

Client: The Sutton Trust Yellow News
Source: Education Journal (Main)
Date: 11 July 2017
Page: 9
Reach: 5000
Size: 815cm2
Value: 1507.75

EEF publishes five new evaluations of funded projects

Spending more class time on meaningful dialogue that encourages pupils to reason, discuss, speculate, argue and explain, rather than simply give the expected answers can boost primary pupils' maths, science and English results, according to a report published by the Education Endowment Foundation.

Seventy-eight English primary schools with higher than average proportions of disadvantaged pupils took part in the randomised controlled trial of Dialogic Teaching, which was devised and piloted by Professor Robin Alexander and developed by the Cambridge Primary Review Trust and the University of York. Teachers were trained to deliver the approach, which aims to maximise the power of classroom talk to increase pupils' engagement, learning and attainment. The programme uses video and print materials, as well as in-school mentoring to support teachers' planning, teaching and evaluation in English, maths and science lessons.

The independent evaluation by researchers at Sheffield Hallam University found that the 2,493 Year 5 pupils who had received the intervention had made, on average, two months more progress in English and science than a similar group of pupils who had not received the intervention. The intervention had also boosted maths results by two months for pupils in receipt of free school meals and one month overall. While teachers had been generally very supportive of the approach, many said that they needed more than two terms to fully embed the approach in their classrooms. The consistent results across subjects suggested that the approach may improve children's overall thinking and learning skills rather than their subject knowledge alone. The finding was backed up by evidence summarised in the [Sutton Trust](#), EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit, that advised that strategies that encouraged pupils to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning, were a particularly effective way of improving results.

In Thinking Talking, Doing Science, primary school pupils were asked question such as "how do we know the earth is a sphere" to stimulate discussion about scientific topics and the principles of scientific enquiry. Independent evaluators found that pupils participating in the trial had made three month's more progress than a similar group of children who had not taken part. EEF also published evaluations of different "whole school" approaches to improving outcomes, which included, Success For All, a highly-structured training and support package that aimed to improve literacy results for primary school pupils. Teachers had been given training in different areas of literacy teaching and had been provided with daily lesson plans and teaching resources.

"The independent evaluation by researchers at Sheffield Hallam University found that the 2,493 Year 5 pupils who had received the intervention had made, on average, two months more progress in English and science than a similar group of pupils who had not received the intervention."



Client: The Sutton Trust Yellow News
Source: Education Journal (Main)
Date: 11 July 2017
Page: 9
Reach: 5000
Size: 815cm2
Value: 1507.75



School leaders had been given support in change management, effective use of data, coaching, peer support and strategic whole school leadership of systems and resources, so that they could effectively measure pupils' progress and regularly group and regroup pupils into classes based on their reading ability, rather than their age. Pupils struggling to learn to read had been given intensive catch-up programmes. The independent evaluators from Queen's University Belfast found that Year 1 pupils in the schools that had taken part in Success for All, had made a month's more progress than children in schools who had not taken part in the programme. Disadvantaged pupils had made two months more progress. The other reports that had been published were:

- Challenge the Gap, a whole school improvement programme which supported schools to improve the attainment of their disadvantaged pupils through a professional development programme for staff run by schools that had successfully narrowed their gaps. The report from the independent evaluators at the University of Manchester, which looked at the 2012 version of the Challenge the Gap programme, suggested that it lacked consistent impacts on pupils eligible for free school meals. However, the security of the findings was low for secondary schools and low to moderate for primary schools. Challenge the Gap had been developed since the evaluation, drawing on lessons learnt from the project.
- Achieve Together, a partnership between Teach First, Teaching Leaders and Future Leaders, tested a model of working together to recruit and develop high-potential teachers in schools with high numbers of disadvantaged pupils. Despite increased participation in all three programmes, the impact evaluation from the independent evaluators at the Institute for Fiscal Studies had found that pupils in schools that had taken part had made no more progress than a similar group of pupils at other schools. Some schools had struggled to coordinate the different aspects of the programme and given the resource intensive nature of the programme, they were not fully able to engage with it. A pilot of an area-based approach to the programme in Bournemouth, evaluated by NatCen, had found similar issues.

Sir Kevan Collins, Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation, said that while getting children to think and talk about their own learning more explicitly could be one of the most effective ways to improve academic outcomes, it could be difficult to put into practice in the classroom. He pointed out that while there was no simple strategy or trick, the evaluation report on dialogic teaching did give primary school heads and teachers practical evidence on an approach that appeared to be effective across different subjects. Sir Kevan pointed out that the other evaluations investigated different models of whole-school improvement programmes, to see if they could help improve grades. He added that while difficult to achieve, it was promising that Success For All, a highly structured package that was popular in the US, appeared to have been effective.

Dr Mary Bousted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers said that teachers knew that giving children space to talk thoughtfully and openly, rather than feeling forced to give correct answers, led to sustained learning. But she argued that the fact the such practice did not happen routinely was a "damning indictment" of the testing regime and accountability system which ensured that teaching to the test was far more common. Dr Bousted pointed out that because dialogic teaching was about much more than just letting children talk, teachers needed time to learn how best to implement such teaching.