



Building Visibility Through Ongoing Dissemination

Background and Context

[SkillBlox](#) is a free application designed to help teachers locate, organize, and share open educational resources (OER) within collections called “Blox.” These collections can then be shared with learners or other teachers, offering flexible ways to supplement instruction. Based on lessons from prior studies of Teaching Skills That Matter (TSTM) implementation, the TSTM-SkillBlox project sought to improve the platform’s usability, curate high-quality OER, and test whether teachers could effectively use SkillBlox to align their instruction with TSTM’s skills and topics. Teachers from multiple states participated in iterative design and testing processes, offering feedback in focus groups, usability studies, and pilot implementations.



The Challenge of Dissemination During Development

For The TSTM-SkillBlox project to succeed, the project team needed more than just strong features; it needed visibility and active use during the grant period. Piloting the new functions for searching, evaluating, and sharing digital content required that teachers actually engage with the platform so that researchers could study usage and gather feedback. Yet, simply offering a free tool is not enough to generate use. Teachers already juggle multiple platforms and are cautious about investing time in a system they may not see as sustainable.

The team recognized the importance of building an end-user audience early. By the time of the pilot’s outcomes study, they wanted a strong community of practitioners familiar with SkillBlox and invested in its potential. Furthermore, a core value of the project was to expand educators’ access to free and open digital resources. Dissemination was not an afterthought; it was central to the mission of strengthening teacher capacity and preparing for eventual scaling.

Strategy: Creating a Website and Amplifying Content

To address this challenge, the TSTM-SkillBlox team relied on the project website (<https://www.crowded.worlded.org/research>) as a central hub for dissemination. The site served multiple functions:

- It offered clear, accessible descriptions of the intervention, including the SkillBlox platform, the TSTM instructional framework, and the research partners.
- It housed resources to help educators identify and use free and open resources effectively, reinforcing the project's value proposition.
- Most importantly, it featured a blog. Over 20 posts were published over the course of the project, covering a wide range of content from technical feature updates, to reflections on research design, to lessons learned in working with teachers.

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The blog format gave the team a way to "translate" research into practice-oriented language. The information in these blogs were promoted in webinars and LinkedIn posts; they explained the development process, highlighted new resources, and described early findings in a voice accessible to both educators and researchers.

Dissemination did not stop at the website. Each new post or resource was amplified through partner networks, webinars, and LinkedIn. Project partners promoted content in their newsletters, extending the reach beyond the immediate SkillBlox community. In conference presentations, instead of providing lengthy summaries of work, team members could simply share links, allowing audiences to explore more deeply on their own time.

Outcomes and Lessons Learned

The website became the project's home base for knowledge translation. It streamlined communication with multiple audiences, including teachers, program leaders, researchers, and state administrators. Instead of tailoring individual explanations of project progress, the team could direct interested parties to the site, where they found up-to-date resources and context.

The act of writing for a broad audience also improved the project team's own communication. Describing complex research processes in practitioner-friendly language kept the team grounded in the needs of teachers. This practice reinforced the principle that dissemination is not only about sharing results at the end, but also about creating an ongoing dialogue that builds trust, visibility, and eventual adoption.

Key Takeaways

The TSTM-SkillBlox team's experience shows that dissemination is not something to postpone until a final report. Instead, it is a strategic, ongoing activity that builds audiences and supports scaling. A simple project website, with new content amplified through partner networks and social media, became a powerful tool for visibility and engagement. By writing with practitioners as well as researchers in mind, the team ensured their work remained accessible, relevant, and positioned for broader impact when the time came to scale.