

October 2020 Webinar

# **Continuous Evidence Building through Small Tests of Change**

Presenter:

**Gregor Thomas**

Director of Data and Evidence Science, Project Evident

# Webinar Information

If you are unable to access audio through your computer, please use your phone:

**+1 (914) 614-3221 / access code: 875-500-466**

All attendees are muted.

## Ways to participate

1. Type your questions in the “Questions” box.
2. Raise your hand questions.
3. Answer the poll questions.

This webinar will be archived at:

<https://www.dibbleinstitute.org/free-resources/webinars/>

# Charlie and Helen Dibble

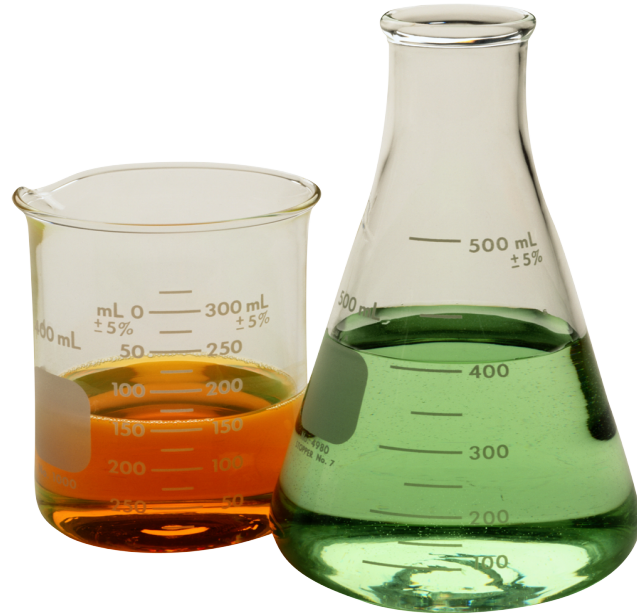




# **The Dibble Institute**

**Resources for Teaching Relationship Skills**

The Dibble Institute believes in research.





The Dibble Institute  
believes in stable, safe, and healthy families.



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# Continuous Evidence Building

Through Small Tests of Change

Gregor Thomas

Dibble Institute Webinar Series

October 14, 2020



**Project Evident harnesses the power of evidence for greater impact.**

We believe that by empowering practitioners to drive their own evidence building and strengthening the surrounding ecosystem, we can increase the number of effective solutions in the social sector and scale them faster—ultimately producing better outcomes for communities.





## We help practitioners and funders build and use evidence for greater impact



### Direct Solutions

We offer custom services to build capacity for evidence:

- Strategic Evidence Planning
- Theory of Change & Culture of Learning
- Technical Assistance & Capacity Support
- Data & Analytics
- Scenario Planning
- Talent Accelerator



### Field Building

We are committed to building a stronger, more equitable evidence ecosystem through efforts like:

- Next Generation of Evidence Campaign (in partnership with the Brookings Institution)
- Actionable Evidence initiative (in partnership with the Gates Foundation).



## Building the Next Generation of Evidence

- We put practitioners at the center of evidence building
- We connect this work to sustainable support from informed and aligned funders and policy makers



## About Me



### **Gregor Thomas**

Senior Director,  
Data & Evidence Science

Gregor is passionate about putting data to good use. At Project Evident, he helps organizations use their data efficiently and fully---whether that is delivering trainings to build organizational capacity in conducting rapid cycle evaluations, advising on fine points of statistical methods, or streamlining data systems and processes.



# Continuous Improvement

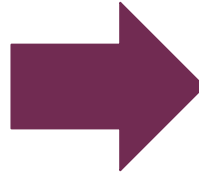
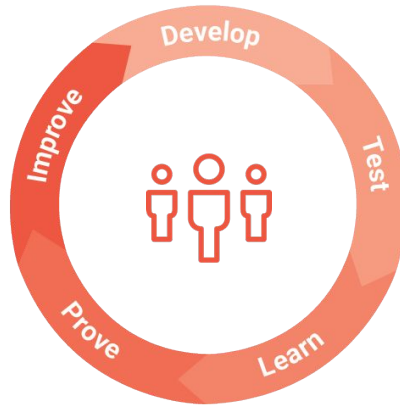
Ongoing deliberate experimentation  
to make programs more effective



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## Continuous Evidence Building



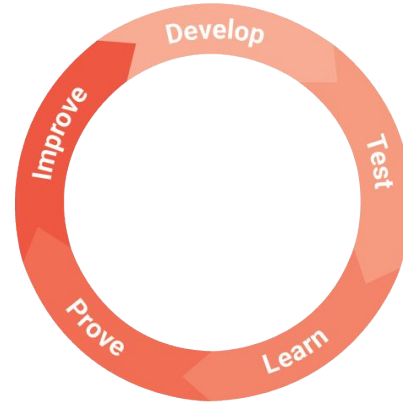
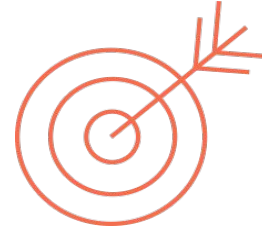
**Better Outcomes**

## Overview

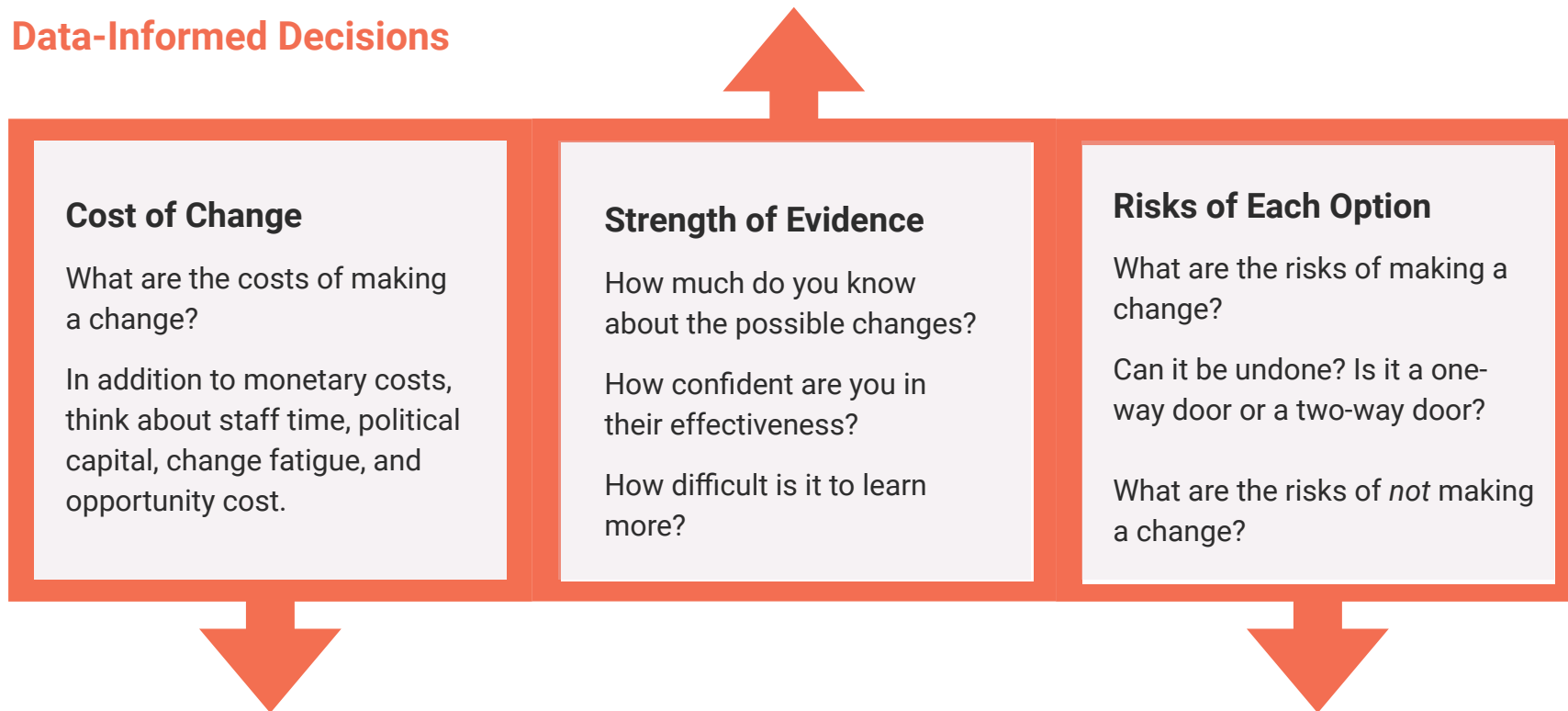
Begin by picking a specific issue to address.

Then we

- **Develop** potential solutions
- **Test** the solutions
- **Learn** from the results
- **Prove** your solution works
- **Improve** your program through iteration



## Data-Informed Decisions



The level of evidence required should be appropriate for the costs and risks.

**Today we focus on a light-weight version of the process to guide improvements on low-risk decisions in a way that is:**

- **Effective**
- **Quick**
- **Practitioner-Driven**





# Identify Issues & Potential Solutions



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## Root Cause Analysis

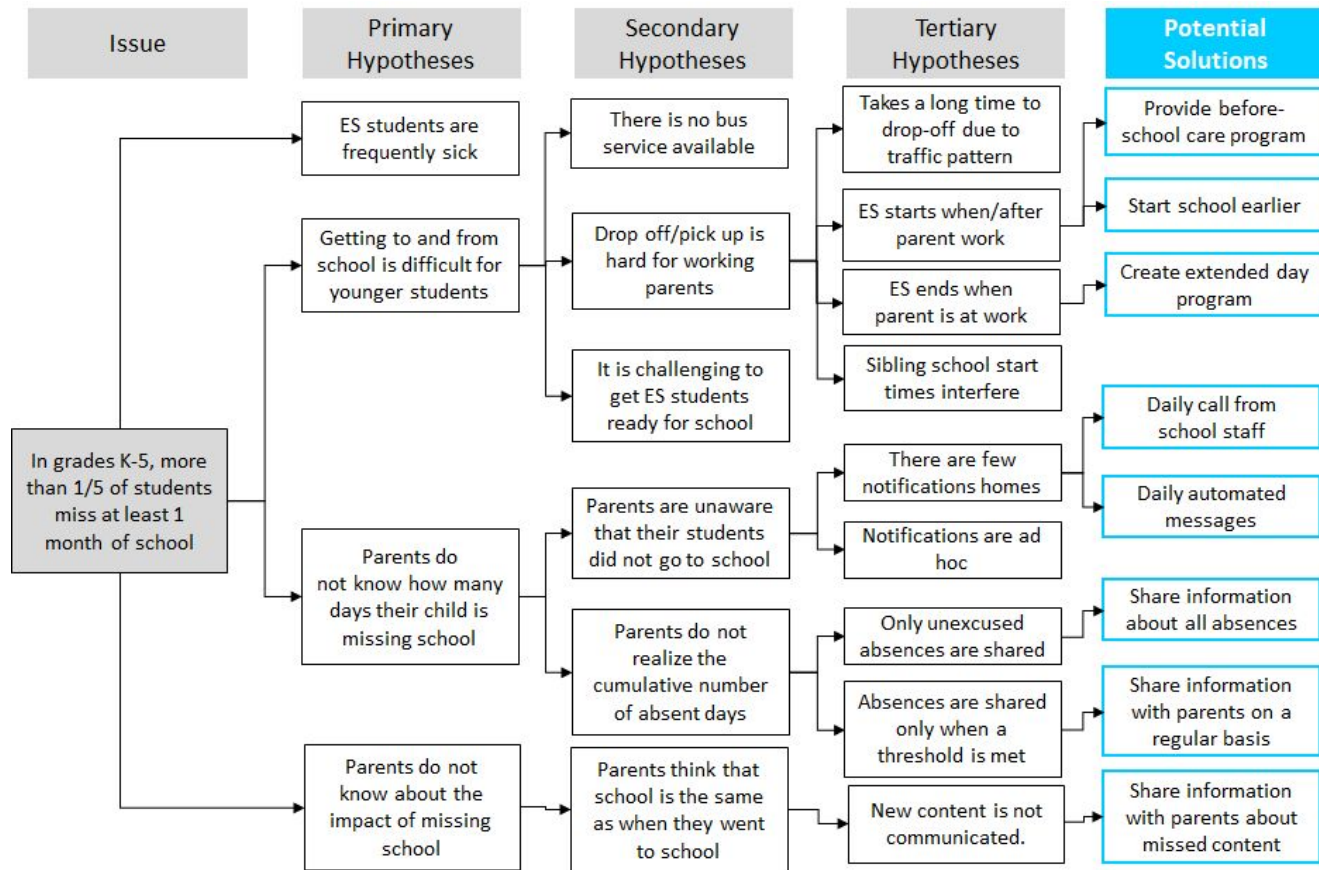
**The more specific you can be about exactly what you are addressing, the more likely your solution will be effective.**

**Methodical root cause analysis can help you see problems from different perspectives.**

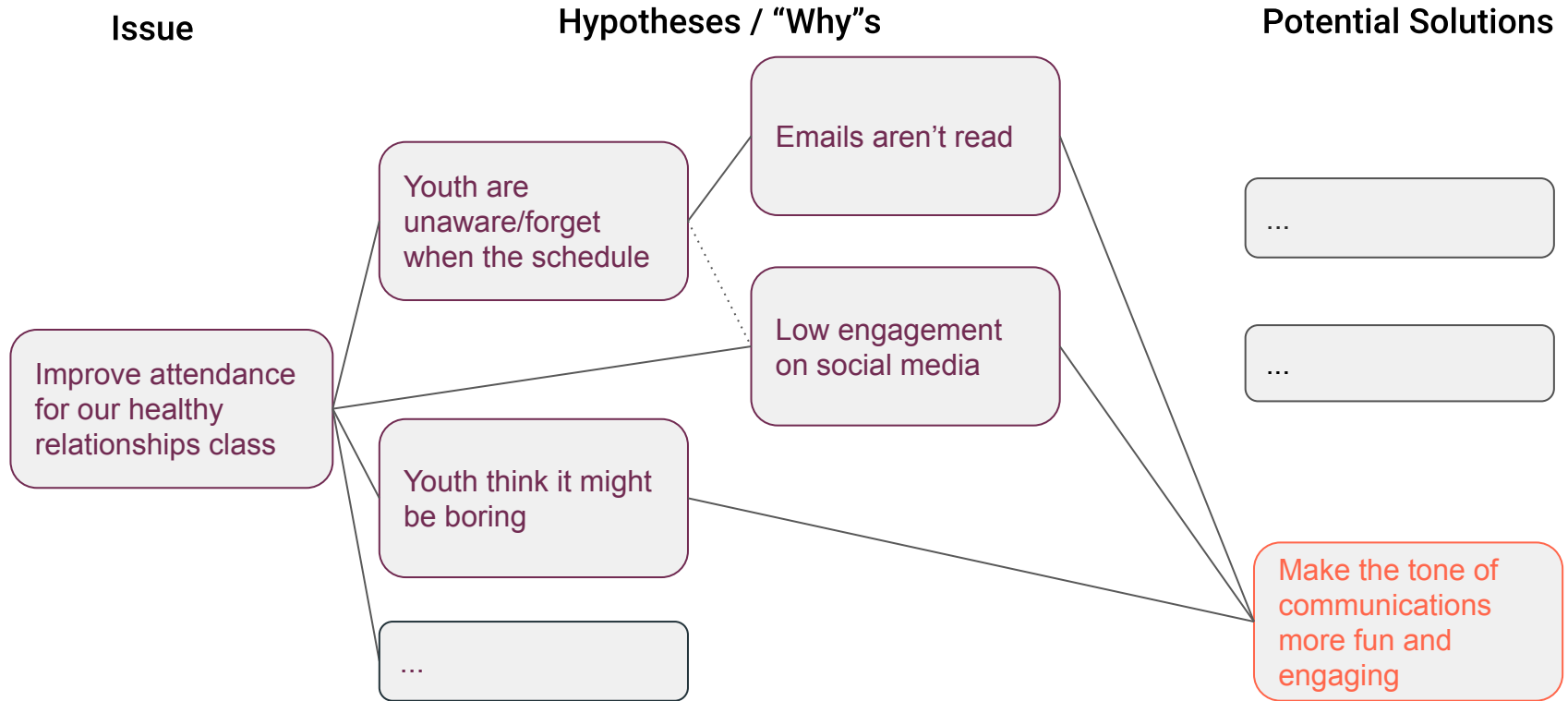
**Our favorite approach is to ask “5 whys” and build a diagram...**



## Example RCA for a school district working on attendance



## A piece of a hypothetical root cause analysis might look like this...





# Develop an Experiment



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## Develop a specific solution ideas

- Vary the communications medium – posters, email, Facebook, Instagram, text...?
- Communications schedule – are you doing too much or too little?
- Change the tone of communications
  - Personalized, rather than group communications
  - Make it more fun
  - Make it shorter
- etc.



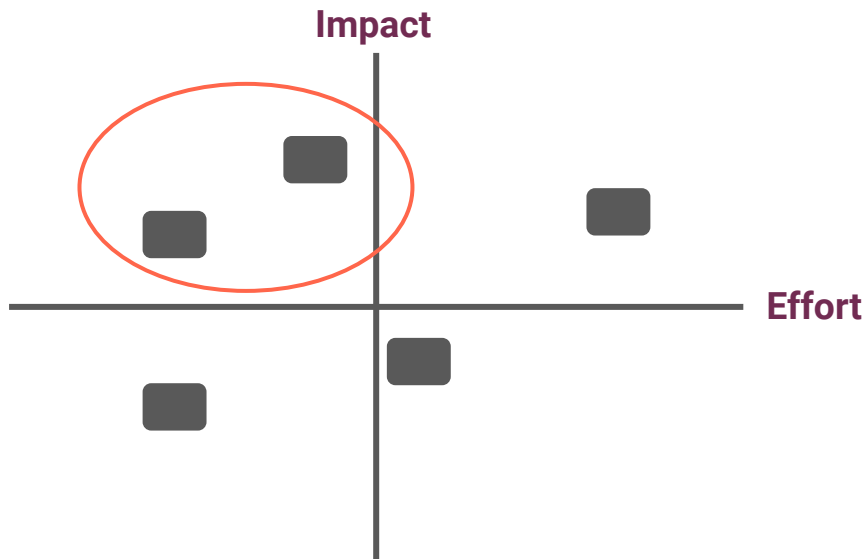
## Assess potential

Make guesses about the *impact* and *effort* for potential solutions.

An impact-effort matrix can help visualize the possibilities and costs.

High effort ideas require:

- high potential impact
- strong evidence



How will you know if it works?

Qualitative data is data.

Go back to your root cause analysis - what can you measure, and how can you measure it?

- Quantitative data – great if you can get enough of it to be useful. And if you can set up Treatment and Control (or A/B) groups.
- Qualitative data – can be much more informative in a small sample. Talk to participants and staff! Or develop a short survey.

In both cases, work to ensure your measurement is relevant to the outcome.





# Test



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Make communications more fun idea: add memes!



# Learn



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## Learn

Does it seem to work?

- Yes? Great! Decide whether you are ready to scale or if revision and/or more evidence is needed.
- Maybe? No? Learn what you can, then
  - Try again, with major revisions, or
  - Try a different approach

While disappointing, you can learn as much from negative results as from positive results.



# Prove



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**Prove**

**Verify results: promising small-scale tests  
should be repeated in a different context.**

**Gives you a chance to refine your solution.**



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## Don't settle on your first attempt



drama  
fighting  
confusion



positive  
healthy  
relationships

Without quantitative data, statistics, and a control group, repeating a test in a different context builds confidence in results.

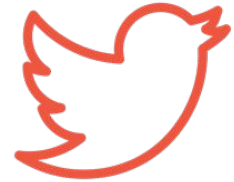
(And gives a chance to refine the idea)

## Adopt and scale successful solutions!

**Depending on the solution, scaling may involve anything from an email to a deliberate strategy.**



**Announce your success, and share what you've learned - internally and externally.**



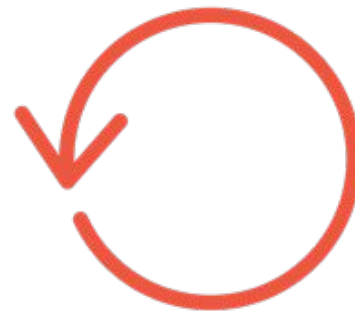


# Improve

## Rinse & Repeat

**Improving your program should be *continuous*.**

**Leverage what you've created and learned so far, go back to your Root Cause Analysis and test another solution!**



# Summary



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# Program staff can drive improvement

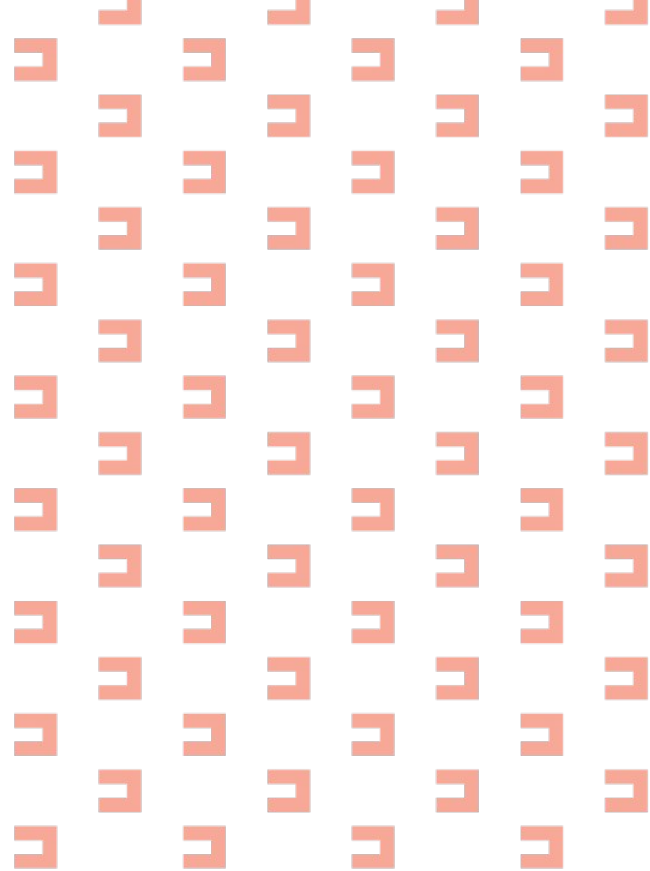
- Be specific about what you want to improve
- Small scale – low-risk – improvements add up
- Root cause analysis to develop ideas
- Test using the data you can get
- Refine and re-test
- Talk about it
- Repeat!



# Empowered

Putting practitioners in the driver's seat of building evidence deepens a sense of control and ownership.

Supporting your team in innovating and improving is a great step in embracing a learning culture at your organization.



**Questions?**  
**Comments?**



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**Gregor Thomas**

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# Thank You for Joining Us Today!

There is a brief survey after the end of this webinar. Thank you for providing us feedback by completing this survey.

**The webinar will be available in 3 days:**



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# **Second Wednesday Webinar**

November 11, 2020

## **A Trauma-Informed Approach for Youth**

**Presenter:**

**Jenn Todd, Ph.D**

Project Manager, University of Texas – Teen Health