

August 2026

What Teachers Think about the Usability of ESSY Whole Child Screener Data Reports

This brief shares findings from [Project ESSY](#), an IES-funded research grant (R305A220249). Project ESSY aims to develop and evaluate the ESSY Whole Child Screener, a multiple-gated, school-based screening instrument assessing a range of child and environmental indicators.

Research suggests that educators have a hard time using data to select interventions for students.^{1,2} Because of this, we took great care in developing the ESSY data report, **aligning it with best practices** about how the information should be organized and displayed.^{3,4}

The **ESSY Whole Child Data Report** is different from other screener reports because **it does not use any numbers or scores**.⁵ Instead, responses are organized to help educators analyze results and determine any necessary interventions. To assist with data interpretation, we developed two versions of an **interpretation guide** to accompany the report. Both a condensed and expanded guide contain three sections about the integrity and trustworthiness of data; identifying primary strengths, concerns, and potential explanations for concerns; and next steps. The expanded version also includes reflection questions for educators at the beginning and end.

To help determine which version of the data report might be most helpful to educators, we conducted both a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews with educators. We wanted to learn which version of the ESSY data report educators found to be most usable.

What Did We Do?

In Winter 2025, we randomly assigned 285 3rd-5th grade teachers to one of three groups:

- viewing the data report only,
- viewing the data report and the condensed guide, or
- viewing the data report and the expanded guide.

The teachers watched a video of a mock team reviewing data for a fictional student using their assigned set of materials. The teachers then evaluated the usability of their assigned materials by completing questions that assessed acceptability, feasibility, understanding, system climate, home-school collaboration, and system support.

In the spring and summer of 2025, we also conducted *qualitative interviews* with nine teachers. We randomly assigned each teacher to one of the three groups and showed them one of the sets of materials for a fictional student. We then asked teachers for their perspectives on each of the six constructs of usability introduced above.



What Did We Find?

The following table summarizes the study's results.

Usability Category	Summary of <u>Quantitative</u> Survey Results	Summary of <u>Qualitative Interview</u> Findings
	Across conditions , participants...	Across conditions , participants...
Acceptability	agreed they would be interested in using the data report .	appreciated the visual presentation and organization of the report. appreciated the inclusion of student strengths and clear communication of areas in need of support.
Feasibility	agreed the resources required to use the screening report would be reasonable .	asked about the amount of time required to complete the initial screener (1-6 min).
Understanding	agreed they had the knowledge and skills needed to use the data report.	expressed having the knowledge and skills needed to use the report.
System Climate	agreed the system they worked in would be supportive of using the screening report.	noted their system would be supportive of using the screening report.
Home-School Collaboration	agreed they would communicate and collaborate with families to use the screener.	said they would communicate with families to gather information about contextual factors in students' lives and to alert them to any next steps.

Usability Category	Summary of <u>Quantitative</u> Survey Results	Summary of <u>Qualitative Interview</u> Findings
	Depending on the condition , participants...	Across conditions , participants...
System Support	assigned to the data report and the <u>basic</u> interpretation guide reported less need for additional professional development or consultation than those assigned to the data report condition.	said that minimal to no training would be needed. At most, participants felt that an introductory video, guide, or short training session would be sufficient for effective use.

"Everything I'm reading is understandable and easy to understand and grasp. [...] Things are very clear and presented well."

"The icons, the images, help with just being able to identify the information and it makes it easy to understand what we're looking at."

Implications

Overall, teachers reported that the different sets of data report materials were similarly useful. As noted in the table, those viewing the data report + basic guide reported *less* need for professional development to use the materials. This suggests the basic guide might help teachers to interpret the ESSY data independently. In another study with focus groups of school-based data teams, we found that teams preferred an **optional** interpretation guide to accompany the data report that they could tailor or condense as needed.⁶ Drawing from these two studies, we have created an optional interpretation guide that can be used alongside the ESSY data report as educators see fit.

To learn more, visit the Project ESSY website at <https://expanding-school-screening.education.uconn.edu/>.

To Cite this Brief:

Koslouski, J.B., Briesch, A., Caemmerer, J. Chafouleas, S.M., & Marcy, H. (2026, August). *What Teachers Think about the Usability of The ESSY Whole Child Screener Data Reports*. Brief available from <https://expanding-school-screening.education.uconn.edu/>

Content in this Brief is Summarized from:

Koslouski, J. B., Briesch, A. M., Caemmerer, J. M., & Chafouleas, S. M. (2026). From data to decision making: A usability study of the ESSY Whole Child Screener data reports. *Behavioral Sciences*, 16(7), 1067. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs16071067>

Copyright © 2026 by the University of Connecticut. All rights reserved. Permission granted to photocopy for personal and educational use as long as the names of the creators and the full copyright notice are included in all copies.

Project ESSY represents a collaboration between researchers at the University of Connecticut and Northeastern University. The research project is supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305A220249 to the University of Connecticut (PI: Chafouleas). The content in this brief does not represent the views of the Institute or the U.S. Department of Education.

¹ Jacobs, J., Gregory, A., Hoppey, D., & Yendol-Hopper, D. (2009). Data literacy: Understanding teachers' data use in a context of accountability and response to intervention. *Action in Teacher Education*, 31(3), 41–55.

² Schelling, N., & Rubenstein, L. D. (2021). Elementary teachers' perceptions of data-driven decision-making. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 33, 317–344.

³ Rankin, J. G. (2016). *Standards for reporting data to educators: What educational leaders should know and demand*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315623283>.

⁴ Koslouski, J. B., Briesch, A. M., Caemmerer, J. M., & Chafouleas, S. M. (2026). From data to decision making: A usability study of the ESSY Whole Child Screener data reports. *Behavioral Sciences*, 16(7), 1067. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs16071067>

⁵ Dodman, S. L., Swalwell, K., DeMulder, E. K., View, J. L., & Stribling, S. M. (2021). Critical data-driven decision making: A conceptual model of data use for equity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 99, 103272. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103272>

⁶ Koslouski, J. B., Briesch, A. M., Chafouleas, S. M., Caemmerer, J. M., & Lyon, K. (2026). Investigating the potential for treatment utility and usability of the ESSY Whole Child Screener. *School Mental Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-026-09888-w>