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## Research Schools Network newsletter

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4 November 2016 at 09:19

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## Research Schools Network Newsletter

Issue #1

November 2016

# WELCOME

A warm welcome to teachers and school leaders from across Yorkshire and the Humber and beyond. This is the very first **Huntington Research School** newsletter and we very much hope that you find it useful and that you share it with your colleagues.

### IN THIS ISSUE

[Latest News](#)

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## SECTOR-LED SUPPORT FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

There are many evidence-based resources and tools available to help improve teaching practice and raise the attainment of pupils, but it can be difficult to get research into schools in ways that really make a difference in the classroom.

That is where we can help. Research Schools aim to lead the way in the use of evidence-based practice. Through the network we will share what we know about putting research into practice, and support schools in our region to make better use of evidence to inform their teaching and learning so that they really make a difference in the classroom.

We will do this by:

- Encouraging schools in our network to make use of evidence-based programmes and practices through regular communication and events
- Providing training and professional development for senior leaders and teachers on how to improve classroom practice based on the best available evidence

- Supporting schools to develop innovative ways of improving teaching and learning and providing them with the expertise to evaluate their impact.

Meet the Research Schools, and learn more about the Research Schools Network on our website.

[READ MORE](#)

## LATEST NEWS

### WORKLOAD CHALLENGE: FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) is offering grant funding of up to £30,000 for groups of schools to carry out collaborative research projects into efficient and effective approaches which reduce workload related to marking, planning and resources and data management. More information about how to apply is available on the [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) website.

[READ MORE](#)



### TEACHING SCHOOL COUNCIL PRIMARY REPORT

The Teaching School council this week released their report on 'Effective Primary Teaching Practice'. It includes lots of interesting input from schools and shares some great pointers on the practice in primary classroom, including topics like using evidence effectively and deploying TAs successfully. Give it a read.

[LINK TO REPORT](#)

## EVIDENCE



### NEW EEF EVALUATION REPORTS

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has published evaluations of six trials, all designed to find out what does and doesn't work when it comes to teaching and learning.

#### 1. ABRA

The EEF has published a report summarising the findings of a randomised controlled trial assessing the impact of Abracadabra (ABRA), an online reading support programme, on literacy outcomes for Year 1 pupils. The programme demonstrated positive results; equivalent to two to three months' additional progress, with a larger impact for students eligible for free school meals. [Read more](#)

## **2. Magic Breakfast**

Breakfast clubs that offer pupils in primary schools a free and nutritious meal before school can boost their reading, writing and maths results by the equivalent of two months' progress over the course of a year, according to the results of a randomised controlled trial. [Read more](#)

## **3. ReflectED**

1,850 children in 30 primary schools took part in a trial of ReflectED, a programme developed by Rosendale Primary School in Lambeth to develop pupils' ability to think about their learning, assess their progress and set and monitor goals. The evaluators from the University of Manchester found promising evidence that the Year 5 pupils who took part in the ReflectED programme made additional progress in maths compared to those who did not participate. [Read more](#)

## **4. ThinkForward**

A pilot trial of ThinkForward, a coaching programme to support GCSE pupils at risk of not being in education, employment or training after school, was designed to find out if this particular method of coaching could be tested at a larger scale. The evaluators from the Sheffield Institute of Education at Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Essex found that more work is needed to develop a model that would produce robust results in a randomised trial. A small-scale assessment of the impact of the programme was carried out at the same time, but did not find any evidence that it improved outcomes. [Read more](#)

## **5. The Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme**

An evaluation by The Institute for Effective Education of The Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP), a whole-school professional development course delivered by outstanding teachers, found it didn't have an impact on pupils in low performing schools' GCSE English and Maths results. Teachers received three full-days of training on topics including pedagogical approaches, phases of learning and effective teacher behaviours. The evaluation did not measure whether TEEP had an impact on younger students or the level of implementation across the school the following year. [Read more](#)

## **6. Project Based Learning**

A randomised controlled trial finds that adopting Project Based Learning (PBL) has no clear impact on either literacy or student engagement with school and learning for

Year 7 pupils. The trial, which took place in 12 intervention schools and 12 control school, evaluated a specific type of PBL know as 'Learning through REAL Projects', developed by the Innovation Unit - an independent social enterprise which aims to improve public sector services. [Read more](#)



## WELCOME!

We are pleased to introduce our first Yorkshire and Humber newsletter from **Huntington Research School**. Our role as an **Education Endowment Foundation** and **Institute for Effective Education** Research School is to help share research evidence with teachers and school leaders so that schools can dig beneath the headlines and glean useable knowledge to help us improve student outcomes.

**Follow our website here:**

<http://huntington.researchschool.org.uk>

**Follow our Twitter feed:**

[@HuntResearchSch](https://twitter.com/HuntResearchSch)

**Get in touch by email here:**

[huntresearchsch@gmail.com](mailto:huntresearchsch@gmail.com)

## BREAKFAST TIME AND BEATING HUNGER

The prospective President of the United States, Hilary Clinton, once stated: “**Home is a child’s first and most important classroom**”. For lots of reasons, Hilary is likely dead right. Evidence from the ‘Magic Breakfast’ EEF project also shows that when the basic resources from home can prove lacking – like at breakfast time – that schools can do their bit.

In the ‘**Magic Breakfast**’ randomised controlled trial, involving 106 schools with a high level of disadvantage, the evidence shows that free breakfast clubs before registration made an important difference at school for the 8.600 children involved.

The results showed that year 2 children benefitted most, with a gain of two additional months progress in reading, writing and maths, when compared with similar student groups whose schools were not given the support to offer breakfasts.

The main findings are here:

- 1. Year 2 children in schools providing a breakfast club experienced the equivalent of around 2 months' additional progress compared to Year 2 children in the other schools in the trial. These positive results would be unlikely to occur by chance.**
- 2. For Year 6 children in schools providing a breakfast club, results for the main outcomes reading and maths were positive but could have occurred by chance. However, on other measures of writing and English they experienced the equivalent of around 2 months' progress compared to Year 6 children in other schools in the trial. These positive results would be unlikely to occur by chance.**
- 3. The findings suggest that it is not just eating breakfast that delivers improvements, but attending a breakfast club. This could be due to the nutritional content of the breakfast itself, or the social or educational benefits of the breakfast club environment.**
- 4. Pupil concentration and behaviour, as measured by a teacher survey, improved in the schools that provided breakfast clubs. This finding is interesting because it shows that breakfast clubs provide an opportunity to improve outcomes for children who do not actually attend breakfast club, through better classroom environments.**
- 5. Activities thought to increase take-up of the breakfast provision included promoting the offer to parents, and encouraging all children to attend while sensitively targeting pupils most likely to benefit. Delivering Magic Breakfast required additional school staff time before school, which some schools found challenging to provide without charging for breakfast.**

Yes – you are probably asking the question: why are children from one of the richest economies in the world going hungry each morning? Sir Kevan Collins, Chief Executive of the EEF, called it a “national scandal”. As politicians and more read the headlines on breakfast clubs, they should think hard about the moral implications of this evidence.

For schools, the positive impact on behaviour, emotional well being and learning is clear. Of course, logistically, such an approach is not always easy to implement – particularly as flat cash for schools shrinks and shrinks and the value of the pound drops still further.

So, what can teachers and school leaders take away from this important research?

- *Is the evidence good enough to pursue free, universal breakfasts for all of our students?*
- *What are the logistical implications of such a programme for schools and should it*

*be a priority for disadvantaged Pupil Premium students and more?*

*• How do small primaries and rural schools best cope with policies like this?*



## **AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN TOMSETT**

### **1. Why were you interested in your school applying to become a national EEF/IEE Research School?**

Well, over the past few years we have become increasingly engaged in developing evidence-informed teaching and learning. The Randomised Controlled Trial we had already undertaken with the EEF has been so beneficial to our school that becoming an EEF/IEE school was a natural next step in our development. Ultimately we were interested in becoming a national EEF/IEE Research School to help disseminate the evidence about what works in the classroom across the region and help improve our students' outcomes.

### **2. When did you first become interested in evidence-based practice in your career in education?**

I am ashamed to say that it was 23 years into my career before I became interested in what the evidence says works best in classrooms. I had led the KS3 Strategy back in 2001 and much of that had a decent evidence-base but I didn't really ask questions about whether what we were told to do might work.

### **3. Why is research evidence important to busy teachers working at the frontline of our classrooms?**

Good use of the available evidence of what works best does two things for busy teachers. Firstly, if they follow what the evidence says they have the best chance of being successful in the classroom first time round and secondly, their students will have the best chance of making good progress.

### **4. Could you name one piece of research evidence that has changed your professional practice and explain why?**

Flavell's work on metacognition has been at the root of my work on metacognition in the classroom. I am convinced that we need to model explicitly the mental processes involved in learning that we, as teachers, can often take for granted. I spend time modelling how I think

when I approach a task and aim to hardwire those thinking processes in my students' brains!

### **5. What are the barriers to evidence-based practice in our current school system?**

Medicine is not an evidence-based profession. I know, that's remarkable isn't it? The opposition from the medical profession to using evidence to inform what happens in the operating theatre mirrors the resistance you find in teaching, in that the teaching establishment consider evidence-based teaching an affront to their omniscience and authority, and dismiss it as both "old hat" ("everybody's already doing it") and a "dangerous innovation, perpetuated by the arrogant to serve cost-cutters and suppress pedagogic freedom". What we have to do is demonstrate how evidence-informed practice can save precious time and help us all improve our teaching.

### **6. How do you envisage the role of research evidence shaping our school system in the next decade?**

With budgets tightening and the level of academic challenge in schools growing we do not have the funding or time to guess about what might work in the classroom. The influence of evidence-informed practice will only grow over the next decade as national policy drives school leaders to raise standards frugally. If we can grow the number of Research Schools so that in every collaboration of schools, large or small, there is a centre of research expertise which influences all classroom practice, then we will have systematically improved our schools.

### **7. Name one piece of research evidence you would recommend for professionals working in schools.**

If you wanted to know the best bets of what works in the classroom, I would suggest every teacher reads Barack Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction. Its subtitle says it all: Research-Based Strategies That All Teachers Should Know!

## **DOES THE KiVA ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAMME WORK?**

A study in Prevention Science evaluates the effectiveness of the KiVa anti-bullying programme in Italy through a randomised controlled trial of students in grades 4 and 6

(equivalent to Years 5 and 7). The sample involved 2,042 students across 13 schools that were randomly assigned to intervention (KiVa) or control (usual school provision) conditions.

KiVa is a research-based anti-bullying programme developed by the University of Turku, Finland. It is a schoolwide intervention that is focused on the bystanders' reactions to a bullying situation, which assist and reinforce the bully, and aims to change their attitudes and behaviours.

Researchers Annalaura Nocentini and Ersilia Menesini considered different outcomes (bullying, victimisation, pro-bullying attitudes, pro-victim attitudes, empathy toward victims), analyses, and estimates of effectiveness in order to compare the Italian results with those from other countries. Multilevel models showed significant results for KiVa for all outcomes and analyses in grade 4. In grade 6, KiVa also reduced bullying, victimisation, and pro-bullying attitudes, but the effects were smaller as compared to grade 4, although still significant. The results also showed that the odds of being a victim were 1.93 times higher for a control student than for a KiVa student in grade 4. Overall, their findings provide evidence of the effectiveness of the programme in Italy.

[READ MORE](#)

## WHAT ARE OUR CHILDREN READING?



It is a truth universally acknowledged that reading is a crucial life skill (and a potential life thrill) for every one of our students. So what are our children reading? And are they reading with success? Keith Topping, Professor of Educational and Social Research, School of Education, University of Dundee, has been searching out some answers on our behalf.

[READ MORE](#)



## BEST EVIDENCE IN BRIEF

Best Evidence in Brief is a valuable resource for teachers and school leaders.

Every two weeks the IEE send a free e-newsletter round-up of the latest education research news to nearly 15,000 subscribers worldwide. What makes Best Evidence in Brief different is that it focuses on stories

with practical implications for schools and policy makers, and tries to include only high quality research.

The Best Evidence in Brief website has been organised by keyword, so that you can easily find research specific to the subject you are interested in.

Visit the site and sign up to the mailing list to keep up to date with new educational research.

[READ MORE](#)



## WHEN PROJECT BASED LEARNING GOES WRONG

Project Based Learning, or PBL for short, has the power to inspire passionate opinions. For some, it heralds the future of education, freed from an outmoded 'factory model' of learning; whereas for others, it is bright and shiny catastrophe waiting to happen.

For those uninitiated, PBL is founded upon some key principles. Let loose from the seeming limits of a subject-based curriculum, PBL focuses upon a meaningful 'real world problem', drawing upon student curiosity and choice to drive learning. With the teacher a guide on the side, the students could craft and draft a great outcome.

Now, the flip-side to this debate sees a subject based curriculum as not just a traditional 'sticking-to-how-we-have-always-done-it', but as meeting a fundamental principle of learning. That is to say, we best develop our knowledge and understanding when it is well organised into subject domains (drawing upon the cognitive science of how we develop 'schemas' of knowledge – like how a building relies upon scaffolds as it is erected).

[READ MORE](#)



## HOMEWORK ARE WE ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS?

Every student, teacher and parent has an opinion about homework. Researchers too have studied the effects of

homework the world over, sharing their insights widely. From Shanghai to Swindon, the complex matter of homework is the subject of debate and, it would appear, some debatable evidence. In a new study, communicated by the renowned cognitive scientist, Daniel Willingham, he draws into question a lot of the assumed evidence about homework.

[READ MORE](#)

## EVENTS AND TRAINING



### MAKING BEST USE OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS - LEADERSHIP TRAINING

We are delighted to announce that we are hosting a high quality Teaching Assistant Leadership programme, '**Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants**' for primary and secondary schools in Yorkshire and the Humber. The course will be led by the experienced teacher trainer, **Diane Heritage**, Primary School Headteacher, **Claire Constantopolous**, and **Alex Quigley**, Director of Huntington Research School and a member of the DFE CPD Standard Expert Group.

Beginning on the 9th of December, this programme, for a school leader and an advocate, is the opportunity to engage with a range of high quality resources and strategies to ensure our precious resource of our TAs thrives in our schools.

[READ MORE](#)

### RESEARCH SCHOOLS NETWORK

The Research Schools Network is a collaboration between the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the Institute for Effective Education (IEE) to create a network of schools that will support the use of evidence to improve teaching practice.

### CONTACT US

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