



Using Your WITS All Year Round

Tips for Program Champions on implementing and sustaining the WITS Programs throughout the school year





August – October: Get Started

1. Get trained

The WITS Teacher Accreditation Program is a 60 to 90-minute online training module that teaches school staff about the WITS Programs and helps them become Accredited WITS Programs Teachers. School staff can complete the training individually or as a group on a professional development day or during a staff meeting. When new teachers join your staff, ask them to complete the training as part of the orientation to your school.

Encourage teachers to print their accreditation certificates and display them in their classrooms.

2. Involve Community Leaders

Identify leaders in your community. They can be police officers, firefighters, paramedics, members of the armed forces, athletes, or Elders. Invite them to partner with you for the WITS Programs. Encourage your Community Leaders to complete the WITS training Program for Community Leaders – a 60-minute online training module describing their role in the programs.

3. Work with Community Leaders to conduct kick-off assemblies

The Welcoming/Swearing-in Ceremony and Tug of Help are led by Community Leaders. They happen in September or early October every school year and kick-off the WITS and LEADS Programs. Work with your Community Leaders to plan and conduct the assemblies. Consider inviting parents, school district officials, and local media to make it a community-wide celebration.

Reading a story called Walrus's Gift is a special part of the WITS kick-off. Encourage teachers to use the books lesson plan in their classrooms to reinforce

4. Make WITS and LEADS resources accessible to teachers

Find a designated place for WITS and LEADS books and resources, like the staff room, office or library, where teachers can readily access them. Remind teachers they can also access lesson plans, as well as other multimedia resources, online.

Print lesson plans and attach them to their corresponding books for quick and easy access.

5. Put up posters in your school

Make WITS and LEADS messages visible in your school by putting up posters in classrooms, hallways, offices, the staff room, library, and waiting areas. Make sure everyone who comes into your school knows that students and staff use their WITS.

Have students create their own posters depicting WITS or LEADS strategies and display those too.



November – December: Build the Community

1. Encourage teachers to use WITS or LEADS books and lessons

Teachers should read at least one WITS or LEADS book per month in their classes. Each book has a lesson plan, containing suggested questions and activities designed to support WITS Programs messages while satisfying provincial/territorial learning objectives. Teachers can also reinforce WITS and LEADS messages in their class meetings and through teachable moments.

Designate a “book of the month” for the school and ask teachers to use it to reinforce WITS and/or LEADS strategies.

2. Encourage children to use their WITS and be WITS Leaders

Encourage use of WITS and LEADS strategies through school announcements. Talk about successes you have seen. Play a WITS song over the PA or make up your own. Recognize positive behaviour with WITS or LEADS recognition stickers or a STAR of the WEEK card.

3. Involve parents

WITS Programs materials include brochures for parents to send home with children or to be made available at parent-teacher interviews. You can also include information about the programs, like pictures from the Welcoming/Swearing-in Ceremony or information about the WITS book of the month, in your school newsletters. Provide a link to the WITS Programs website on your school website.

Set up a WITS information table at your next school parent meetings.

4. Work with Community Leaders to conduct follow-up visits

Following the Welcoming/Swearing-In Ceremony and Tug of Help, Community Leaders should make regular classroom visits at least once every two months throughout the year. Work with Community Leaders to create a visit schedule that works for everyone. Classroom visits generally include the distribution of reminder gifts, such as books, bookmarks, pens, pencils, and posters, which are labelled with the WITS or LEADS acronym to reinforce the programs. Keep enough reminder gifts on hand so that Community Leaders can distribute one to every student on each visit. These are available via the WITS online store.

5. Monitor your progress

Reflect on the successes and challenges you’ve had while using the WITS Programs. Do you know if the programs are working? Keep track of disciplinary action that is taken in your school to address bullying. Has there been a noticeable decline?

Are students using WITS and LEADS? Ask them on the playground.



January – April: Sustain the Momentum

1. Get creative about incorporating the WITS Programs into activities

Teachers across Canada have found innovative ways to integrate the WITS Programs into every aspect of learning. Be creative with messages and materials. For example, schools have made online cartoons, written songs, and put on plays about WITS and LEADS.

Has your school created a WITS-inspired song or play? We'd love to hear about it! Send photos, audio or video to info@witsprogram.ca.

2. Check in with staff about how the WITS Programs are working

At staff meetings, make time for a discussion about the WITS Programs. What books do teachers like? What strategies have they found helpful in strengthening the WITS and LEADS messages in the school? Sharing successes, as well as challenges and their solutions, can be an excellent way to encourage continued enthusiasm.

Some schools designate books for specific grade levels, with complex stories for older students. Others use the same books in every grade, allowing students to examine them from different perspectives as they develop and learn.

3. Involve non-teaching staff

Ensure that all school staff members are familiar with the WITS language. Assistants, volunteers, playground supervisors, and other adults in your school play a valuable role in reinforcing the WITS message. When everyone is on board, children feel that they have more support within their community and a larger network from which to seek help.

4. Contact Community Leaders to see how classroom visits are going

Community Leaders help show children that they are supported outside of the school and that they live in safe and caring communities. Reconnect with your Community Leaders regarding classroom visits and discuss ideas for future visits. For some Community Leaders, this may be the first time they've worked in schools. Praise, support and ideas can help them feel more comfortable.

It is helpful if Community Leaders can share their WITS Programs duties. Partnering with a local high school or university can be a great source of support. Many student athletes have a community service requirement - helping Community Leaders with classroom visits is a great way to fulfill it.



May - June: Wrapping Up

1. **Include the WITS Programs in end-of-year activities**

Include WITS Programs in end-of-year celebrations and activities at your school. Recognize children who have been outstanding WITS Special Constables or WITS Leaders at the year-end awards ceremony. Ask Community Leaders to attend and hand out these special WITS and LEADS awards. Include photos from the Welcoming/Swearing-in Ceremony or Tug of Help in your school yearbook or year-end slideshows.

Include a special message to parents in the school newsletter, providing helpful hints about how they can ensure their children continue to use their WITS with siblings and friends throughout the summer break. For ideas, visit the “WITS for Families” section of our website.

2. **Thank your Community Leaders**

Recognize your Community Leaders for their contributions to the WITS Programs at your school. Present a certificate of appreciation at an end-of-year awards ceremony, a thank you card from students, or a simple thank you note. Will let them know how much their time and efforts are appreciated by children and staff, this will encourage their continued involvement.

3. **Complete the year-end survey**

Share your experience with WITS! This is an important component of the program. You will receive a call or email with directions for completing a few questions designed to help ensure program effectiveness. You can share your success stories, favourite books, creative approaches, challenges and anything else - let us know!

4. **Assess needs and order for next year**

You will receive an email from WITS staff (orders@witsprogram.ca) asking how many children are in your school and how many are in the WITS Program (Kindergarten to Grade 3) and the WITS LEADS Program (Grades 4 to 6). Providing this information in June helps us anticipate next year's enrollment numbers and prevent delays in getting the resources to you in September.

5. **Congratulate yourself, your school and your community!**

Implementing the WITS Programs helps create responsive communities for the prevention of peer victimization among elementary school students. The hard work that you, your staff, students, parents and community leaders have put in can make a huge difference for your school community. Congratulate yourselves on a job well done!

Tell others about how WITS is working in your school. Word-of-mouth among colleagues is key for the program's widespread dissemination and implementation.