❑ Education for All
- ❑ Effective Schools
- ❑ Empower Reading Program
- ❑ Response to Intervention Pilot
- ❑ Scholastics Arts, and Global Education (SAGE) Program
- ❑ Single-gender classes

## Completed Evaluations

- ❑ Alternative Education Program
- ❑ Balanced Day
- ❑ All Day Every Day Kindergarten
- ❑ JK School Ready Program
- ❑ Literacy Improvement Project
- ❑ Making it KLLIC!
- ❑ Teacher Induction and Mentorship
- ❑ Sports Academy
- ❑ Substance Use Education Evaluation
- ❑ Suspension Pilot
- ❑ Yoga.Ed
- ❑ The Virtues Project

# Program Evaluation in Schools: Experiences and Lessons Learned

Contact Information

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