



# pD T

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
TODAY

Issue: 19.1

## It's all about learning and growth

**Chris Watkins** provides the HOW TO guide to learning-centred classrooms

**Christopher Chapman** and **Kevin Lowden** report on growing teacher leadership for school improvement

**Peter Matthews** investigates incremental coaching

Growing research capital is explored by **Chris Brown**

**Jo Evans** reflects on the joys of professional reading



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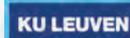
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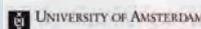
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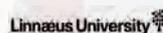
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# It's all about learning and growth

**Graham Handscomb** argues that effective professional development has to have learning at its core.

## ■ ■ ■ Training, development or learning?

What's in a name? Over the years a variety of terms have been used when referring to the ongoing development of those involved in the teaching enterprise. *In-service training* was often used to provide a distinction from *initial teacher training*. The once ubiquitous term *continuing professional development (CPD)* then gained considerable popularity and traction. It could be seen to embrace not just teachers but also other adults who work with children, and was a concept used in other professions as well. Above all it was seen as a powerful expression because it signalled an on-going process that was a fundamental feature of what it was to be a professional - someone who took seriously and invested in keeping up to date and in improving their practice.

In all of this there was an interesting debate about whether this was a process of training or education; was teaching a craft with skills to be acquired and honed or more of an art to be nurtured and developed (Fish, 1998)? In more recent times there has been an emerging emphasis on *professional knowledge* and indeed on the whole notion of *professional learning* (Timperley and Alton-Lee, 2008). If schools are envisaged as being learning organisations then this embraces the learning of staff as well as pupils. This has led some commentators to use *professional learning* as a preferred term, or in the case of the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) the composite expression *professional development and learning*.

## ■ ■ ■ Schools as learning communities

Adopting the perspective of teachers as learners within schools seen as learning communities raises intriguing questions about the nature of such learning and how it relates to the learning of pupils – is it similar and shared or different and distinctive? Certainly there are some who see a distinction between pedagogy: child-led learning, and andragogy: “man” or adult-led learning (Knowles, 1984). But there is much that bridges the two; just as we aim to enable children to become curious inquirers who take increasing control of their own learning, so we also see the great benefits for teachers in becoming research engaged practitioners (Handscomb and MacBeath, 2006).

## ■ ■ ■ Learning-centred classrooms

All these matters concerned with learning, development and growth are reflected in this issue of *Professional Development Today*. The HOW TO section, written by Chris Watkins, is forthright in claiming that actually “learning is a rare focus in classrooms and schools” and that the dominant pattern persists of: “teacher initiates, students responds, teacher evaluates.” Watkins provocatively claims that we have socialised children into schooling but forgotten to socialise them into learning! He provides step by step guidance to restoring and developing learning-centred classrooms where adults as well as children learn and flourish. These HOW TO contributions provide much food for thought including the pithy observation: “The links between teaching and learning are complex and multiple. High-level learning doesn't come from us teaching our socks off.” This brings to mind the Dylan Wiliam quip that students go to school not to learn but to watch teachers work!

## ■ ■ ■ Learning, leadership and school improvement

In the article by Christopher Chapman and Kevin Lowden they describe how the key concepts of professional learning, co-production and enquiry were built into their initiative, commissioned by the Scottish Government. This aimed to grow teacher leadership and build the capacity of schools, local authorities and their partners. They portray a “solution-focused approach” which promotes sustained collaboration across classroom, school and local authority boundaries to tackle educational inequality. Evidence indicates significant outcomes showing that this School Improvement Partnership Project had a positive impact on both teachers and students. Teacher leaders developed considerable research skills and exercised leadership beyond their school context; and the Partnership helped to close the attainment gap for students. In terms of professional learning the authors suggest that such “networked improvement communities tend to flourish when they draw on a range of approaches including lesson study, instructional rounds, improvement science and collaborative action.”

## It's all about learning and growth ■■■■

The next article also explores how a network sought to reduce educational inequality through a professional learning initiative – this time in Bristol and focused on the development of teaching assistants (TAs) to improve the transfer of children with high behaviour support needs from nursery into reception. Interestingly the authors, Liz Jenkins and Rebecca Nelson, highlight the context of schools which have chosen not to convert to academies finding professional development opportunities drastically reduced. This initiative attempted to redress this through a programme which enabled teaching assistants to collaboratively explore case studies. A key feature of this approach was moving from training directed by teachers or external experts to a greater emphasis on TAs' control of their own development and "participation in a learning community for which they have shared responsibility."

### ■■■ Incremental coaching

Ownership of one's own professional learning is similarly a major feature of Peter Matthews' research article. He describes the research he has carried out into the practice of incremental coaching which is defined as a "regular, frequent and ongoing cycle of observation and action-based coaching." Great claims are made for this sustained programme of regular 15 minute observation and 15 minute feedbacks. These include that a teacher develops as much in one year as most teachers do in 20! Indeed the author states that "incremental coaching is *the* core process for developing the teaching workforce; it builds on other training and is central to continuing professional development, effectively transforming continuing to *continuous* professional development."

A number of features are identified as being significant to the process. These include it being best to detach it from performance management, the need for senior leader support, the provision of coordinated, protected time and space, and access to relevant research resources. The last is seen as particularly important in ensuring teachers are able to engage with and apply research when attempting to improve their practice ... and to recognise the impact of doing so.

### ■■■ Engagement and collaborative learning

Chris Brown continues this theme of research engagement in his account of an investigation into increasing "research capital" within a federation of primary schools. The aim was "to foster positive attitudes towards, and engagement in, research by teachers so that this increased 'research capital' can in turn result in improvement dividends." He identified four "evidence-use types" among the schools, ranging from intensive collaborative use to none at all. Some key learning emerging from this evaluation is that those teachers who do research are more likely to make active use of research. He also concludes that what fundamentally "drives positive attitudes towards research use for school improvement" are "teachers' *collaborative* and *networked* orientations." It seems then that, as with all forms of effective professional learning, first-hand experience and joint working with others are pivotal.

### ■■■ Reflection and learning

The final contributions are first from David Weston who describes the work of the *Teacher Development Trust* which he helped to found. He reflects on the achievements of the TDT which is becoming increasingly influential. Among these are its contribution to developing a new Chartered College of Teaching, the formulation of new CPD standards (DfE, 2016), and the commissioning of a major review of what works in professional development (Cordingley et al, 2016).

The issue finishes with Jo Evans reflecting on her headteacher experience and the tremendous value she found in professional reading. Reading educational and research literature may seem a rather esoteric activity to some busy teachers and school leaders but she makes a compelling case. Indeed we get a sense of how such reading provides the therapeutic conditions and strategic space in which professional learning may take root and grow.

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Chieveley Primary School



## Growing teacher leadership

# Growing teacher leadership

**Christopher Chapman** and **Kevin Lowden** describe how they built teacher leadership through collaborative research and development as part of the School Improvement Partnership Programme<sup>1</sup> led by the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change at the University of Glasgow. They report significant gains for both teachers and pupils, together with partnerships helping to close the attainment gap.

### Introduction – collaboration and improvement

This article draws on some of the experiences and lessons from a major School Improvement Partnership Programme (SIPP) as an example of a collaborative research and development programme designed to build individual, institutional and system capacity. A team from the Robert Owen Centre for Educational

1. This article is based on an earlier paper prepared for Scottish Government's Attainment Challenge. The full findings from the programme can be found in Chapman et al., (2014; 2015 and 2016).



second reflects on the contribution the programme has made to teacher leadership.

### Principles and practice

The programme is an evidence-based approach to educational change, underpinned by partnership, networking and disciplined collaborative enquiry designed to close the poverty related attainment gap. It involves schools and Local Authorities working in partnership, drawing on a range of methods or ‘tools’, including lesson study, collaborative action research, improvement science and instructional rounds, to provide a set of processes that teachers and others can draw on to implement focused improvements in their classrooms and schools. This approach combines locally initiated and led practitioner collaborative enquiry across classrooms within schools with school-to-school collaborative enquiry that often spans local authority boundaries.

The knowledge that underpins this approach has been generated over decades of development and research activity and can be found in a diverse range of systems including Hong Kong, Australia, USA and Canada and, more recently South America, Russia and parts of Asia. (e.g. Chapman and Hadfield, 2010).

Research has demonstrated that the most effective school improvements are also locally owned and led by teachers and school leaders, collecting and using data appropriately, conducting enquiry, and working in partnership and collaboration with like-minded professionals and stakeholders (Ainscow et al 2012; Chapman 2008, 2012 and 2014; Cochran-Smith and Lytle 2009; Earl and Katz, 2006; Hadfield and Chapman 2009; Kerr et al 2003).

### Key principles

The programme adopts a ‘solution-focused approach’ to Scotland’s attainment issues with an emphasis on supporting innovation and promoting sustainable collaboration across classroom, school and local authority boundaries to tackle educational inequality.

The programme is underpinned by a philosophy that encourages staff to take leadership responsibility for embedding collaborative enquiry to learn from each other, experiment with their practice and monitor

Change (ROC) at the University of Glasgow was commissioned by the Scottish Government to assess the impact of the programme and to support the building capacity of teachers, local authorities and their partner organisations to implement the SIPP. We outline the programme’s principles and how it was implemented and then reflect on the specific contribution it has made to building teacher leadership capacity within the system. The article is structured in two sections. In the first we outline the principles and practice whilst the



and evaluate practice to close the attainment gap. The work of the Partnerships also promotes broader leadership opportunities and professional learning at all levels. The programme seeks to promote disciplined innovation by fostering a culture of mutual respect, ‘co-production’ and partnership, rather than replicating traditional hierarchies and ways of working. In this sense the approach moves beyond the simple sharing of knowledge and ideas to what David Hargreaves (2010) argues is “joint practice development.”

The programme aligns with, and reinforces a number of key national policies, including *Curriculum for Excellence*, *Teaching Scotland’s Future*, the *SCEL Fellowship programme* and *Children’s and Young Peoples Collaborative*. All of these are underpinned by the same key concepts of co-production, professional learning and enquiry as part of a broader *Scottish Approach* to public

service reform. Informed by the Scottish Approach and combined with evidence and experience outlined above, the programme is designed around seven core principles:

- **Partnership working** is promoted across schools and local authorities, with a focus on exploring specific issues relating to educational inequity.
- **Action research and evidence** are used to identify key challenges, experiment with innovative practices and monitor developments.
- **Leadership opportunities** are created, alongside the **professional learning** of staff at all levels.
- **Reciprocity and mutual benefit** to all involved underpin planning and implementation of the Programme.
- **Planning for collaboration** encompasses the development of arrangements to support long-

term collaboration and new approaches to capacity building.

- **Strategic improvement planning** in schools and local authorities is explicitly linked to SIPP activity.
- **Partners** are diverse and include schools, local authorities, Education Scotland and other agencies.

Since the launch of the programme in spring 2013, these key principles have provided an overarching framework that has ensured programme coherence from which systemic lessons can be learned, whilst retaining the flexibility necessary for the development of context-specific arrangements to tackle the attainment gap. Put simply, it provides a framework for collective action rather than a prescriptive one-size fits all approach to improvement.

■ ■ ■ **From principles to practice**

The programme has employed a three-phase implementation strategy over three years. The first phase

focused on creating the conditions by building trust and relationships. The second phase worked to embed projects into their context and the final phase focused on issues of sustainability, including strengthening and deepening connections within and between partnerships to create a ‘networked improvement community’ (Bryk et al., 2015) that could inform developments and activity within the Scottish Attainment Challenge. The latter was launched in 2015 and continues to draw on many of the key principles of the programme and support the next generation of this type of activity.

The approach involved working with eight discrete but interconnected projects. Four of the projects entailed work across two local authorities, while another involved collaboration between schools in three authorities. The remaining three initiatives were located within individual authorities but involved a range of schools and or partner agencies. Table 1 summarises the eight projects, their aims, partners involved and the scale of the work.

**Table 1: The eight SIPP projects**

Project ID	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>Aim</b>	To tackle educational inequity							
<b>Approach</b>	Focused projects using collaborative action research							
<b>Local authorities</b>	3	1	2	2	2	1	2	1
<b>Schools</b>	3	2	>30	2	12	1 pilot & 3 others joined later	13	9
<b>School phase</b>	Secondary	Primary	Secondary Primary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary Primary
<b>Main partners</b>	Teachers and Headteachers							CLDW Sfl, *, teachers
<b>Area of focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental engagement</li> <li>• Pupil engagement</li> <li>• Monitoring progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maths</li> <li>• CGI **-informed numeracy approach</li> <li>• Lesson study</li> </ul>	Local Improvement Group (LIG) model for collaboration CLPL ***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental engagement</li> <li>• Maths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLPL</li> <li>• Hattie’s Visual learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil mental wellbeing</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Motivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maths</li> <li>• Literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy</li> </ul>

\* Community Learning and Development Workers and Support for Learning Teachers

\*\* Cognitively Guided Instruction

\*\*\* CLPL Career-Long Professional Learning



Each of the partnerships used the key principles to design and develop their own programme of work to tackle educational inequity. The partnerships were supported by a team of university researchers and local authority and Education Scotland (the Scottish school improvement agency) staff who worked as critical friends providing challenge, support and guidance as appropriate.

In addition to bespoke support for individual projects, the university research team facilitated regular ‘clinics’ for school and local authority staff to meet either virtually or at the university, a ‘safe space’ in which to problem-solve their concerns, challenges, methodological issues and also discuss their ideas for development.

Individual partnership projects were also brought together at regular local and national events. These network events provided a forum for sharing ideas, practice and generally making connections across partnerships, reinforcing positive relationships and the trust necessary to build effective partnerships and networks (Hadfield and Chapman, 2009). This evolved to such an extent that we observed innovative

and evidenced-based practice being shared, adapted and moved and jointly developed across partnerships without significant external support, other than creating the time and space for the networked improvement community to work on joint practice development.

### ■ ■ ■ Reflections: Capacity building and Teacher Leadership

#### **Positive impact – application to own context**

After three years of implementation, and the collection of a large volume of data within each of the partnerships and across the programme, the overwhelming evidence suggests that the SIPP has had a positive impact on teachers and students in participating schools and in some cases beyond. Furthermore, there is increasing evidence to support claims that the work within partnerships is closing the attainment gap (Chapman et al 2015, Chapman et al 2016).

The range of positive developments and impact demonstrate that the underlying principles for disciplined collaborative enquiry to tackle educational inequity provides a positive way forward. Indeed, progress and impact has been most evident in those

partnerships that have been able to adapt and apply the principles and core concepts underpinning the programme to their own context. The majority of the partnerships report that lessons learned will be reflected in school and local authority planning to sustain approaches that have been identified as making a difference, particularly through the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

The design of the programme deliberately took a phased approach to implementation. This has enabled it to evolve from a set of discrete partnerships to a programme of inter-connected partnerships working as a ‘networked improvement community’ similar to how Bryk and colleagues (2015) describe their work

in the United States. One important distinction is that we view networked improvement communities as more methodologically eclectic.

### **Networked improvement communities – range of approaches**

Our experience suggests that networked improvement communities tend to flourish when they draw on a range of approaches including lesson study, instructional rounds, improvement science and collaborative action research. This allows the particular approach to be matched to the specific aim, nature of enquiry questions and the local context that is being researched and developed.



## Growing teacher leadership ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

For example, in Partnership 2, teachers in the SIPP team led Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL) within their own schools and clusters and were leading cluster-working groups. This activity focused on identifying particular challenges to educational equity in their schools, devising and applying appropriate learning interventions for mathematics and associated evaluation. In this SIPP team, teachers facilitated Lesson Study cycles within their schools to promote their colleagues' ability to research these learning strategies and to reflect the findings in their schools' plans and development cycles.

Decades of work in this area and our three-year

experience of SIPP highlight the fact that there is no magic bullet or panacea. This is complex and messy work that requires intelligent and sophisticated use of all of the tools at our disposal.

Feedback from the partnerships reveals that shifting local and national policy priorities and changes in resources and staffing locally can present a challenge to the pace of progress and sustainability of activity. However, where local authorities and school leaders are agile and creative the arrangements and ways of working that underpinned SIPP are now influencing thinking and developmental plans more widely across the participating local authorities. This includes those



involved with the Scottish Attainment Challenge, and in some cases more generally across the wider education system.

### Development of teacher leadership

The capacity building principles and practices promoted by the programme have made a significant contribution to supporting the development of teacher leadership. The programme has injected new ideas and ways of working into our classrooms and schools. These ideas and practices have been adopted by a cadre of teachers that have led change from their classrooms, into their schools and to other schools within their local authority and in some cases across local authorities.

For example, In Partnership 5, teachers reported that their SIPP experience, particularly leading collaborative enquiry activity, provided evidence to support their professional update and leadership development. Teachers in this partnership organised themselves into working groups to develop a Personal Support Programme and Visible Learning Programme for targeted pupils that was supported by the local Education Psychology Service. Reflecting on this process, one senior manager in this local authority emphasised the role of the SIPP a catalyst to promote teacher leadership in the context of school improvement and tackling raising attainment.

*A variety of staff have taken leadership opportunities. For example a teacher in her first year of teaching at [high school] is leading a group for the SIPP partnership, and a number of middle leaders have been given the chance to work at a strategic level between schools. The SIPP work has contributed to inspiring a number of teachers to join the [local authority] first steps to leadership programme and career-long professional learning opportunities.*

Partnership 5. LA feedback report. Spring 2016

The programme has tended to have most traction where a group of committed practitioners has been keen to build new working relationships and prepared to take on leadership responsibilities for personal and professional satisfaction rather than monetary reward. Where teacher leaders have been supported by school

and local authority leaders, projects have driven forward with pace and focus and have also been able to engage other staff and expand the influence of the programme to affect behaviours more widely across schools and partnerships.

Teacher leaders have developed a wide repertoire of knowledge and skills, ranging from research methods, data use and understanding to project planning and management and opportunities to practice leadership and management tasks. These may not have been possible without involvement in the programme. In effect this is a small but important step in building leadership capacity within the system, which in the past has sometimes been patchy or non-existent.

In addition to developing an expanded repertoire of knowledge and skills teacher leaders received higher levels of exposure to a diverse range of professionals. The conversations and interactions with researchers, local authority staff, senior education officers and inspectors from Education Scotland, educational psychologists, community development workers and others provided teachers with access to a range of insights and perspectives on issues which enriched teachers' professional experience and their understanding of the complexity of tackling the attainment gap. This highlighted the need for educators to collaborate with a diverse range of public service providers, rather than taking a narrow standards-based perspective of the teaching and learning process or to work in a narrow educational space.

Perhaps, the most significant dimension of teacher leadership development has been the opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles beyond their own classrooms and schools. This has involved providing opportunities for junior teachers to lead collaborative professional development within and between schools.

Put simply, SIPP has developed a network of early and mid-career teachers who are leading a range of initiatives at relatively early stages of their careers, in some cases across local authority boundaries. The leadership experience they have gained within this programme will place them in a position to develop into the next generation of system leaders.

Unlike some other programmes, such as the Learning Partners programme in New York, those that took on teacher leadership roles within SIPP did not have a formal designation as a 'Teacher Leader'. Some partnerships assigned titles such as 'Data Lead' but there was no programme-wide designation. This might be something to reflect on and think about for the future in terms of recognising and promoting the role, commitment and contribution of teacher leaders within a Scottish context. It is also noteworthy that teachers with Master's degrees played an important role., applying their knowledge and expertise to support others' learning. Much of the work that the teacher leaders were undertaking was sophisticated and could, with the appropriate portfolio assessment, have been accredited. This is another consideration for the future.

### Ownership and power – teachers change classrooms

Finally, it is worthy of mention that while collaborative enquiry driven initiatives like this programme have an important role to play in delivering specific outcomes and acting as vehicles for meaningful professional learning, their real value may lie in their leverage for handing greater responsibility, decision-making, ownership and, perhaps most crucially, power over to teachers. Lawrence Stenhouse's words on this issue are just as relevant now as they were over a third of a century ago:

*Only the pursuit of research directly applied to the curriculum and teaching puts the teacher in the power position; for he [sic] is in possession of the only valid laboratory, the classroom.*

(Stenhouse, 1980, p. 44)

Put simply, Stenhouse reminds us that it is teachers who change classrooms not policies or protocols. These types of initiatives provide a positive context that place teachers at the centre of educational change and empower them to lead the change at a time when so many policies place them at the margins, with little power or control.

If schools are to play their full role in tackling educational inequities in an authentic way we must place teachers and teacher leadership at the centre of reforms and provide the power and resources to undertake the task in hand within their own schools, in collaboration with other schools and in partnership with the communities and families they serve. In this sense the move to further empower teachers within Scotland provides us with a significant opportunity to both raise the bar and close the gap in educational outcomes for all of Scotland's children.

**This article is based on a paper prepared for Scottish Government.**

**Professor Christopher Chapman and Kevin Lowden  
Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change. University  
of Glasgow.**

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# Enabling effective transition for the vulnerable

Moving from nursery to reception is often a daunting prospect for vulnerable children and the contribution of teaching assistants can be crucial. **Liz Jenkins** and **Rebecca Nelson** describe a networking initiative designed to put teaching assistants at the helm of their own professional learning.

## ■■■ Professional networking and development

This article describes a professional development initiative for teaching assistants being developed as a strand of work within a small and newly- formed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) network in East- Central Bristol. The network currently includes St Werburgh's Park Nursery School, one other



local nursery school and five local primary schools, with hopes that this will expand to additional primary schools. The initiative is at a very early stage and the article describes the background to the formation of the group and some of the emerging findings relevant to the professional development of teaching assistants working with SEND children.

#### ■■■ Support for the most vulnerable

Pressures on all professionals working with vulnerable children were explored by others in a range of

contributions in a previous issue of *Professional Development Today*, together with the potential gains from encouraging better sharing of skills among staff from different agencies through professional development (Hughes, Durrant and Le Moine, 2016). The school-based initiative described here, in this article, is supported by the active participation of two staff from the Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Blandford and Knowles (2016) have discussed in PDT the responsibility that early-years settings have in securing a fully-inclusive environment in which all children can learn and thrive. A key trigger for initiating a new network was dissatisfaction among members about the difficulties experienced by a small number of children transferring from a nursery-school setting to the Reception year in the primary school. Children with high behaviour- support needs, who had been successful in a nursery-school environment, found it difficult to adapt to the additional demands of school and a Reception-year curriculum which is designed to help children transition to more formal modes of learning. There were some specific examples of children becoming violent and needing to be excluded from school for the safety of staff and other children. It was felt that there were opportunities for sharing expertise and practice which would help these children and the staff working to support them. In the longer term, it is envisaged that there may be opportunities for extended transition arrangements from the nursery setting to school for a small number of very needy children.

#### ■■■ Schools missing out in an Academy landscape

In common with all local authorities, Bristol City Council is facing significant funding challenges in supporting those schools which have chosen not to convert to academies. Professional Development opportunities have been reduced drastically and access to 'top-up' funding for children with additional support needs has become increasingly difficult. At the same time, changes to thresholds for additional funding for schools with high proportions of children living in disadvantaged circumstances has reduced school budgets in areas like East-Central Bristol, where many

## Enabling effective transition for the vulnerable ■■■■

families live in sub-standard accommodation and face considerable challenges.

### ■■■ Quality expertise, systems and partnerships

However, the area is fortunate in having two stand-alone nursery schools, serving 2-5 year-olds. Overall, Bristol has 12 Local Authority Maintained Nursery Schools and faces challenges common to the sector in funding these at a level consistent with the high quality of education provided (NAHT, September 2016). Staff in these nursery schools have high levels of expertise, particularly in working with SEND children and their families. Good systems are in place for liaison between nursery and primary schools to support the transition of children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, with a meeting between the school and nursery-school

SENCO always taking place, to discuss the support needs of each child. This meeting may be supplemented by additional meetings involving parents and other representatives from both schools.

The initiative to develop a networking group was thus based on a sound foundation of partnership working, reinforced by the high number of children from the local nursery schools transferring to one or other of the five primary schools in the new network. Primary schools in the area have worked together for a number of years in a loose partnership to share practice, for example through cross- moderation exercises looking at pupil attainment and progress.

### ■■■ Opportunities and challenges

Although there is some specialist provision in the city for children with high behaviour-support needs



when they reach Year 1, there is no such provision for children of Reception age. Nursery school leaders are aware of the advantages their schools have in supporting children below Reception age with behaviour-support needs when compared with primary schools. Staff-child ratios are higher and there is an expectation that staff will plan play activities to respond to the learning needs of a very diverse range of children (aged from just 2 to almost 5 years old). Activities can be quickly modified or changed to suit the response of individual children. It is commonplace for children to arrive later or leave earlier than other members of a class and the amount of time spent in the setting can be flexible and responsive to the needs of both children and their parents. Support staff are experienced and skilled and work alongside the class teacher, with constant communication throughout the school day. Parents are encouraged to accompany



their children into the classroom each day, so that any event which may affect the child can be discussed immediately with the teacher or key worker.

In a multi-cultural area such as East-Central Bristol, mediating the cultural expectations of parents about schooling and behaviour management of children is a complex and sometimes challenging task. The nursery school is well-placed to build professional relationships with families to support children, particularly important for those with SEND. They work very closely with colleagues from health services, including health visitors and CAMHS specialists. The rare occasions when they are not able to meet highly-challenging needs of children and families are emotionally distressing, particularly when a young child is unable to secure a supportive primary school placement.

Staff at the lead nursery school, St Werburgh's Park, made it clear that they understand the different context for learning in the Reception year and the challenges faced by their colleagues in primary schools. Increasingly, in order to conform to national expectations of pupil progress and achievement in Year 1 and Year 2, Reception-age children are asked to conform to more formal teaching approaches as they progress through the year. The current SENCO, and deputy head, has recently worked in one of the participating primary schools and this has given her a good awareness, both of the issues faced and the strengths which might be shared in a network group.

#### ■ ■ ■ A spirit of collaboration

The formation of a strategic local SEND group originally arose through informal discussions between the headteacher at St Werburgh's Park Nursery School and colleagues at primary schools in the local area. As a nursery school offering priority places to two-year-olds identified as high need, they have particularly close working relationships with professionals working with other agencies, such as CAMHS, GP services, health visitors and, where necessary, police and social services. The school is often best placed to convene and lead cross-agency meetings for individual children and families and play a major support role for families of children with SEND. Close relationships and mutual respect

have developed between CAMHS colleagues working with children under 5 and the nursery school. Last year, children attending the nursery school transferred to 26 different primary schools, but the nursery school has particularly close relationships with the five network schools and all of these schools responded positively to the suggestion of working together to improve outcomes for particularly vulnerable children at transition.

Although at a very early stage, the strategic group has begun to identify strengths within the group of schools that can be shared with others, with the first meeting used to establish some longer term aims. There was a common recognition of the range and depth of expertise within schools and of opportunities for using this more effectively for mutual benefit. Each meeting is scheduled to take place at a different school, so that colleagues can see the different approaches to the learning environment and the resources used.



### Professional development of teaching assistants – a priority

An immediate objective established by the network was to improve the professional support and development for teaching assistants (TAs) who provide keyworker support to SEND children with high behaviour- support needs. Working with a small child with challenging needs can be both demanding and isolating, with limited immediate feedback or evidence of positive impact on the child. The nursery school SENCO uses the term ‘incredible resilience’ when describing pre- requisites for this role. Reducing the sense of isolation and improving the well- being of support staff was a strong motivator in moving this objective forward in the network’s agenda.

Through the nursery school headteacher, two Children and Adult Mental Health (CAMH) professionals offered to work with the TA group. A major success was in securing the support of a professional working with children under 5 and a colleague from the over-5s service, particularly as schools report a perceived lack of alignment between the branches of the service. It was agreed that it was important to provide a space in which TAs could share experiences and feel ownership of a group that was not led by a more senior school colleague and where they would have direct access to expertise on relevant issues. Training sessions have been arranged in a regular cycle and, as with the strategic group of senior leaders, they are each planned to take place in different school settings. Sessions last for an hour, at the end of the school day and TAs are paid for the time they attend.

### The development approach

The first meetings have been used to enable open sharing of problems faced in working with young children with high behaviour- support needs. The health professionals facilitating the group are basing their approach on guidance produced for *Tavistock Work Discussion Groups* (Jackson, 2008). Rather than offering tips on behaviour- management tactics, this processes encourages shared problem solving. The TAs receive support and advice from the facilitators, but are also encouraged to act as supportive consultants to one another. By describing the behaviours of a child with whom one of them is working, the group is able to discuss the reasons behind such behaviour and how these underlying reasons might be explored and addressed.

Through this process, practitioners are encouraged to develop their ability to respond to behaviour in a more reflective and confident way. In dealing with challenging issues facing individual children, the lead CAMHS professional says there is no “hierarchy of knowledge”, so that less experienced members of the group may contribute on an equal basis. What is common to all levels of experience among the TAs are the feelings of anxiety and inadequacy they are likely to experience in individual cases and, through sharing their feelings, as well as their skills, they are helped towards emotional containment. We are clear that the range of

experience and expertise among the group is, important to its success so far. Less-experienced TAs benefit from knowing that colleagues experience similar emotional stresses, as well as from the practical knowledge that can be passed on.

During a professional development session, teaching assistants provide case study examples of children they are working with now for discussion by the group. The case study approach provides the opportunity for the CAMHs professionals to input on relevant issues, for example, those surrounding attachment (Bowlby, 1982). Feedback has been good on the first sessions; for example one teaching assistant said that the case study discussion of another child had helped her to appreciate, for the first time, the skills she already had in working with similar children.

Sessions planned for the next few months will continue this approach and it is hoped, in the words of a headteacher quoted in Jackson (*ibid.*), there will be evidence of TAs, “growing in perception, tolerance, patience and confidence in containing and motivating challenging children” (p 59).

### Self-directed group or expert led?

If benefits are to be sustained in the longer term, the group must continue to be successful in advancing the professional learning needs of all its members. Bristol has chosen to introduce a national model of training (CASCADE: Schools and CAMHS Partnership Training) during 2017 and this may also affect the direction and priorities for professional development in schools. In monitoring the progress and value of the TA professional development network, members of the strategic group are aware of tensions between enabling ownership and empowerment of the teaching assistants and in providing high-quality professional learning that continues to be responsive and useful to participants

with varying levels of experience, expertise and self-confidence. Teaching assistants have been used to training led and directed by teachers or external experts rather than participation in a learning community for which they have shared responsibility. Senior leaders may have their own beliefs about what would be good use of time in the sessions, but also share a long time aim of helping their support staff take charge of their own learning. Teaching assistants working with SEND children have an ongoing need to update their skills, as the nature of the special needs of children they work with will vary considerably from year to year. With school budget pressures further reducing both the overall numbers of support staff in schools and the extent to which externally provided professional development can be secured, there is a high risk of SEND teaching assistants coming under even greater pressure in the future.

### Investing in the future

If they are supported now in becoming confident about their skills and in taking charge of the direction and focus for new learning in partnership with their peers, their own well-being is likely to be better in the future, as is the learning and support for children they work with. As the SEND TA group moves into the future phases of development, the key challenge for school senior leaders is in enabling such full ownership.

**Liz Jenkins is headteacher of St Werburgh’s Park Nursery School in Bristol, a National Leader of Education and an Ofsted inspector.**

**Rebecca Nelson is an Associate at UCL Institute of Education. This article is written in a personal capacity as a governor of two of the schools in the network described here.**

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# How to...

## develop learning-centred classrooms

### Interested in Learning?

This apparently naïve question stimulates important dynamics. Most people (quietly) reply “Of course,” sometimes following up with a qualification: “depends on what and how.” But then they may add: “Why are you asking?”

For teachers this question raises plenty of other questions about their professional purpose, and their professional development. But it is a rare question and rare focus in our schools today.

The following “HOW TO’s,” written by Chris Watkins, offer some activities which can help teachers learn about the issue and how to develop more learning-centred contexts. They are not recipes: they are frameworks for colleagues to discuss and investigate key issues. Within each HOW TO are a range of activities, along with embedded video clips, to help you apply the thinking to your own practice. Each HOW TO also gives at the end a list of resources (handouts, powerpoints, video clips and publications) which are freely available at the relevant section of [www.chriswatkins.net](http://www.chriswatkins.net).

Interested?



# How to ... spot the lack of learning

**Chris Watkins** says the attention given to learning in classrooms is often minimal and gives guidance on spotting the “space-invaders” which block learning.

The first step is recognising that Learning is a rare focus in classrooms and schools. After four decades of studying classroom learning issues using hidden microphones and video cameras, Nuthall’s final book was given the title “The Hidden Lives of Learners” (Nuthall, 2007). This reflects the dominant pattern in classrooms since they were invented

5,000 years ago: teacher initiates, students responds, teacher evaluates (Cazden, 2001). Does this accord with your experience? Or as professional educators are you spending your day in classrooms talking about learning, in staff-rooms talking about learning, in meetings talking about learning? This may seem like dreamland but has become a reality in some schools I know.



Try an auditory survey of a classroom: Is the word “learning” heard?

Try a visual survey: Is it seen?

Do the same at school level.

Ask children to draw a classroom and then examine any representation of learning in their offer.

Discuss the results with colleagues.

My aim here is not to fall into the culture of blaming teachers, but to identify a key feature of the classroom culture. Jerome Bruner helped us regain our control of the notion of culture - humans create culture by the stories they tell. So we change the culture by changing the language and the stories. But this is most effective when it explicitly addresses the aspects of dominant culture that are getting in the way. So it helps to name what causes the problem - I identify the themes which take up the space in which we would wish to give to a focus on learning as “space invaders” since they hi-jack the space we would wish to give. What candidates come to mind? Here are three.

### ■ Teaching

Phrases such as “teaching and learning policies” or “teaching and learning strategies” have been used more and more. But close examination suggests that they might better read “teaching and teaching”, since the real attention given to learning is minimal.

And the phrase is also often said as “teaching’n’learning” rather like “fish’n’chips” — the “and” is almost missed, whereas it represents both the challenge and achievement of the profession. The links between teaching and learning are complex and multiple. High-level learning doesn’t come from us teaching our socks off.

Try this provocative conversation starter with colleagues: “which do you think happens more often - teaching without learning or learning without teaching?” This can stimulate rich dialogue and highlight dominant dynamics of classroom contexts together with contrasting dynamics in non-classroom contexts.

### Survey pupils’ views of learning in school.

The first time I did this with a class of 5-year olds is captured on video (see clip 1). After discussing in pairs their examples of what they had learned, the class was asked to discuss “Now what do you mean by the word ‘Learning’?”. Moving from pairs to the whole class, the first contribution was Ryan: “Learning is being good and not being naughty”. This led to their teacher Juliet saying “We’ve socialised them into schooling, but forgotten to socialise them into learning”.

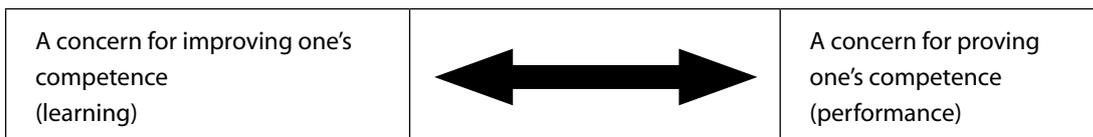
And don’t let any voices suggest this is some trendy modern idea. Just look at the date of this quote: “Let the beginning and the end of our didactics be: seek and find the methods where the teacher teaches less but they who sit in the desks learn more. Let schools have less rush, less antipathy and less vain effort, but more wellbeing, convenience and permanent gain” (Comenius, 1632).

### ■ Performance

The past few decades have seen an increased emphasis on pupil and school performance, together with an increasingly divisive culture between schools and between pupils. We want pupils to perform well as part of their schooling, but we don’t get good results for them by banging on about it. Reviewing the research led me to the conclusion: “a focus on learning can enhance performance, whereas a focus on performance (alone) can depress performance” (see publication: Watkins (2010) Learning Performance and Improvement [www.mantleoftheexpert.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Watkins-10-Lng-Perf-Imp.pdf](http://www.mantleoftheexpert.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Watkins-10-Lng-Perf-Imp.pdf)).

spot the lack of learning

Some approaches categorise learners as either having a performance orientation or a learning orientation. It's more useful to think of a dimension, along which we all vary with different situations, and along which different situations vary:



This could even explain the most recent evidence about UK 15-year olds. In the PISA 2015 questionnaire results, pupils in England reported receiving more feedback from their teachers than their peers in top-performing countries, and lower performing pupils in UK reported receiving more feedback from their teachers than their colleagues (OECD, 2016, page 289).

We could ask what orientation a classroom promotes. One major study identified four classrooms with significantly different motivational profiles (Patrick et al, 2001). Over two terms of observation focused on teachers' talk and practices, the following features were consistent across time:

In a Learning-oriented Classroom, teachers spoke about learning as an active process that requires student involvement and discussion; that understanding - rather than memorization and replication - is important; and that interaction is a key feature.

In a Performance-oriented Classroom, teachers spoke about learning as an individual process achieved by listening and following instructions; correct answer is the goal, following procedures is the method. (see publication: Watkins (2009) "Learning about Learning" [www.excellenceeast.org.uk/uploads/Articles/2010/Dec/Watkins09Lngaboutlng.pdf](http://www.excellenceeast.org.uk/uploads/Articles/2010/Dec/Watkins09Lngaboutlng.pdf).)

**How do classrooms you know fare on these features?**  
**Discuss your observations with colleagues.**

Schools which develop learning-centred practice get good results. In 2012 a headteacher I had worked with from a primary school in a disadvantaged area of Leeds sent me her school data under the heading "Best Results

Ever". In 2013 they were better again.

The improved results are also less divisive. In the past I have written "The only intervention which achieves both equity and excellence is one that is learning-centred" (see publication: Watkins (2014) "Developing learning-centred classrooms and schools" [http://chriswatkins.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Watkins\\_14\\_Intl\\_Hbk.pdf](http://chriswatkins.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Watkins_14_Intl_Hbk.pdf)) and since then evidence from a secondary school which developed a "learning to learn" programme demonstrated that attainment gap between socially disadvantaged students and others moved from 25% in the year before the programme to just 2% in the L2L group (Mannion & Mercer 2016).

**Work**

Listen in any classroom: "Get on with your work", "Please Miss he's copying my work", "Home work," "Schemes of work", "Have you finished your work?" It can be the dominant discourse of classroom life. But it can lead to a situation of meaningless work, as when people talk about being "on task" without assessing the learning quality or engagement.

The discourse of "work" shifts the locus of agency: as Harrison (8 years) said to his teacher Donna: "When you work you work for someone else, and when you learn you learn for yourself."

Having spotted this, what can we do? This space invader gives us a starting example of how to change its effect: change from talking about work to learning: for example "homework" to "home learning". Another school in Leeds had a whole-school assembly where the head said "From today on, no more work, only learning". She reported that Year 1 children ran back to their classrooms excitedly enquiring: "Is it true? Is it true?"

Can you think of other examples where the word "work" is used and you could experiment with substituting the word "learning"?

When we have identified the space invaders we are empowered into "Naming and Taming" their negative effects.

Survey your school's website, counting the incidence of terms which fall under the categories: teaching, performance, work, learning.

**References:** By clicking on any of the items in the list below you can access these resources

- Handout: Talking about learning – are we really?
- Handout: Enquiry: our school's messages about learning
- Clip 1: five-year old pupils talking about what they mean by the word "learning".
- Clip 2: eight-year old pupils in a school in Devon which had worked with my colleague Jane Reed - including one who says "How do you not talk about learning if you're in school?"
- Publication: Learning - a sense-maker's guide
- Publication: Learning about Learning
- Publication: Learning Performance and Improvement

# Improving Listening Skills

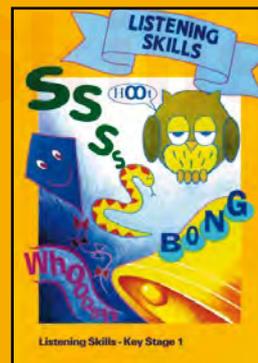
Sandi Rickerby and Sue Lambert

The games in these packs are designed for reception class children and those at key stages 1 and 2, and will help teachers to establish effective listening skills with children right from their first days in school. Each of the photocopiable worksheets is accompanied by detailed step-by-step instructions for the teacher. The games are an excellent way to help children improve their concentration and attention span.



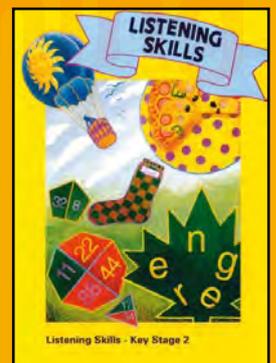
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Listening Skills - Key Stage 1

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Listening Skills - Key Stage 2

Listening Skills - Key Stage 2

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# How to ... build a focus on learning

**Chris Watkins** explores how using Appreciative Inquiry can ensure a focus on learning.

**W**hen the dominant culture is not clearly focussing and not sufficiently geared towards learning, *Appreciative Inquiry* (Hammond 2013) is an effective approach. Originally an organization development strategy, *Appreciative Inquiry* utilises a social process of inquiry and joint discovery. Carried out by organizational members themselves, through face-to face interviews, the process legitimized everyone’s curiosity about what works for self and others and allows the unveiling of each other’s peak experiences. It operates on the following four principles:

In every context something works well, so what you want more of already exists (this gives the lie to the views of “hostile witnesses”).

We create our reality locally (especially through language). An inquiry can become a positive intervention. People have more confidence in moving into the unknown when they carry with them parts of the known. *Appreciative Inquiry* has been adapted to the pedagogy of management education (Yballe and O’Connor 2000), but I first met it in 1998 as an approach to “post-Ofsted syndrome” (Whalley 1998). This clarified the cycle:

- Appreciating and Valuing the best of “what is”
- Envisioning “what might be”
- Dialoguing “what should be”
- Innovating “what will be”

When we apply this to classrooms, we start with “In every classroom something works well”. This helps to remind ourselves of our own achievements. Then we can choose what to focus on and what to inquire about,

and how we make that choice makes a big difference. So if we enquire about classroom learning, where will that lead? Try the following exercise with colleagues:

Take a few minutes to think of a classroom you know, in which the sense of learning has been really positive. Maybe there has been engagement, excitement, reflection, whatever.

Choose the best experience you can and reconstruct it in your mind’s eye. Capture in concrete detail the things that made that experience possible.

When you have made sense of this positive occasion, and how it was made possible, try to capture something important to take forward by completing:

“To me effective learning in classrooms happens when ...”

The next step is to analyse how this best experience was helped to happen, and how more of these experiences could be created. This will often involve discussion and negotiation with colleagues.

And then making an important choice of when and how you will try out an experiment to see whether more of the best can be created. It’s best to treat this experiment as an active enquiry from which more will be learned, rather than a test.

**References:** By clicking on any of the items in the list below you can access these resources

- Handout: Effective Learning in Classrooms - an appreciative inquiry
- Publication: Developing learning-centred classrooms and schools

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LS+**

## Confidence is everything in learning!

As the work of Carol Dweck has proved, no matter how able, a child's perception of themselves as learners will determine their academic careers. If it is poor it will:

- Undermine their resilience, so that they give up at the slightest obstacle
- Make them defensive learners, unwilling to challenge themselves
- Make them over-reliant on teachers and on received opinion
- Write-off successes as 'flukes'
- Under-perform in exams and tests
- Have low aspirations and under-achieve in life

Whilst there are other self-esteem tests, no other test measures a child's perception of themselves, specifically as learners, so well. This is why MALS has gone around the world as the key test to use to measure a child's image of themselves as learners and thinkers. Using it will enable you to:

- Uncover, beneath external shows of confidence, which children have poor views of themselves as learners and therefore will be liable to under-perform
- Pinpoint exactly where their problems are
- Measure progress in developing 'open-mindsets' in children



### Teacher Skills

The MALS is also a very subtle test of teacher performance – those teachers who succeed in lifting a child's MALS score have the ability to motivate and teach the skills of independent learning... and vice versa! This too is often far from being easily visible.

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# How to ... address “effective learning”

**Chris Watkins** explores what constitutes effective learning and how to create a culture which encourages more learner autonomy.

## ■ ■ Phase one: identifying and fostering effective learning

There are many views around about what constitutes an effective learner. Many of them do not stand up to the evidence (see publication: Effective Learning Watkins, 2002. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/83041.pdf>). Briefly, an effective learner is someone who knows (and acts accordingly) that:

- it's **their** actions which are crucial for their learning;
- interaction with colleagues can be a key process in their learning;
- they can plan monitor and regulate their learning.

These headings create the first three of four for effective classroom learning:



- active
- collaborative
- learner-driven

These will be elaborated below, but with only a brief introduction I find these three have a high degree of match with teachers' best experiences of classroom learning (see photos of beginner teachers, experienced teachers, headteachers and inspectors at [chriswatkins.net/key-issues](http://chriswatkins.net/key-issues)).

■ ■ **Active**

This does not mean more activity for its own sake! It means learning from activity through another active cycle:



So after the doing, we talk it through, either to ourselves (that's called "thinking") or with others, and then make meaning of the experience and the key events, and thinking forward to other situations. This process can be applied to a wide range of activities which can promote learning, including reading and writing.

Teachers' reservations will always be present, and it is best that they are voiced and addressed. Many are predictable:

*"I have to cover the curriculum"*. Sorry, who is covering the curriculum? Isn't it the students' task to do that? And the more active they can be in that task, the better the results.

*"It takes too long"*. So what's the short-cut? - ah teacher telling them (again)

*"It's a lot of planning"*. It may feel like that in the early phases, but as the balance shifts towards planning for learner activity, and learners become better planners too, it may take less planning time and therefore liberate teachers for more responding time.

*"It will all fall apart and the behaviour will worsen."*

These represent some classic fears which arise when we do something different in the complex context of the classroom, but if the tasks and prompts for the action learning cycle are well designed you'll get more engagement and better behaviour.

■ ■ **Collaborative**

In many classrooms pupils may be placed in groups around a table, but that does not mean they are operating in groups. The key feature is whether they are collaborating to create a joint product of some sort:



The communication is central. As Annie (10 years) puts it, in an interview with my colleague Caroline Lodge:

*"You learn more [when working with others] because if you explain to people what to do, you say things that you wouldn't say to yourself, really. So you learn things that you wouldn't know if you were just doing it by yourself"*.

To promote more collaboration in classrooms, we need to design the collaborative task for pupils. It aims to give them the experience of creating something together which they could not have created alone. First, the task

address "effective learning"

must not be 'decomposable'; in other words, it must not be able to be completed by one member of the group, Second, the task must require the contribution of all members of the group, through their different voices, angles, roles, and so on. Finally, the task cannot be a 'right answer' task: instead it must require higher-order thinking and the negotiation of meaning.

■ ■ **Learner-driven**

When learners feel in charge of their learning, and able to vary it, it is a key achievement. For example "When I'm stuck, I go back and check instead of guessing", says Vikesh (11 years). Of the variation in school performance, 34% of it is attributed to variation in learners' self-regulation (Vukman & Likardo 2010).

The metaphor of driving is a good one for using everyday language .Try the following sequence and see whether it describes some of your experience of learning:

Learners who are competent in self-regulation show it in a range of ways, including when their "results" are good. One head wrote: "The children's response was fascinating, almost laid back in a sort of 'well we told you so' sort of way! They were pleased, don't get me wrong but they were confident they'd got it before the results were published."

With each of the three sub-headings, consider a time in your classroom experience when it was going well:  
 What helped it?  
 How could it happen more often?  
 What could you do to make it happen?

*Before starting:*

- Where do we want to get to?
- Which way should we go?
- Has someone got a map?
- Or shall we make up our own route?
- Is there anything to remember from previous journeys?
- Do we need to take any equipment?

*On the road:*

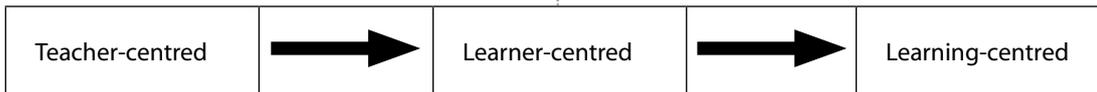
- How's it going?
- Are we on the right track?
- Do we need to change direction?
- Has anyone gone another way?
- Cor look!

*Journey's end:*

- Where did we get to?
- Is this the place we planned? Maybe it's better!
- Did anyone get here by another route?
- Where next?



Now we are ready to develop classrooms which are learning-centred. The move from teacher-centred classrooms needs to happen in two phases:



If teachers try to rush these phases, for example by introducing some terms about learning, their classroom will be inhabited by low-agency pupils thinking "Hello, teacher has been on a course". And we must beware implying that an effective learner is some sort of recipe. "An effective learner is versatile and can actively utilize different strategies and approaches for different contexts and purposes" (see publication: Effective Learning Watkins, 2002. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/83041.pdf>). So we need to build a classroom context where pupils are involved in different learning strategies together with explicit sense-making of the learning. Teachers' role is key, especially if they act as learners too: "By modeling their own thinking processes, learning-oriented teachers demonstrated that being unsure, learning from mistakes, and asking questions were natural and necessary parts of learning" (Turner et al 2002).

■ ■ **Phase two: towards Learning-centred**

The move from learner-centred practice to learning-centred practice involves learning about learning. If we take learning to be the human process of making sense of experience, then learning about learning = making sense of your experiences of learning. Classroom practices can involve:

- making learning an object of attention – Noticing learning;
- making learning an object of conversation – Talking about learning;
- making learning an object of reflection – Reviewing experiences of learning;
- making learning an object of learning – Experimenting with learning.

Zoe was operating her classroom of 6-year olds as a

learning community. At one point she asked the class to write about their experience of learning. Lucy wrote: "I have learned from books and the TV and even toys. I have learned from fresh air. I have learned from other people at class time. I have learned from Miss Bonnell. I have learned from pictures and computers. I have learned from writing."

Think of a topic which would be an appropriate starter for a conversation about learning with a class you know.

One strategy which can help these processes is the use of "storyboards", a simple structure on a sheet of paper giving a title focus, and then three boxes for pupils to draw something about the beginning, middle and end of the story, some space to add a few words on each and finally an incomplete sentence on the focus such as "I can help myself take charge of my learning by ....." (See powerpoint "learning storyboards" slides 8 & 17-18 "A time when I took charge of my learning"; slide 12 "My most impressive learning"; slides 14-16 "Some learning I'm proud of.")

Choose a topic for storyboards which would be appropriate for a class you know. Share with colleagues and decide when you will try it out.

Classroom conversations can be held on topics of learning. Juliet in a London school invited her class of Year 6 pupils to clarify in pairs what they meant by "learn, know, understand" (she had just read some

research on it). The result was so rich she asked some pairs to continue, with video-recording (clip 7). She was so glad she had the video camera! One says “I think learning is ... you watch, and you teach yourself sometimes or other people or other objects help you, and you like listen, you watch, and you like add to what people say.” Multiple sources, multiple dimensions, adding to the narrative!

My stance is:

- The more richly someone narrates their learning, the more they see their own role in it.
- The more someone sees their own role in their learning, the more they become able to plan, monitor and review (i.e. be an effective learner).
- The more they become an effective learner, the more they see other people and a range of contexts as important resources in their learning. (see publication Learning about Learning Watkins, 2009. <http://www.excellenceeast.org.uk/uploads/Articles/2010/Dec/Watkins09Lngaboutlmg.pdf>.)

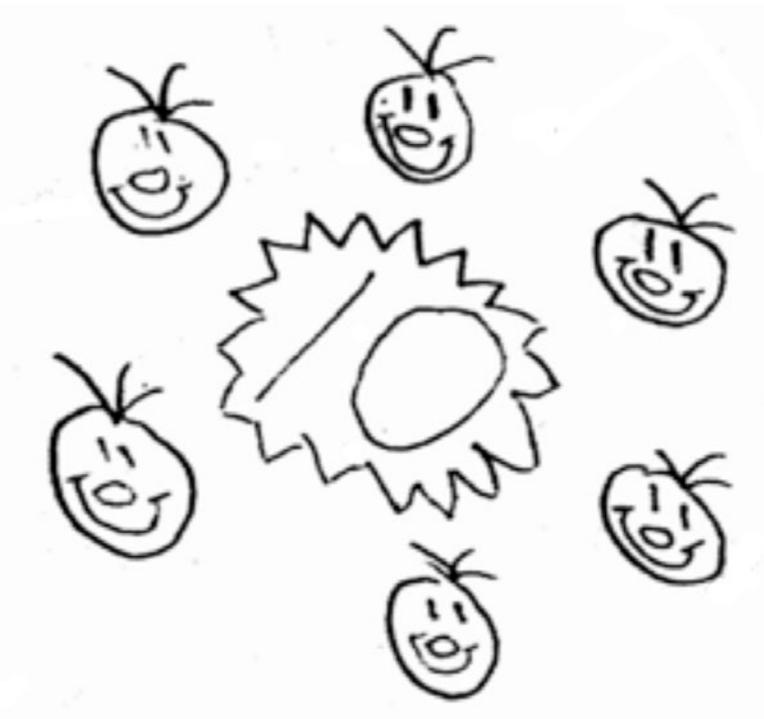
On one occasion I was in conversation with 10-year olds about some of their classroom practices (see clip 8), I heard her use the term “metalearning”, which she then clarifies: “knowing yourself as a learner - which is a good thing”. As the first person to write a publication entitled “Metalearning in classrooms” I needed picking up off the floor! The headteacher of their school in Sheffield wrote to me in an everyday email: “Things here are great. Despite all the changes that are happening, the staff and children at school are still focused on the importance of being good learners and knowing themselves as learners. ... What I am delighted to report, is that the language of learning and the children’s understanding of themselves as learners is far more embedded throughout the school. As a result, the children are leaving us as well rounded, confident and talented young people. In terms of the benchmarks, we are now exceeding national expectations in terms of attainment at the end of KS2 and also in terms of progress.”

One of the outcomes of such conversations can be public record in the classroom through posters and so

on. In one London school, Joel Benji, Maya Sumaya and Samka (Year 5) were creating a classroom poster on “How to take charge of our learning?”. They included:

1. Don’t give up
2. Keep practicing
3. Say to yourself “you can do it”
4. Keep believing
5. Try very hard
6. Think about how to solve the problem
7. Close your eyes and concentrate
8. Write your ideas down
9. Make a time when you can practice it
10. Decide for yourself what to do

And they represented themselves on the poster as:



In other classrooms I have seen “Learning Journey” displays depicting the questions students raised on a topic, together with resolutions and progress. In one case pupils adapted road signs to highlight important aspects, including:



A “juicy mistake” was defined as a mistake we can all learn from, and pupils were commended for finding them.

Over 50 years ago, Jerry Bruner was saying “Modern pedagogy is moving increasingly to the view that the child should be aware of her own thought processes, and that it is crucial for the pedagogical theorist and teacher alike to help her become more metacognitive - to be as aware of how she goes about her learning and thinking about the subject matter she is studying. Achieving skill and accumulating knowledge are not enough: the learner can be helped to achieve full mastery by reflecting as

well upon how she is going about her job and how her approach can be improved” (Bruner, 1966).

There’s nothing more valuable that schooling can help young people develop than self-control and the ability to take a perspective. The field of learning is a rich one for developing both of these.

“In classrooms where a sense of community is built, students are crew, not passengers”. (See page 47 of Publication: Classrooms as Learning Communities Watkins, 2004 <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.455.4201&rep=rep1&type=pdf> ). Does the same point apply to teachers?

**References:** By clicking on any of the items in the list below you can access these resources

- Handout: Talking about effective learning
- Handouts: Active Learning, Collaborative Learning, Driving learning
- Handout: Monitoring classroom learning
- Powerpoint: 1 Active learning (workshop)
- Powerpoint: 2 Collaborative learning (workshop)
- Powerpoint: 3 Learner-driven learning

- Publication: Effective Learning
- Handout: When pupils talk about learning
- Powerpoint: 4 Learning about learning
- Powerpoint: 5 Learning storyboards
- Powerpoint 6 Classroom LEARNING environment
- Powerpoint 7b Building learning orientation in classrooms
- Videoclip 8
- Videoclip 7
- Publication: Learning about Learning
- Publication: Classrooms as Learning Communities



## How to ... treat teachers as learners

Professional development is all about learning. **Chris Watkins** calls for teachers to be empowered as learners, for the need to combat siren external voices which distract from learning, and for school leaders to see themselves as lead learners.

One of the last large research project on classrooms in UK, *Learning How To Learn*, demonstrated two important elements for this theme of treating teachers as learners. Current classroom practice on promoting learning autonomy shows a large values-practice gap with teachers' values (James & Pedder, 2006). Teachers

who stay in the profession nowadays have a wider vision than simply a focus on current practice. Also, the only school practice which helped teachers develop an explicit focus on learning in their classrooms was inquiry (Pedder, 2006). So greater agency for pupils develops with greater agency for teachers.





And this point also links the levels of learning among all those who are present in the school setting. As key workers in this field have put it: “We have come to see that it is not possible to either fully or sustainably promote the agency of the school or the teacher without the knowledge and skill to promote the agency of the pupil” (Reed & Lodge, 2006: 5).

#### Personal Inquiry.

Try to identify some occasions in your professional experience when you have felt like a rich professional learner.

Identify some of the key elements which created those occasions.

Discuss and compare with colleagues.

An immediate parallel follows: if we treat teachers as learners, then staff development activities for teachers should display the same characteristics as were explored in the other HOW TO pieces for effective learning in classrooms: active, collaborative, learner-driven, learning-focussed. When these processes are in place teachers start to make changes in their classrooms which are against the grain of the dominant patterns.

How are your professional development activities doing currently:

Are you involved as an active learner, i.e. reviewing practice, making sense of the patterns, planning new practice?

Are you involved as a collaborative learner, i.e. involved in dialogue with colleagues, creating more together than you would individually?

Are you involved in a learner-driven way, i.e. influencing the agenda and the activities?

Are your activities learning-centred, i.e. focused on pupil learning, teacher learning, school learning?

Implications for leadership were summarized in Southworth’s (2005) “Essential tasks for leaders” as:

- Making learning central to their work.
- Consistently communicating the centrality of student learning.
- Articulating core values that support a focus on powerful, equitable learning.
- Paying public attention to efforts to support learning.

Tensions with the external will arise. An inspiring account of a school regaining control of its agenda comes from an Oldham school where they noticed something important about the external agenda: “We suddenly spotted that they were all making it up. And we said ‘What if we made it up?’”. One of the many activities which followed involved pupils asking “What if we were wizards?” and creating an inspiring list of qualities of wizard learners (Arya et al, 2007).

Notice those times when a voice says “I can’t focus on learning because XX” and share examples with your colleagues. These voices have less impact when they are brought into the open, and ways of moving forward can be devised.

Schools from a learning-centred improvement network decided to write an account and call it “The Adventurous School” (Reed et al 2012). This does not mean taking risks for their own sake, but it does mean building a culture of inquiry. Again, this applies to all levels of the community. As one headteacher put it: “Central to our vision is staff learning with each other, the children and their parents.”

The Newcastle *Learning to Learn* team has investigated which schools “take off” most with a learning to learn agenda, and highlighted the distributed nature of agency and leadership: “In some schools there is the convergence of leadership values and action and teacher agency in sympathy with the leadership values. Here one can see the strongest effects. In these schools research

culture and processes emerge as a significant factor. It appears to give schools greater confidence in terms of their ability to identify factors affecting attainment and motivation and potential levers for change and makes teachers more reflective and critical” (Wall & Hall, 2009).

**How does your school fare on these dimensions?**

Compare your thoughts with the following summary points from teachers on a project:

- Aspects of the school’s language and culture and an open and honest ethos which supports reflection
- School leadership who view themselves as learners
- Staff meetings more learning focused and less managerial
- Peer-collaborative enquiry into teaching and learning, e.g. lesson study, professional learning communities
- An open and valuing approach to teacher’s practice being shared – show and tell during meetings, videoing lessons
- Being encouraged to innovate, review, take what are perceived to be risks
- A collaborative approach to the development agenda
- Showing the children that you are a learner

Again, the language used by school has an impact. Matt Chappel (a key member of the London Network of Learning-Centred Schools) had the sign outside his school refer to him as “lead learner” rather than “head teacher.” I happened to look at the KS2 results for the school, which serves disadvantaged students - the DfE website said “there is no statistically better performing school in this group that is within a 75 mile radius of the focus school”. Other schools in UK have had this description, but not in London, so even by those “standards” it was the best in London.

**Resources:** By clicking on the item below you can access this resource

■ Handout: What helps Teachers see themselves as learners

**References:** Arya, H., Maskill, K., & Thorne, L. (2007). What If? Oldham: Limeside Primary School ■ Bruner JS (1996), “Folk pedagogy” page 64 in his *The Culture of Education*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press. ■ Comenius (1632) *The Great Didactic*, Trans M W Keating 1967, New York, Russell & Russell ■ Mannion, J., & Mercer, N. (2016). “Learning to learn: improving attainment, closing the gap at Key Stage 3”. *The Curriculum Journal*, 1-26. ■ Hammond S.A. (2013) *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry* (3rd Edition) Thin Book Publishing ■ James, M., & Pedder, D. (2006). “Beyond method: Assessment and learning practices and values”. *The Curriculum Journal*, 17(2), 109-138. ■ OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris. ■ Patrick H, Anderman LH, Ryan AM, et al. (2001) “Teachers’ communication of goal orientations in four fifth-grade classrooms” *The Elementary School Journal* 102(1) 35-58. ■ Pedder, D. (2006). “Organizational conditions that foster successful classroom promotion of Learning How to Learn”. *Research Papers in Education*, 21(2), 171-200. ■ Reed et al (2012) *The Adventurous School*, London: Institute of Education Publications ■ Reed, J. and Lodge, C. (2006). *Towards Learning-focused School Improvement*. Research Matters series, No 28. London: University of London Institute of Education International Network for School Improvement ■ Southworth, G. (2005). “Learning-centred leadership”, in Davies B (ed) *The Essentials of School Leadership* (pp. 75-92): Paul Chapman and Corwin Press London ■ Turner JC, Midgley C, Meyer DK, et al. (2002) “The classroom environment and students reports of avoidance strategies in mathematics: a multimethod study” *Journal of Educational Psychology* 94(1) 88-106 ■ Vukman K. & Licardo M. (2010) “How cognitive, metacognitive, motivational and emotional self-regulation influence school performance in adolescence and early adulthood”, *Educational Studies*, 36 (3), 259–268 ■ Wall, K. & Hall, E. (2009). *Developing New Understandings of Learning to Learn*, Research Matters series No 33. London: University of London Institute of Education International Network for School Improvement ■ Watkins, C. (2002) *Effective Learning*. The National School Improvement Network (NSIN). Summer 2002. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/83041.pdf> ■ Watkins, C. (2004) *Classrooms as learning communities* The National School Improvement Network (NSIN). Autumn 2004. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.455.4201&rep=rep1&type=pdf> ■ Watkins, C. (2009) *Learning about learning*. *School Leadership Today*. Volume 1.3. *Imaginative Minds*. <http://www.excellenceeast.org.uk/uploads/Articles/2010/Dec/Watkins09Lngaboutlmg.pdf> ■ Watkins, C. (2010) *Ed. Jane Reed. Learning, Performance and Improvement*. International Network for School Improvement (LCLL) <http://www.mantleoftheexpert.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Watkins-10-Lng-Perf-Imp.pdf> ■ Watkins, C. (2014) *Developing learning-centred classrooms and schools in Mayhill*, M. and Maclean, R. (2014) *International handbook on Life in Schools and Classrooms: Past, present and future visions*. Springer. [http://chriswatkins.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Watkins\\_14\\_Intl\\_Hbk.pdf](http://chriswatkins.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Watkins_14_Intl_Hbk.pdf) ■ Whalley, C. (1998). “Using Appreciative Inquiry to overcome post-OFSTED syndrome” *Management in Education*, 12(3), 6-7. ■ Yballe, L., & O’Connor, D. (2000). “Appreciative pedagogy: Constructing positive models for learning”. *Journal of Management Education*, 24(4), 474-483.

“ The matrix is a fantastic way to benchmark where a school is in its practice. ”

Leckhampton C of E Primary School

# What is Good Leadership?

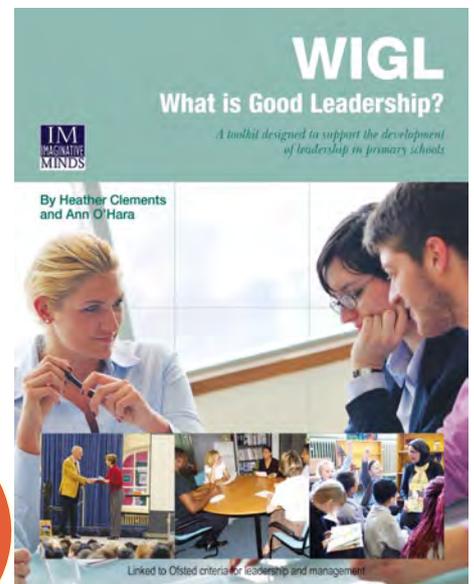
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# The power of incremental coaching – improving teaching quality

**Peter Matthews** evaluates an approach to regular non-judgemental observation and feedback that has the power to enhance the quality and consistency of teaching and its impact on learning.<sup>1</sup>

## ■■■ A potent professional development strategy

A crucial challenge for all schools is to refine the skills, and thereby the effectiveness, of their teachers. In the range of professional development strategies adopted by schools, a regular, incremental approach to observation and feedback, here termed ‘incremental coaching’, is claimed to be particularly effective in accelerating teacher development (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012). This article examines the nature and efficacy of incremental coaching as implemented by some schools in England.

## ■■■ What is incremental coaching?

Coaching has been defined in various ways. The definition of coaching as ‘a structured one-to-one learning relationship between coach and coachee aimed at developing competence and improving performance in the coachee’ (Wisker et al. 2008) is a starting point. Sarah Fletcher (2009) has provided a succinct summary of the coaching scene and issues in the context of education.

Bubb and Earley (2016) have reviewed the mentoring-coaching continuum and stressed the importance of organisations developing a coaching culture.

The ‘incremental coaching approach’ is based on an approach to observation and feedback advocated in ‘*Leverage Leadership*’ by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) and practised in the North Star Academy schools in Newark, New Jersey. He cites an example of a school where every teacher is observed and receives face-to-face feedback every week. The teachers develop rapidly and get exceptionally good results. It is important to stress that the observations are the basis for coaching not evaluation.

School leaders in the North Star Academy schools are committed to *weekly* 15-minute short observations of each teacher, combined with *weekly* 15-minute feedback meetings for every teacher. At each feedback meeting the teacher is given “direct, readily applicable feedback. The next week, the coach checks that the feedback has been implemented and looks for a further area for improvement, thereby building a cycle of improvement.

The result is a set of observations meant not to evaluate but to coach – a change that makes all the difference.”

Frequent feedback and opportunities to practise are said to lead to rapid development. Bambrick-Santoyo asserts that “by receiving weekly observations and feedback, a teacher develops as much in one year as most teachers do in twenty.” Imagine what levels of mastery are possible if incremental coaching is continued throughout a career – as indeed it is in many other occupations - from sport to surgery - requiring high and continually improving levels of skill.

### ■ ■ ■ The ingredients of incremental coaching

The term ‘incremental coaching’ encapsulates a *regular, frequent and ongoing cycle of observation and action-based coaching*. The coaching is a dialogue that typically includes review, praise, feedback, reflection, modelling, planning and goal setting. Essentially:

- The process focuses on one action step at a time.
- Each step is followed up in subsequent observations until it is demonstrably embedded in practice.
- There is a minimal interval between observation and coaching.
- The observation and coaching events are planned into the organisation of the school.
- Coaching is a disciplined activity which incorporates common elements.
- Coaches are trained in the process.
- Coaches are lead practitioners who have earned professional respect.

### ■ ■ ■ The benefits of incremental coaching

In the research carried out into incremental coaching I found that where it has been adopted by a school, incremental coaching is *the* core process for developing the teaching workforce; it builds on other training and is central to continuing professional development (CPD), effectively transforming continuing to *continuous* professional development. One further characteristic, essential to the successful establishment of incremental coaching, is that it is developmental and non-judgemental. It is best when detached from performance

management; indeed, perceptions of such a link are detrimental to the process. For this reason it is better if coaches are not the line managers of those they are coaching, and the outcomes of coaching are owned by the coachee rather than management.

The schools presented incremental coaching as an entitlement for teachers: something that will support them in their work, enhance their skills and accelerate their progress towards professional mastery. Even when this stage is reached, it remains valuable, as demonstrated by leaders in education and other organisations and in a range of occupations. Coaching has the potential to make teaching more effective, more satisfying and more successful, through its agency for professional and personal growth. Undertaken systematically across a school, it can improve teaching quality and consistency.

### ■ ■ ■ How was incremental coaching evaluated?

Most coaching research has focused on the characteristics of coaches and coachees and the process - rather than the efficacy - of coaching. Grant (2013) found no standardised or commonly used measures of coaching efficacy but cited evidence that that coaching can be a very effective human change methodology (p43).

The evaluation of incremental coaching (Matthews 2016) was based on four main sources of evidence: coaches, coachees, organisational perspectives and documents in six case studies – primary (4) and secondary (2) – schools located in London, Bristol and Torquay. The research included:

- a survey of participating staff in the six schools who indicated the extent of agreement or disagreement with a range of positive and negative propositions. There were 128 responses to the survey, amounting to over 60% of the total teaching staff of the case study schools (see Box 1);
- over 30 face to face interviews recorded with school leaders, coaches and coachees;
- observations of coaching conversations;
- school documents and data;
- a review of relevant published research using Google Scholar.

## The power of incremental coaching – improving teaching quality

**Box 1: Responses to incremental coaching survey of staff in the six case study schools**

Responses to statements on a ten point scale from 1=strongly disagree to 10=strongly agree (N=128)					
'Positive' statements (ordered randomly in questionnaire)	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Skew*
1. My coach has a friendly and approachable manner.	8.94	10	10	1.72	-2.02
2. My coach is open and honest in their communication.	8.94	10	10	1.76	-2.25
3. My coach always finds something to praise.	8.91	10	10	1.69	-1.83
4. I am comfortable with my coach observing my work.	8.77	10	10	1.94	-1.87
5. Coaching remains beneficial, even for expert teachers and leaders.	8.74	10	10	1.72	-1.69
6. I welcome the use of incremental coaching by my school.	8.61	9	10	1.91	-1.83
7. There are benefits to my practice.	8.60	9	10	1.88	-1.78
8. I apply what I have learned to future plans.	8.60	9	10	1.76	-1.93
9. I believe my coach is an excellent teacher.	8.49	9	10	1.91	-1.31
10. There are benefits to pupils' progress.	8.33	9	10	2.12	-1.34
11. My coach is a good listener.	8.32	9	10	2.18	-1.65
12. I value our observation and coaching process.	8.31	9	10	2.13	-1.51
13. There are benefits to the whole school in terms of its improvement.	8.27	9	10	2.03	-1.45
14. I generally learn something from our coaching conversations.	8.27	9	10	1.98	-1.64
15. Coaching helps make our school a more open professional learning community.	8.18	9	10	2.02	-1.33
16. I believe coaching helps raise achievement.	8.18	8	10	2.01	-1.21
17. I would recommend incremental coaching to all teachers and school leaders.	8.16	9	10	2.04	-1.21
18. Incremental coaching benefits pupils' progress.	8.16	9	10	2.12	-1.30
19. I would value career-long coaching.	8.13	8	10	1.96	-0.98
20. I consider a 'little and often' approach to professional learning to be very valuable.	8.06	8	10	2.10	-1.16
21. Coaching in my school is about my development, not accountability.	7.87	9	10	2.47	-1.17
22. My coach always reviews progress from my last action step.	7.84	9	10	2.43	-1.08
23. Coaching promotes consistent classroom practice across the school.	7.80	8	10	2.27	-1.19
24. My coach asks probing questions.	7.51	8	10	2.60	-1.06
25. I normally identify the problem for myself.	7.45	8	8	1.80	-0.62
26. Each observation results in only one action step.	7.38	8	10	2.59	-0.92
27. Coaching includes modelling and practising.	6.95	8	10	2.80	-0.81
28. Coaching has improved the willingness of staff to share knowledge and learn from one another.	6.91	7	6	2.29	-0.46
29. Coachees should be able to choose their coaches.	4.85	5	5	2.47	0.38

Responses to statements on a ten point scale from 1=strongly disagree to 10=strongly agree (N=128)					
'Negative' statements (inserted randomly into questionnaire)	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Skew
30. The pupils act differently when a coach is observing.	4.30	4	1	2.86	0.33
31. Coaching feels like being inspected.	4.11	3	1	2.95	0.61
32. We never set a timeline for actions.	3.49	2.5	1	2.58	0.88
33. Coaching feels more about managerial control than professional growth.	3.09	2	1	2.61	1.36
34. Incremental coaching will deter teachers from applying to my school.	3.02	3	1	2.09	1.18
35. Incremental coaching stifles creativity and innovation in teaching.	2.98	2	1	2.39	1.39
36. I would prefer a different coach.	2.52	1	1	2.65	1.77
37. My coach talks too much.	2.51	2	1	1.96	1.70
38. I get little encouragement to reflect.	2.50	2	1	2.17	1.95
39. My coach is judgemental.	2.33	1	1	2.17	2.03
40. Regular coaching is a waste of my time.	2.05	1	1	1.74	2.32
41. My coach has little of value to offer me.	1.74	1	1	1.42	2.94

\*Note: Skewness is given as a statistic (calculated using the Excel function) indicating the distribution of the data-sets, most of which were highly asymmetrical rendering standard deviation less useful. The degree of skew is an indication of the strength of response to each of the statements, along with the mean and other statistics. Rule of thumb interpretation<sup>2</sup> is:

- If the skewness is between -0.5 and 0.5, the data are fairly symmetrical
- If the skewness is between -1.0 and -0.5 or between 0.5 and 1.0, the data are moderately skewed
- If the skewness is less than -1.0 or greater than 1.0, the data are highly skewed.

The mixed methods approach to this evaluation allowed triangulation of the evidence. It was not practicable for this initial study to employ randomised controlled trials (RCTs) which, in any case, are subject to debate about their application to 'real world' organisational contexts (Briner and Rousseau 2011). Grant (ibid. p53) questioned whether an RCT in testing the efficacy of coaching is inevitably and objectively better than a qualitative case study approach owing to the highly

diverse applications of coaching activity. Nevertheless, the systematic rigour of incremental coaching and indications of its efficacy argue for an RCT if feasible. Grant suggests that 'goal attainment scaling' may provide one useful measure of efficacy (p34). In the case of incremental action coaching, the specificity of coaching objectives - one action point at a time - and regularity of coaching allowed action steps and their implementation to be tracked and impact assessed directly, similar to formative assessment of and feedback to students. Most of the case study schools systematically recorded the discussion and assimilation of coaching actions and thus could demonstrate first order effects on the implementation of action points and hence improvements in the quality of teaching.

### ■ ■ ■ How do schools introduce and implement incremental coaching?

All the school principals and executive principals interviewed were convinced that incremental coaching was key to helping teachers individually to be the best they could be. They had read *Leverage Leadership*, seen incremental coaching in operation in schools in England or the USA, used coaching in their own leadership

## The power of incremental coaching – improving teaching quality ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

practice, and become convinced of its efficacy. One principal, for example, found the book was very much in tune with his thinking and went hand in hand with material such as *Teach Like a Champion* (Lemov 2015) and with the school’s data-driven teaching and learning cycles:

*“The coaching model excited me. I went to New Jersey and visited a number of ‘Uncommon Schools’. I saw the coaching in action. I saw the classrooms and saw the materials before introducing it here. What we do here is very top down but it has to be and you see the impact.”*

Some of the principals had previous career experience in a different profession where coaching was normal business practice. One had been surprised that professional coaching was not more deeply embedded in education as an important strand of professional development.

Strategies used to introduce incremental coaching in the six schools included:

- instant implementation (‘Just do it’), in very small primary schools;
- starting with newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and expanding from there;
- piloting with a small cross section of staff before scaling up;
- making incremental coaching part of the non-negotiable culture from the beginning (in a new school).

The introduction of incremental coaching was most successful where it was seen as intended for the benefit and development of teaching staff, rather than an additional accountability measure, linked directly or indirectly to appraisal. Evaluation evidence shows that most coachees in the sample of schools recognised and trusted this separation (Box 2).

**Selection and training of coaches** is important. In the primary schools, coaching tended to be undertaken by an instructional leader (assistant headteacher) with time allocated for the role. In secondary schools, coaching was coordinated by a senior leader; coaches ranged from lead practitioners to faculty leaders and school senior leaders.

There was a consensus among coachees that it was preferable for the coach not to be the line manager of the coachee, since the line manager usually has a more direct quality assurance responsibility for performance. As one middle leader said:

*“My first coach was an advanced skills teacher which was very beneficial to my teaching. I now have an SLT member and I find myself considering their managerial views on me before I answer questions, which has reduced the effectiveness of the coaching.”*

Approaches to training varied between the school organisations. Many of the coaches had received some previous coaching training, often as part of middle or senior leadership development programmes. Some were familiar with the ‘GROW’ model: GROW’ is the acronym for Goal setting, Reality check, Options available and Will (what the client will do). (Whitmore 1992). Training was based on the steps set out by Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) Two schools were making extensive use of a consultant education coach both to train coaches and to coach them in coaching.



Box 3. Length of observation and coaching elements				
	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
Duration (minutes) of observation?	17.2	15	15	8.2
Duration (minutes) of feedback?	19.8	20	20	10.4

The main **organisational challenge** is to provide time for coaches to observe and for coaches and coachees to meet (Box 3). In the three smaller primary schools, these demands were met through the main or only coach having a timetable in which the coaching and teaching-learning development role was not eroded by having any other significant teaching duties.

In one secondary school, the coaching was undertaken by senior leaders, an assistant principal (who led the coaching and took on the lion's share), and lead practitioners whose timetables made allowance for incremental coaching duties. In two other schools, the arrangements were more fluid, with coaching meetings often taking place after school or in lunch breaks or non-teaching time. Such arrangements were less conducive to sustaining the regularity and centrality of incremental coaching. Overall, the coaching/feedback sessions for 60% of the survey respondents were timetabled.

### ■ ■ ■ Is there a coaching agenda?

The substance of incremental coaching combines the development of individual skills with the school's expectations of effective teaching. All the schools espoused a school or organisation-wide pedagogy: for example, the Ark 'great teaching rubric'; the Oasis 'eight pillars' and the 62 skills of Lemov's (2015) *Teach Like a Champion*. As one Ark school leader explained:

*"we try to align all the coaching points with that rubric in order that we can identify what is needed, for example, in professionalism, assessment and planning. If it is an issue that is more planning-related, the instructional leader (coach) will do some co-planning with the teacher and go through the planning process at the same time."*

Interviews with coaches and coachees confirmed that the detailed action points tended to relate to the school's pedagogy policies. Questioning and discussion, for example, included such techniques as 'cold calling' (Lemov 2015), 'wait time' and aspects such as the style

of questioning. Starts of lessons typically included 'silent start' routines. Coachees were asked to identify up to four aspects that they had been coached on (Box 4). The pattern of responses undoubtedly was influenced by priorities in the sample schools. At the time of the survey, for example, one school was focusing on differentiation; another on behaviour management and pupil engagement.



### ■ ■ ■ How well has the implementation of coaching been accepted?

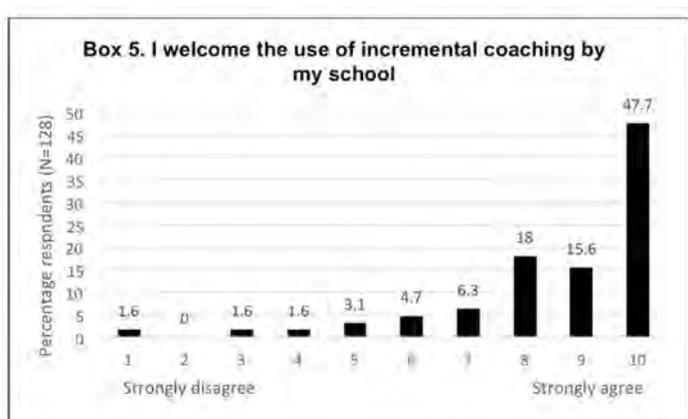
The great majority of comments by coachees - many of whom also have leadership roles - about the adoption of incremental coaching are strongly positive:

*"Although initially sceptical, I have grown very used to the regular coaching and feedback sessions and genuinely get a lot from them. I feel my teaching has grown and I am better able to reflect on how to develop as a teacher without feeling judged or vulnerable. However, my coach is amazing."* (Primary teacher)

*"I think it is very valuable as it allows me to feel respected and supported within the academy. It allows me to feel confident in my role as middle leader and classroom practitioner to ensure that the pupils are reaching their potential in my subject."* (Secondary middle leader)

## The power of incremental coaching – improving teaching quality

Only ten of the 128 respondents were less welcoming of the introduction of incremental coaching in their schools, scoring five or fewer points in response to this statement (Box 5). Two did not give reasons but the reservations of others included being paired with an inexperienced coach or feeling under scrutiny through being coached by a line manager. School principals were coached by executive leaders or other external coaches at regular but less frequent intervals.



The great majority of respondents to the survey favoured access to career-long coaching. As one teacher said:

*“I believe the coaching I have received has made me the teacher I am today and will allow me to continually improve throughout my career.”*

### How well did the coaching demonstrate the components of effective feedback?

The survey included statements related to the feedback steps set out by Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) (Box 6). One teacher commented:

*“Coaching has allowed me to reflect on my practice regularly and apply in small steps what I would like to change and improve in my teaching and management of the class.”* Another said: *“I now have a bank of action steps that are easy to implement alongside one another to ensure I am successful in a range of aspects in my lessons. These steps are also tailored to me and my class.”*

The desirable changes (‘even better if’ points) identified by the survey included:

- further training for coaches
- ensuring that feedback happens as soon as possible while ideas are still fresh
- adhering to the earmarked (‘locked in’) time for coaching and joint planning
- peer observation of the coach by the coachee
- coaches (in secondary schools) who have some knowledge of the coachee’s subject.

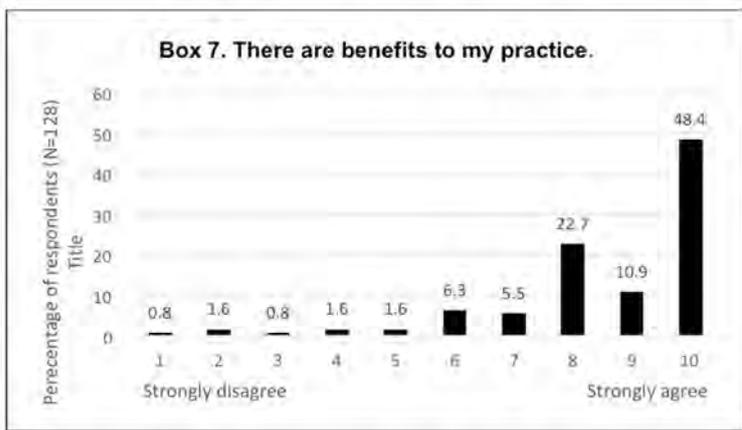
### What are the benefits to teaching and learning?

In their comprehensive review of research on coaching based on more than 200 research publications, Corwin and Knight (2009) concluded that there was evidence of an association between coaching and teachers’ increased job satisfaction, implementing new teaching practices, a positive increase in teachers’ efficacy and – since teacher quality is one of the most important

Box 6. Steps to effective feedback	Survey statements	Mean agreement score (1-10)
1. Review progress	We always review progress from my last action step.	7.84
2. Provide precise praise*	My coach always finds something to praise.	8.91
3. Probe*	My coach asks probing questions.	7.51
4. Identify problem and concrete action step*	I normally identify the problem for myself.	7.45
	Each observation results in only one action step.	7.38
5. Practice*	Coaching includes modelling and practising.	6.95
6. Plan ahead*	I apply what I have learned to future plans.	8.60
7. Set timeline*	We never set a timeline for actions.	3.49

\* Denotes one of the six steps described by Bambrick-Santoyo.

variables affecting student achievement - an impact on student achievement. Less is known about how well coaching improves the specific teaching practices that increase student achievement. But it can be argued that if coaching focuses on skills that are known to have a large effect size in terms of students' attainment (Hattie 2009, Education Endowment Foundation 2016), the 'missing link' becomes more tangible. The survey provided strong affirmation of benefits to coaches' practice, whether as teachers or leaders (Box 7).



Coaches in the case study schools kept track of the impact of incremental coaching on coachees in terms of the action points and their absorption and implementation. Such records, which could easily be used for 'goal attainment scaling' (see earlier) were shared by coach and coachee and used by coaching coordinators to track the progress of the coaching pairs and impact - or value added - by the incremental coaching activity.

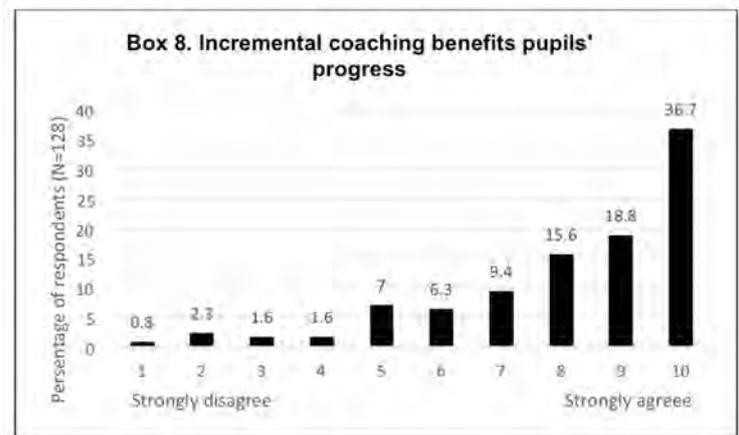
The evidence suggests that a large majority of those surveyed believed that incremental coaching benefited pupils' progress (71% agreed at the level of 8, 9 or 10 – Box 8). It is a second order effect, not easily susceptible

to direct causal analysis. But within the school, it is commonplace to track the rate of progress of pupils in different classes and subjects. Respondents to the survey commented:

*"I have found coaching highly valuable and I have seen improvements in my teaching and the levels of engagement from the children."* Primary teacher).

*"The focus is always on the children - i.e. 'how can we help that child?' - and not on the current "skill-level" of you as a teacher, and that kind of blame-free discussion is incredibly productive. It encourages reflection and so its effects ripple out across your practice."* (Primary middle leader)

*"I am (more) mindful of the structure of my lessons and ensuring all students are engaging with the learning because the differentiation is more effective."* (Secondary teacher)



The correlations between perceived effects on teaching and impact on pupil achievement shown in Box 9 vary from moderate (0.40 to 0.59) to strong (0.60 or over) or very strong (0.80 or over). These should be taken as no more than broad indications that coachees believe that benefits to their practice in turn benefit pupils' progress.

Box 9. Correlations between perceived effects on teaching and pupils' progress.	There are benefits for pupils' progress.	I believe coaching helps raise achievement.
I welcome the use of incremental coaching by my school.	0.730	0.729
There are benefits to my practice.	0.888	0.695
I apply what I have learned to future plans.	0.669	0.600
I generally learn something from our coaching conversations.	0.703	0.537



### ■■■ Does incremental coaching contribute to whole school improvement?

The survey showed a strong perception that the incremental coaching was beneficial to the school's improvement; it was central to school improvement strategy in all the schools. Many individual comments endorsed this view. For example, a secondary senior teacher reported:

*“Incremental coaching is a valuable tool for developing and refining whole school teaching and learning strategies in lessons. It gets you to think carefully about a particular strategy and the best way to use it rather than trying to cover everything in one go. It's also a very good learning process for the coach if you are observing/coaching a skilled teacher.”* A primary middle leader endorsed this perception: *“It is invaluable for every member of the school and has really improved us as practitioners.”*

Coaching observations and feedback have been recognised as contributing to the quality of teaching and implicitly to the improving standards of the four schools that have been inspected. One is outstanding; the other three - inspected in summer 2016 - have improved to 'good' from lower ratings. Their Ofsted inspection reports include references to the coaching regimes, for example referring to:

- “The use of an instructional leader at the forefront of improving the quality of teaching through observing each teacher frequently and setting and reviewing targets for improvement;
- Supporting teachers (who) they work in pairs to reflect on their own teaching and share ideas of how to improve resulting in teachers developing their skills at a faster rate;

- Action coaching and a focus on evidence-based research; consequently staff are taking a lead on improving their own practice.”

The ultimate indicator of improved teaching rests with whether pupils make faster progress and achieve higher outcomes. It was not possible to prove a link or assert a strong association between incremental coaching and an upward trend in such outcomes, owing to the varied length of time that schools employed coaching, the lack of a data trail for recently sponsored academies, and changes in 2016 performance data and the indirect causal link. But there are positive signs; for example in one secondary school with well-established incremental coaching, the proportion of students achieving five or more high grade GCSEs including English and mathematics has improved by ten percentage points year on year over three years, and progress 8 in 2016 was 0.59 ('well above average'). Data on improved attendance, punctuality and behaviour as well as trends in the overall quality of lessons recorded by the school are all claimed to be associated with the implementation of school-wide incremental coaching action points, recorded in coaching records.

### ■■■ What is role of coaching in implementing other training and development?

The power of action coaching is that is used in conjunction with a clear pedagogical agenda developed and communicated through professional development sessions. Coaching that follows training transforms the value of the training by maximising implementation of

the desired practices and skills. The rate of transfer of training into classroom practice has been shown to be greatly enhanced when the training is followed by coaching. The rate of transfer of training into classroom practice has been shown to be greatly enhanced when the training is followed by coaching. Drawing from a number of randomised control-style studies, Showers (1983) concluded that 75% of teachers who received peer coaching successfully transferred the skill presented at a professional development session compared with transfer by 15% of the teachers who had not received the coaching. Research on pedagogic coaching endorses this approach to facilitating change, improving instruction and transforming school culture, three of the claims made in Knight's (2007) readable overview of the approach.

Our evidence suggests that incremental coaching, as practised in the sample schools, fulfils these claims. One case study school, for example, reflects this model of what it terms 'Teacher Effectiveness Training' through a combination of generic input followed by more specific subject workshops and coaching. The aim of 'Every Lesson Every Day Good or Better' is supported by a team of peer to peer, subject specialist teacher coaches and external consultants.

### ■ Culture - What are the conditions for success?

The findings of this study show that the conditions for the successful introduction and embedding of incremental coaching are well established and the experience of the case study schools provides a number of evidence-based learning points. Some conditions for success are summarised set out below.

1. **Strong pedagogic leadership** – based on the school having clear, evidence-informed principles on which teaching is based.
2. **An effective professional development strategy** – in which coaching is used to embed new or better practices, drive joint practice development and maximise consistency across the teaching workforce of a school.
3. **Effective communication** – in which the school is open about what it is doing and why.

4. **Operational organisation** – through which observation and coaching are properly resourced.
5. **Coaching advocates** – represented in highly effective practitioners.
6. **Carefully selected and well-trained coaches** – and careful formulation of coaching pairs.
7. **A preferred coaching model** – such as the seven step approach (see earlier).
8. **Evaluation of the changes in teaching, learning and students' progress that can be attributed to or associated with coaching.**
9. **Quality assurance of the effectiveness of coaching arrangements** – not least by coaching the coaches.

Crucially, getting 'buy-in' from staff and pupils, what Andy Buck (2015) has described as 'building discretionary effort', is central to whole-school efforts to reduce within-school variation and maximise results. Buck writes of the importance of *culture*: 'the way we do things around here', and *climate*: 'how it feels to work in a team, supported and challenged as well as trusted.' The inspection report on one of the smallest schools in the sample captured its climate thus:

Leaders are quick to recognise and praise the good work of staff and pupils and are alert to situations where people need more advice and guidance. *Because staff benefit from supportive feedback, a climate has been created where everyone is trying hard to make the school even better*' (Ofsted).

A culture where colleagues are always in and out of each other's classrooms is far more productive in knowing what is actually going on in classrooms than set piece lesson observations. Feedback provides a mechanism for adding value to lesson drop-ins, but purposeful incremental coaching, as Andy Buck says, 'elicits the areas of strength, a single area for improvement and some strategies to try' followed by another 'short drop-in a week later when there can be some discussion about the progress that has been made. . . Over time, this incremental process enables teachers to develop mastery in the full range of basic classroom skills and pedagogies that will lead to improved classroom delivery and improved outcomes for pupils' (Buck 2015.)

### ■■■ Concluding comments: the value of in-school consistency

Incremental action coaching has been introduced successfully by all the schools studied in this evaluation, which range from outstanding to demonstrably improving. The approach is endorsed strongly by the school leaders and most of their teachers. There is compelling evidence of the capacity of this approach to bring about rapid step-wise improvement and greater consistency in the quality and effectiveness of teaching. Teachers and schools believe that student learning and outcomes are improving as a result, although more longitudinal data would help to corroborate this. Such data could usefully include: teacher and student surveys relating to quality of teaching and learning, quantifying goal attainment from ongoing coaching tracker records, annual external audits of the quality of teaching and learning, student attainment and progress data and data relating to the impact of incremental coaching on challenging areas such as behaviour, inclusion and reducing attainment gaps.

This research suggests that the efficacy of incremental coaching in improving teaching makes it a powerful tool in the drive to the within-school variation in teaching that continues to hamper student outcomes at school and national levels in England. There is a wider issue, to which David Hopkins (2007) has referred when considering networking and innovation as part of the journey for schools to become great:

“Although the (current) focus on networking and between-school collaboration is essential for large scale systemic change, it may ironically have the perverse effect of deflecting attention from the importance of focusing on within-school variation . . . Without a direct

focus on within-school variation, it is unlikely that we shall see a further transformation in standards.”

He argued for the necessity of establishing “a school level improvement process” and set out what he considers to be the necessary organisational features for reducing in-school variation. These include use of data, workshops on teaching and learning strategies – including demonstration and modelling, and partnership teaching, modelling and peer coaching: many of the approaches to improving teaching found in the case study schools.

Some approaches to school to school learning, joint practice development and professional learning groups and communities, which are well established in the self-improving school system in England, may be key to schools becoming outstanding. But schools which neglect the fundamental goal of achieving high levels of in-school consistency of practice and reducing within-school variation do so at their peril. The fundamental link that has been established between training, incremental coaching and improving the quality and consistency of instruction should not be ignored.

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1. This research was undertaken on behalf of Teaching Leaders, now Ambition School Leadership. The author is grateful for the help of Andy Buck, Steve Margetts - Principal of Torquay Academy, and the leaders and staff of the Ark and Oasis academies included in this study.

2. See: [www.spcforexcel.com/knowledge/basic-statistics/are-skewness-and-kurtosis-useful-statistics](http://www.spcforexcel.com/knowledge/basic-statistics/are-skewness-and-kurtosis-useful-statistics)

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King Alfred’s Academy, Wantage



# Growing research capital for school improvement

**Chris Brown** explores how “research capital” can be used as the basis for school and school system improvement, modelled on an evaluative case study of a federation of schools.

**W**hat can be done to foster positive attitudes towards, and engagement in, research by teachers so that this increased “research capital” can in turn result in improvement dividends? This ambition is explored in this article and illustrated through a case study of three schools working together within the Chestnut Learning Federation.

## ■■■ Evidence informed practice

Evidence informed practice (EIP) is defined by England’s Department for Education as: ‘A combination

of practitioner expertise and knowledge of the best external research, and evaluation-based evidence’ ([www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)). Despite ongoing controversies and debates (e.g. Hargreaves, 1996; Goldacre, 2013) a swathe of education policy in England now heavily emphasizes teachers’ use of research evidence as a means to improve teaching and learning (e.g. Department for Education, 2010; Greany, 2015). It is also suggested (e.g. OECD, 2016) that optimal forms of EIP involve teachers collaborating to use research to address school priorities, where these priorities coincide with the day to day realities of the classroom (e.g. teachers’ use of research



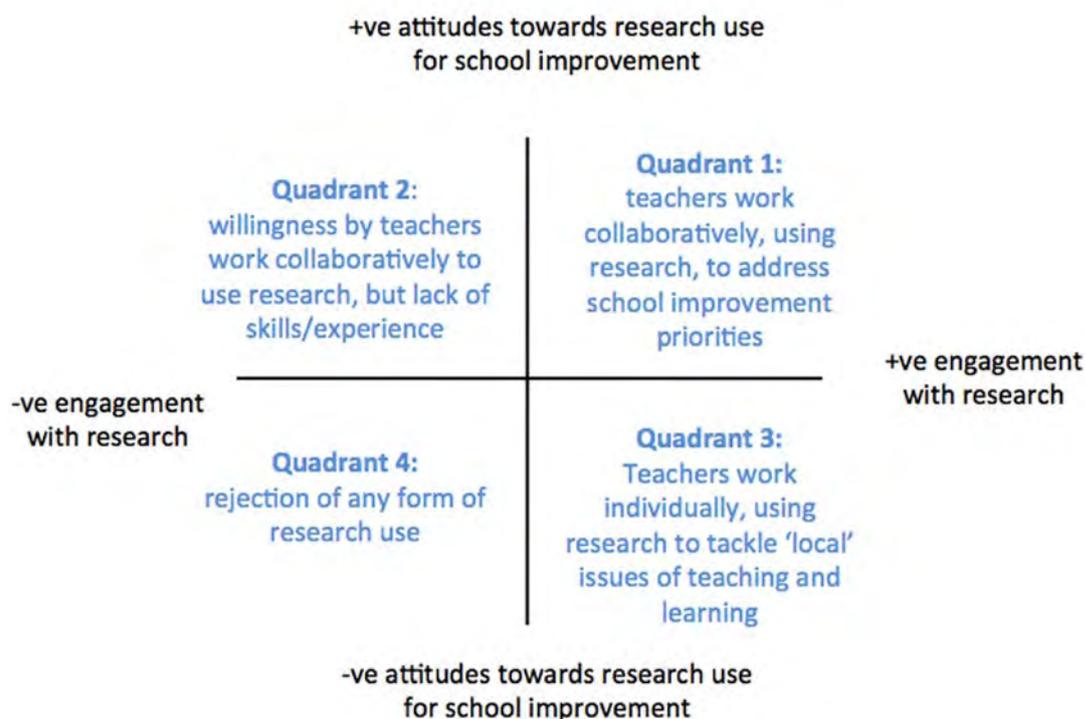
to improve pupil behaviour or pedagogy). However, little research has been undertaken into how this optimal situation can be achieved (Cain, 2015).

### Types of teacher evidence use and 'research capital'

Recent studies examining the use of research by teachers (e.g. Brown and Zhang, 2016; Stoll and Brown, 2015) suggest that it is possible to characterize teachers' EIP behaviours according to a combination of their attitudes towards using research for school improvement and teachers' engagement with research. Conceiving teachers' research-use attitudes and engagement as forming the axes of a 2 x 2 matrix (see Figure 1), these studies point towards four evidence-use 'types': with type 1 use representing teachers working collaboratively using research to address school improvement priorities; type 2 use teachers are those willing to work collaboratively to engage with research, but who lack the skills/experience required; type 3 teachers are those who work individually, using research to tackle 'local' issues of teaching and learning; and finally, type 4 teachers reject any form of research use.

Drawing on the idea of other forms of capital such as social and cultural capital (e.g. Bourdieu, 1986), I suggest that the notion of *research capital* (RC) corresponds to situations in which *teachers can use research to improve teaching and learning, and where they also seek to do so collaboratively*. Linked to this it also follows that securing higher levels of research capital should be what schools should strive to achieve. This means, in terms of school and school system improvement, it would seem preferable for schools to have a high number of teachers who are type 1 evidence users. It is also clear that, based on their attitudes and experience, if type 1 teachers have the highest levels of research capital, then type 4 teachers have the lowest; with type 2 and type 3 teachers possessing intermediate levels of RC. Ideally then, schools that are seeking to be research engaged should be attempting to foster type 1 behaviour amongst their entire teaching staff. As yet, however, no research has been undertaken into whether individual schools tend to have a predominance of teachers of any given type, why this might be the case and how levels of research capital can be raised.

Figure 1: A typology of teachers' use of evidence



The research informing this article examines these four evidence-use types in more detail to ascertain what leads to teachers possessing higher or lower levels of research capital. It also examines the distribution of teachers by quadrant in one school Federation in Hampshire. The article concludes with suggestions for how this Federation, as well as schools more generally, can work towards developing higher levels of RC and the strategies school leaders might use to develop teachers into type 1 research users.

### ■ ■ ■ Chestnut Learning Federation: seeking to become research engaged

The Chestnut CE Learning Federation is a family of three small Church Infant Schools based in the Hampshire villages of Rosebush, All Saints and Southampton Common, who all work closely together under the leadership of the Federation Headteacher and Governing Body (the names of the federation and schools have been changed to preserve their anonymity). The vision of the three schools is to

ensure children grow up to lead safe, happy, healthy and successful lives by providing the highest standard of education and the opportunity for each child to attain their own, full potential. One of the Federation's improvement plan objectives is for it to become an evidence-informed Federation. This would entail schools collaborating to rigorously review the quality of the education they offer, understand what they need to do to improve, take appropriate evidence-informed action and evaluate the impact of their actions. In this way they would adopt an evidenced informed approach to tackling achievement together.

To meet this objective, the executive headteacher of the Federation has developed a model of professional learning where (as from the 2016/17 school year) four of the statutory staff professional development (INSET) days allocated to schools in England will be dedicated solely to evidence-informed professional development. Using a cycle of enquiry approach, the aim of the model is to:

- enable teachers to engage collaboratively with research;
- develop new practices, to trial these practices;
- measure their impact and then;
- roll out the most successful within and across schools in the Federation.

**The evaluation method**

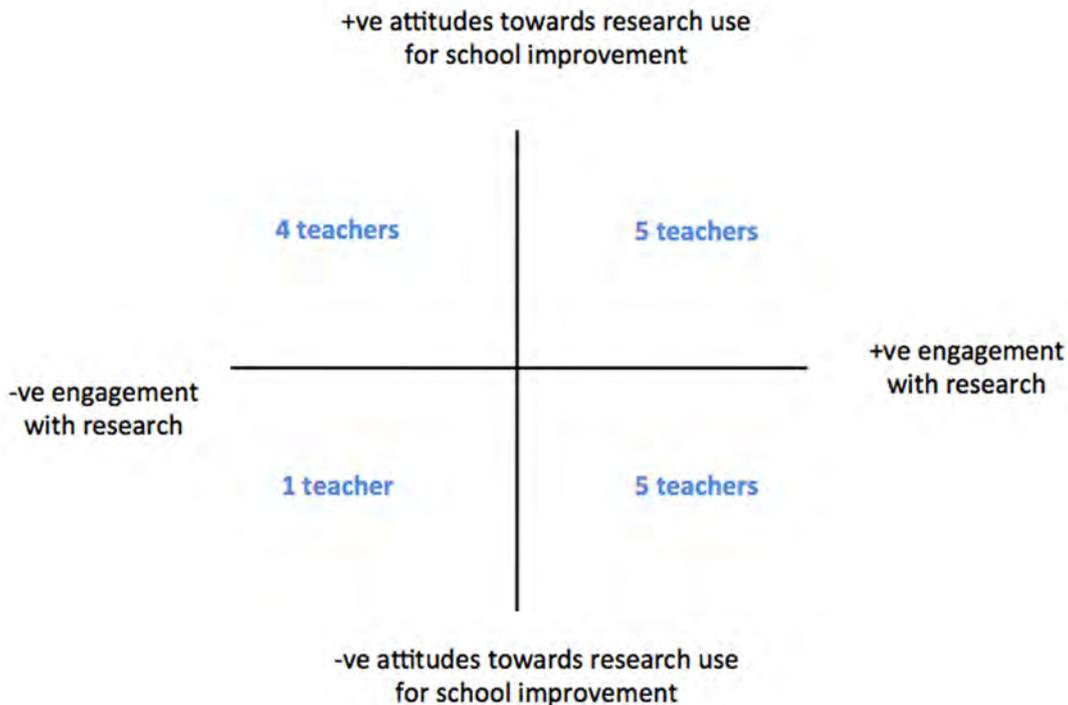
A qualitative methodology was employed to explore both the context for the roll out of the Chestnut’s model for research engagement, and what is required from this approach if it is to move the Federation towards the optimal position of high research capital. Specifically in-

depth semi-structured interviews were used to identify the research use types displayed by Chestnut’s staff and the factors that seemingly led to staff engaging in specific forms of research use. A total 15 teachers were interviewed in September 2016 (representing the whole of the federation’s teaching staff). The characteristics of the respondents are set out in Table 1. Interviews were recorded and these recordings transcribed. Data from the recordings were organised according to each research use type and then analysed thematically. The number of respondents by each quadrant type are provided in Figure 2.

**Table 1: Characteristics of the interview respondents**

Gender	12 Female (92%), 1 Male (8%)
Average time in post	9 years
Average age bracket	46-50
Number with post graduate qualifications	5 (38%)
Middle or senior leaders	6 (46%)

**Figure 2: Number of respondents by quadrant type**





### ■■■ Overall findings

Overall, a summary of the main findings indicates that:

**Type 1** teachers had a firm understanding of the benefits of employing research, felt it provided an exciting vision for the future and felt that senior leaders (both at school and federation level) were encouraging them to experiment using research-informed approaches to realize these benefits/this vision. Teachers in this quadrant believed in the importance of collaboration and in maximizing the benefits of being in a network and because of this, viewed EIP as having value that went beyond the individual classroom. So it was felt that EIP should involve collective endeavour to enable teachers to harness the benefits of the social capital potentially available to them. At the same time, respondents in this quadrant also regarded research use as providing them with a secure knowledge base upon which to engage in collaborative networked activity.

**Type 2** teachers recognized that senior leaders were encouraging them to use research-informed

approaches and were happy to consider engaging in EIP, since this both represented a natural extension of and supported existing collaborative activity (e.g. networked learning conversations). They also saw EIP as helping them fully develop an enquiry habit of mind. Although these teachers were yet to fully understand the practical benefits of evidence informed practice, they were cognizant of the costs required to engage in EIP effectively.

**Type 3** teachers, perhaps because of time pressures, held different views. While they understood the benefits of employing research, they considered EIP primarily as a ‘tool’: something relevant to tackling local (classroom level) issues, rather than something to be used collaboratively to tackle the strategic and more distant goals of the network. As a consequence, teachers in this quadrant were more likely to use research solely to develop their professional autonomy: to try out new strategies and build up a repertoire of research-informed pedagogies that focused solely on day to day student issues.

**Type 4** research users: only one respondent indicated that they rejected any form of research use. While it is not desirable to report on the findings of one individual for reliability and ethical reasons, there is one area of particular significance that can be reflected upon. Respondents located in the other three quadrants universally linked EIP to solving problems, developing an enquiry habit of mind (OECD, 2016), becoming a reflective practitioner and developing 21<sup>st</sup> century learning amongst pupils. However, by contrast, the respondent in this type 4 category linked EIP directly to *performativity and accountability*.

■ ■ ■ **Using and doing research - the link**

As well as examining findings across individual quadrants, it is also possible to undertake a ‘cross case’ approach to examine the factors that inform respondents’ *attitudes towards research use for school improvement* as well as their *engagement with research*. Beginning with the latter, and examining data from both quadrants 1 and 3, it would seem that key to driving participant’s actual use of research is their first hand engagement with research. For instance, those participants who recognized the benefits of using research were those who had typically recently completing postgraduate study.

■ ■ ■ **The collaborative dimension**

A fundamental part of what drives positive attitudes towards research use for school improvement, on the

other hand, is the extent to which the use of research is perceived as being something that should extend beyond the local setting: in other words to teachers’ *collaborative* and *networked* orientations (e.g. their use of learning conversations and networked learning conversations) and the extent to which evidence-use signifies not just a tool, but something that leads to 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning within what the OECD refers to as ‘learning organisations’ (OECD, 2016).

Related is the recognition from teachers within quadrants 1 and 2, that senior leaders in the federation encourage and support the EIP agenda and, vitally, also engage in acts (such as timetabling) to enable networked collaboration. Where participants held *negative attitudes towards research use for school improvement*, they not only perceived that EIP should not extend beyond their classroom, they also engaged in more superficial collaboration (Warren Little, 1982) and highlighted a lack of support to encourage them to engage in research use (most often citing competing priorities as the reason that EIP was only likely to materialize locally).

Situating these findings more widely, it is clear that they both cohere with and augment other work in the areas of research use and educational change at the system level. They also provide vital insights if Chestnut Learning Federation is to achieve its improvement plan objectives to become an evidence-informed Federation. This relates particularly to the ambition of Chestnut Learning Federation to shift the perspectives of all of its

teachers towards those held by type 1 research users, so maximising its research capital. There are a number of factors that come into play when considering how this might be achieved. First, the findings reaffirm the vital importance of first-hand experience if individuals are to buy-in to new ways of working, such as that



represented by using research evidence (e.g. Fullan, 2011). Teachers also need to feel able to experiment if they are to fully engage in EIP type activity (e.g. Katz *et al.*, 2009; Roberts, 2015). Key to increasing engagement with research amongst teachers in the Chestnut Learning Federation therefore is ensuring teachers are able to engage with and apply research when attempting to improve their practice *and* that they can recognise the impact of doing so.

### The vital role of leadership

These findings also reaffirm that senior leader support is key to fostering a culture of research use. As Earl and Katz (2006: 20) argue, it is '*leaders [who] have the challenge of convincing everyone who works in a school of the merits of using [evidence] for productive change and creating the conditions in which [evidence] can become an integral part of school decision making*'. Such conditions include coordinated and protected time and space, as well as access to relevant research resource (Galdin O'Shea, 2015). Senior leadership support is also essential for networked activity to take root and flourish (Earl and Katz, 2006; Rin-on-Gallardo and Fullan, 2016). Support in these areas is most effectively delivered via a mixture of transformational leadership strategies as well as school leaders 'walking the talk': i.e.

Showcasing the research-related behaviours expected of staff (Southworth, 2009; Stoll, 2015).

So the findings from this study highlight the requirement for Chestnut Learning Federation to promote the idea of community and ensuring that staff are both encouraged and supported, with leadership modelling, to engage in research use in a networked way. Here all staff must move beyond the superficial exchange of practices and resource towards meaningful research-related collaboration that has demonstrable benefits for both individual teachers and the Federation as a whole. In essence this involves the following. To support type 1 type perspectives, school leaders in the Federation need to ensure all teachers act more readily in the spirit of what Brown and Zhang (2016) refers to as the *culture of the networked research learning community*. The use of networks in ways that can produce a multitude of benefits at a variety of levels is therefore key to unlocking the potential that may otherwise lie dormant in schools seeking to develop their evidenced informed practice.

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# Transforming teacher development and learning

**David Weston** describes the work and achievements of the Teacher Development Trust – from its earliest beginnings as a personal endeavour to the systemic and cultural change being forged in the world of professional development

**P**owerful professional development to help children succeed and teachers thrive. That's the mantra of the Teacher Development Trust (or TDT), the charity that I set up in early 2012 to champion teachers' professional learning. We've discovered a lot about the challenges of getting great development in every school, as well as having had a number of breakthroughs. This is the story of the TDT.



### ■■■ Formation of the Trust – a personal journey

Back in 2011 I was a full time physics and maths teacher with a role as the school's data manager. I'd been teaching since a PGCE in 2003 and had become interested in how school data systems capture – or rather, fail to capture – meaningful information about teaching practice to help us develop. Being something of a nerd, and drawing on my background in engineering and computing, I set about creating two tools: firstly, a graphical tool to explore and analyse classroom data

more effectively and, secondly, a 'trip advisor' type online database for CPD opportunities.

In order to pursue this project, I drew upon some experience in initial teacher training some training in data and Initial Teacher Education/Newly Qualified Teacher mentoring that I had been doing with Brunel University and Teach First. I was also lucky to strike up a great working relationship with Philippa Cordingley and her colleagues at CUREE who gradually led me to discover some of the great research in the field of teacher professional development.

It was an interesting time. Being early in the coalition government and with Michael Gove as education secretary we were mid-way through the 'bonfire of the quangos' with the GTC already closed and the TDA on its way out. The relatively recent project of a national CPD database was being closed down and the only CPD policy to speak of at the time was that 'Teaching Schools will do it'.

Around the end of 2011 I had recently gone for a promotion in my school and had been pipped to the post by someone else. I was thinking about new challenges and happened to meet Mark McCourt, a former maths teacher, headteacher and ex-Director of the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM). Mark suggested the idea of a non-profit or charity to try and campaign for more effective professional development and, together, we set about forming the new charity along with two other founding trustees.

The early months of 2012 were challenging as I was juggling part-time teaching with the charity. I took my exam classes to the end of their courses and finally started full-time as Chief Executive in June.

### ■■■ Early work – steep learning curve

We immediately set about three strands of work:

1. **Advocacy:** promoting understanding and stimulating demand for more effective approaches to professional development. This involved social media, blogs and speaking engagements as well as lots of informal networking to establish relationships across the sector. We ran a number of seminars in the early



days and managed to place a number of high profile pieces in education sector media. A key strand of this work from the very early days was engaging with government and other influential sector players to try and get CPD higher up the agenda.

2. Provision: using our 'trip advisor' database (then called the Good CPD Guide) to help schools to find and commission external expertise more effectively, to encourage providers to improve their provision and to support providers to understand and implement the evidence around effective CPD.
3. Schools: helping schools to transform the culture, leadership, planning and resourcing of their CPD through the provision of tools and training.

Unlike many other charities, we started with no major grants, no government funding and no established business plans. As someone who had never run an organisation before, it was a steep learning curve for me. However, we soon found ourselves being commissioned to support schools and providers, as well as successfully persuading some charitable and commercial organisations to support our early work through grants and sponsorship. This was helped significantly by the support of some of the earlier trustees and advisors, including John Bangs, Dame Alison Peacock, Sam Freedman, Charlotte Leslie

MP, Bill Donoghue, Professor Rob Coe and Philippa Cordingley, among many others. We were also delighted to have Sir John Holman join us as our new Chair and Lord Andrew Adonis join us as our Honorary President.

### System impact and key achievements

We were clear from the outset that we wanted to change the way the system operated, making effective professional development a default choice rather than an unusual discovery.

Looking back over the 5 years of our work, three main achievements stand out at a system level: the College of Teaching, the new Standard for Teachers' Professional Development and the systematic review, *Developing Great Teaching*.

The idea of a 'Royal College of Teaching' had emerged both from teachers within the Prince's Teaching Institute (PTI) and also from the Education Select Committee. Its development was masterfully facilitated in the early days by the PTI, who successfully worked with teachers and others to create two iterations of a blueprint for the future organisation. By early 2014, a re-invigorated College of Teachers was also interested in playing a major role and bequeathing its existing Royal Charter. The PTI, the College and TDT formed an alliance, the 'Claim your College coalition,' which was quickly joined by the SSAT. Each organisation invested

a huge amount of time, resource and effort to pull the project together, bring the Department for Education and other funders on side and start the process of setting up a formal Board of Trustees drawn from across the teaching profession.

After much effort, the Chartered College is now starting work. TDT pushed hard to make sure that the body's vision was focused on really scholarly, professional attitudes to expertise and professional learning. With the new organisation about to launch its first membership offer as I write this piece, TDT is feeling proud of the role we played in the setup of a body which should help to raise the status of the profession and transform attitudes to CPD.

A second key achievement was the new 'CPD Standard'. From the very early days of the Trust we were encouraging Ministers to make professional development a priority and to come up with a clear, engaging vision of how it should be. This bore fruit in early 2015 when TDT was asked to release me to be Chair of an expert group within the Department to form the new Standard for Teachers' Professional Development. The document (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standard-for-teachers-professional-development>) went through a long consultation process and was released in the summer of 2016.

Finally, TDT partnered with TES Global to commission a major new systematic review of what works in teachers' professional development. *Developing Great Teaching: Lessons from the international reviews into effective professional development* (Cordingley, P., Higgins, S., Greany, T., Buckler, N., Coles-Jordan, D., Crisp, B., Saunders, L., Coe, R.) was a huge undertaking led by Philippa Cordingley and her team at CUREE along with Professors Steve Higgins and Rob Coe at Durham and Toby Greany at UCL IoE. The research rapidly became a key document for government, for the Education Endowment Foundation and for many other key bodies across the sector.

### ■ ■ ■ Our ongoing and future work

Most of our time is spent working with schools. We have a network of over 200 schools (primary and secondary; maintained, academy and independent; mainstream,

alternative and special) from across England and Wales. The TDT has developed a quality framework which underpins our CPD Audit service and offer tools, resources, training and support for the schools to implement, refine and embed better approaches to teacher development. We set a deliberately high standard with only seven schools having ever achieved our 'Gold' level award out of nearly one hundred and twenty audits.

It's a huge pleasure to visit some really exceptional schools. We've seen some extraordinary practices and have been able to publicise some brilliant practice in leading sector newspapers and magazines. The Trust has also encourage school leaders from these schools to get out on to the speaking circuit, sharing their expertise and raising the profile of leaders with a thoroughly healthy attitude to professionalism and teacher learning.

Our major project this year is to revisit our 'trip advisor' database, now called TDT Advisor. We're engaging in a big strategic review of the site and exploring how to develop and improve it so that more schools and providers can use it to form long-lasting, sustained and high-impact relationships which make a real difference.

### ■ ■ ■ Changing culture

There is still a long way to go. Changing the professional habits of half a million teachers and the cultures of twenty-five thousand schools is no easy task. But we know that TDT is just one cog in a huge crowd of inspiring people and amazing organisations. We're dedicated to working with as many people as possible to keep spreading the word, inspiring as to what is possible, offering new perspectives on what 'good' teacher learning looks like and getting on with the day-to-day job of pouring energy, enthusiasm and expertise into a massive change-management task. If we all get it right then our pupils, our schools, our teachers and our country stand to benefit immensely.

**David Weston is founder and CEO of the Teacher Development Trust – <http://TDTrust.org>. You can follow him on Twitter at @informed\_edu and the Trust at @TeacherDevTrust.**



## Professional reading makes a difference

Reading educational literature and research is not widespread among busy school practitioners. **Jo Evans** explains why it can be invaluable, particularly for headteachers as the school's "lead learners," and she gives guidance on how to catch the reading bug!

**W**hat's the point of reading these days when all we need do is follow the governmental dictates? For one former headteacher it has meant achieving Outstanding outcomes in two schools she has led, the most recent report stating, "The headteacher has created a culture in which learning flourishes" (Mar 2015).

### Why Read

There is so much information for leadership teams to digest, currently from two main sources, the DFE and Ofsted to whom schools are ultimately accountable. We can often lose sight of where our real accountabilities lie, our pupils, and be distracted from our core purpose of developing our pedagogy to better meet their needs. There is a wealth of high quality research available which, if used as an intrinsic part of school improvement, can really make a difference to practice and provision for learners.

### Lead Learners

Headteachers are responsible for modelling the learning process. Demonstrating the notion that you

are always learning, permits staff and pupils to feel comfortable to be open to learning, make mistakes and enjoy the pursuit of making sense. Take, for example, the learning around growth mindset which has become very familiar to most practitioners in the last two to three years. Dweck's work stems from the late 80's the first major book being in 2006; yet most will have only become familiar with her work in the last few years when it was put in a more public arena, promoted by those who have recognised its significance, converting it into smaller soundbites for general consumption. Those that realise the deepest impact in their schools are those who truly engage with the theory and incorporate the learning into their practice through long term strategic planning.



## Professional reading makes a difference ■■■■

### ■■■ Going about reading

It can be hard to know where to start but your personal philosophy of learning will draw us to certain theories against others. Often an article or a talk at an event can sow seeds of interest that can be pursued. A bibliography should be seen as a treasure trove of threads to follow, be it to an article, a research paper or a book.

As you read it is wise to make notes, highlight or notate in the margins (if the reading belongs to you). If you intend sharing the book with others you might need to keep notation/highlight free as they can be off-putting. The notes are best when considering the reading in relation to your setting/practice rather than general statements.

### ■■■ Finding others and sharing the load

The idea that you can learn with, for and on behalf of others is one that every head should keep in mind. Everyone has different gifts and talents and identifying those readers and researchers within your school and wider professional community can naturally build collaborative learning. A teacher who regularly reads the education pages of the educational press can begin to forward links to others, another headteacher with a particular pedagogical interest can provide a summary of a journal article, a member of your leadership team might attend a conference and so forth.

A more formal way to connect with research is to become part of a journal group or professional networking group that provides opportunities to share articles and ideas. The concept of journal groups is very familiar in evidence-based medicine and is the ideal way to learn collaboratively. A theme might be set based on local/national issues or simply come from a school or individual's particular passions. At the start this can be less important than getting the group's activity embedded as a regular part of a school's cycle of learning.

### ■■■ Good places to start

The Cambridge Primary Review Trust has produced twelve research reviews in the last two years with topics linked to its priorities. Of particular interest for both primary and secondary teachers would be Wynn Harlen's review of assessment and Pickett and Vanderbloemen's report on equity and disadvantage which makes recommendations for UK social and educational policy and practice. All of the research reviews come as a full report and a 4 page briefing so can be read at different levels of detail. These documents could form the basis of one or several group meetings.

Taking part in a group can work on the principle mentioned earlier -reading with, for or on behalf of others. A good group will be happy to include those who perhaps haven't read the article but would be a worthy contributor to a principled debate.

A very useful framework came from an EEF funded project on Research Learning Communities which took research and asked practitioners to reflect and respond to three questions:

1. What resonated with me?
2. What challenged me?
3. So what difference does this make to me and my practice/leadership?

### ■■■ It all comes back to you

One of the keys to successful leadership, consistently noted is the idea of the principal as lead learner. Using quality research from highly respected academics is a crucial part of building your professional knowledge and keeping it current. A deepening understanding of education philosophy and practice is a vital part of enabling a school leadership team to negotiate the current educational landscape with a secure foundation.

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## Confidence is everything in learning!

As the work of Carol Dweck has proved, no matter how able, a child's perception of themselves as learners will determine their academic careers. If it is poor it will:

- Undermine their resilience, so that they give up at the slightest obstacle
- Make them defensive learners, unwilling to challenge themselves
- Make them over-reliant on teachers and on received opinion
- Write-off successes as 'flukes'
- Under-perform in exams and tests
- Have low aspirations and under-achieve in life

Whilst there are other self-esteem tests, no other test measures a child's perception of themselves, specifically as learners, so well. This is why MALS has gone around the world as the key test to use to measure a child's image of themselves as learners and thinkers. Using it will enable you to:

- Uncover, beneath external shows of confidence, which children have poor views of themselves as learners and therefore will be liable to under-perform
- Pinpoint exactly where their problems are
- Measure progress in developing 'open-mindsets' in children



### Teacher Skills

The MALS is also a very subtle test of teacher performance – those teachers who succeed in lifting a child's MALS score have the ability to motivate and teach the skills of independent learning... and vice versa! This too is often far from being easily visible.

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Annual Primary Assessments

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# Annual Primary Assessments for the NEW National Curriculum

Pupil-friendly checks to measure progress and depth of learning

- How are your pupils doing before and between SATs?
- Have they secured this year's objectives?
- Can they apply and prove their knowledge?
- Can they succeed in timed and formal conditions?
- Do your current arrangements take account of teacher-assessed elements such as writing and range of reading?
- Can you compare cohorts?

## WHAT YOU GET IN EACH YEAR PACK

1 Annual Primary Assessment Master Pack –  
Covering Reading, Writing and Mathematics  
1 Teachers Guide  
Photocopiable Master pack with Site Licence



You can answer these questions for Years 1, 3, 4 and 5 using  
the NEW Annual Primary Assessments, by Sue Hackman



Ensure that your pupils are on track to succeed in the new, tougher NEW National Curriculum by using the new **Annual Primary Assessments** from Sue Hackman and Imaginative Minds.

These assessments help you cross-check your children's knowledge and progress, and provide a helpful profile of their performance across the strands of reading, writing and mathematics.

Written by a leading expert in assessment and Assessment for Learning. Sue Hackman is a former Chief Examiner and, as Chief Adviser at the DfE for 13 years, was responsible for Curriculum and Assessment in the National Curriculum.

## The effective and detailed tests help you:

- Monitor attainment before and between SATs (Years 1, 3, 4 and 5)
- Include teacher-assessed strands as well as tested strands
- Test objectives taken directly from the National Curriculum
- Gain a clear sight of strengths and weaknesses of pupils and classes, across strands and subjects
- Cross-check on-going teacher assessments
- Compare performances between cohorts and the progress of individual cohorts over the years
- Offer pupils a gentle introduction to working in test conditions

Turn over to see how the assessments work...

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# Ensure your pupils are progressing in the new curriculum

The Annual Primary Assessments are simple to administer and easy to mark. They give your teachers a complete overview of each child in reading, writing and maths. The marking scheme is clear, as is the analysis.

## How are the children assessed?

The tasks are based on the major strands of the new curriculum (e.g. spelling, grammar and punctuation) and give a result for each strand. Most of the tests are formal timed assessments; some are less formal.

## What is assessed?

Each assessment covers the age-specific objectives of the National Curriculum. This includes strands usually allocated to teacher assessment (such as the range of reading). This offers a full and fair assessment for younger pupils.

## Is the mark scheme easy to use?

The teacher's resource pack gives you a clear and very straightforward marking scheme. While the pupil records are useful for feeding back to parents.

## What are other schools saying?

"The style is appropriate to current SATs papers and the content is organised well throughout: topics covered a section at a time. We feel the tests are age-appropriate."  
Forest View Junior School, Notts

"Clear and useful - effective and detailed."  
'The Three Schools', Milton Keynes

"They are easy to follow and show clearly which objective children are missing or haven't understood."  
Naburn Primary School, York

## Order Today

Help your teachers track pupil progress through the new tougher reading, writing and maths curriculum. Order your packs today!

Product	Qty	Price	Total
<b>Year 1 Annual Primary Assessment with Teachers Guide</b> (Photocopiable Master pack with Site Licence)		<b>£75.00</b>	
<b>Year 3 Annual Primary Assessment with Teachers Guide</b> (Photocopiable Master pack with Site Licence)		<b>£75.00</b>	
<b>Year 4 Annual Primary Assessment with Teachers Guide</b> (Photocopiable Master pack with Site Licence)		<b>£75.00</b>	
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<b>Order all of the years together and save 15%</b>		<del>£300</del> <b>£255</b>	
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# THINK LIKE A LEARNER!

## A new practical guidebook to help children acquire the language, skills and self-awareness of successful learners

This book asks children to involve themselves in key questions about learning and develops their self-awareness as self-critical thinkers and learners. It asks:

- How do we think and talk about learning?
- What is 'bouncebackability' and how do you get it?
- How can we make sure our team learning is high quality?
- How does making choices help us to become more responsible for our own learning?

Ofsted has observed how children 'really enjoyed learning' in a school using the guidebook.

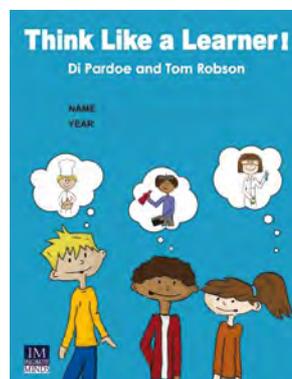
Hundreds of schools and thousands of children have used the questions and ideas from the 'Think Like a Learner' approach and the authors, Diana Pardoe and Tom Robson have now turned them into a workbook for children aged 8-12.

### Comments from children:

- We now work harder
- It's good to be in the challenge zone and get out of the comfort zone
- We understand we need to co-operate and know how to do it
- We understand that learning is our responsibility and that we have got to take part

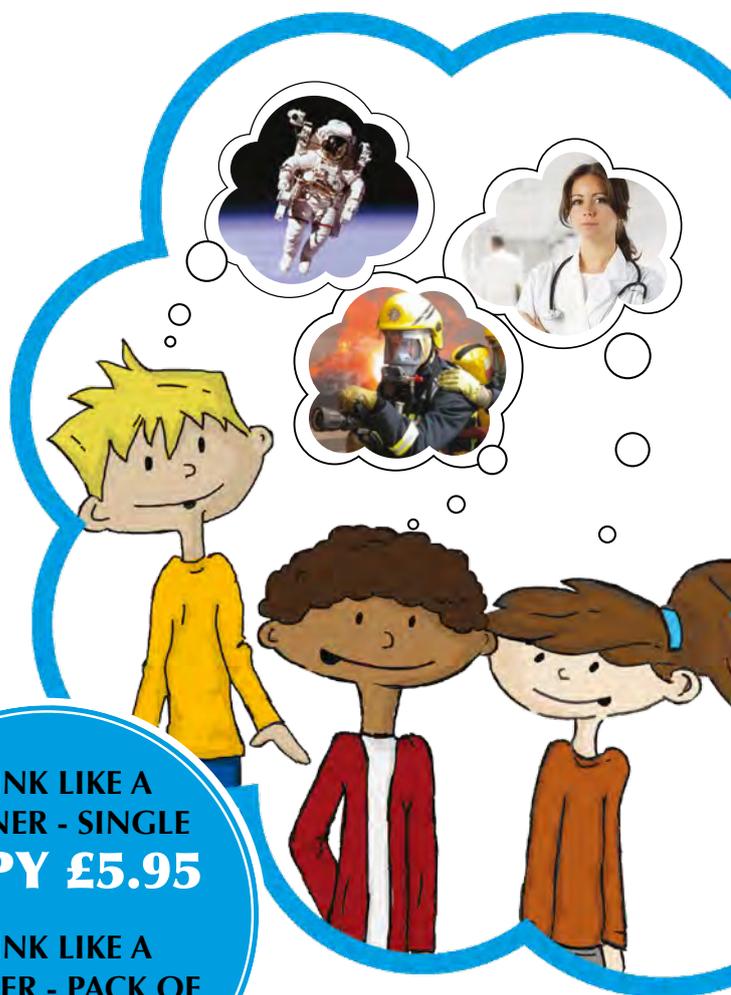
### Comments from teachers:

- The children are becoming more divergent thinkers
- They are more in control of their learning. They recognise what makes them successful learners and THEY have the responsibility for learning.
- When faced with difficult tasks the children are more prepared to have a go and to take a risk
- Improved communication skills
- Raised self-esteem



Help your children make the transition to secondary school with **Think Like a Learner**

Carol Dweck has shown how important children's self-concept as learners is to their performance, no matter what their ability and Bob Burden's *Myself As a Learner Scale (MALS)* suggests how children's self-concept as learners can grow when taking responsibility for assessing their own work. A child's ability to reflect on their own thinking is now recognised as critical to them becoming resilient and successful learners.



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*Learning is an exciting journey*

*The more we understand about it the more exciting it gets*

*The better we get at thinking the more we enjoy taking on a challenge*

*The harder we try the prouder we feel*

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