

Research Champion Update – November 14

Using educational research to inform changes that improve the educational experience of our students.

The above is not a very snappy tagline, but we feel there are too many of them kicking around the educational landscape! However, it is at the core of each strand of the educational research work carried out by ATA.

Experienced teachers and researchers tend to agree that keeping abreast of useful developments in research publications and local initiatives is almost impossible alongside the demands of full-time teaching. Today's (or even yesterday's) pressing deadlines squawk loudly for our attention whilst unexpected incidents and issues gobble up opportunities to take stock and consider the bigger picture.

Whilst this is understandable, in our view it is far from ideal. Within educational research individuals are given the luxury of time and space to analyse critically individual aspects of education. It seems logical to posit that helping schools to engage with useful, relevant research could help bring about informed improvement.

As mentioned in our last twilight session, we are committed to ensuring that engagement with educational research has a lasting positive impact upon each of the following:

- a. Our own understanding of teaching and learning.
- b. Our own teaching practice.
- c. The structures and systems that we have responsibility for within school.

Each term we will share a short update covering the following:

1. The Big Picture – updates in research use nationally.
2. Local events – reminder of our upcoming collective events.
3. Individual schools' update – outline of the direction 'research use' is headed in each of our schools.
4. Emerging questions and queries

Welcome to our first newsletter! If you would like to contribute to our next edition, either in relation to the features or by contributing something extra in a guest slot, please let me know.

Updates from Educational Research

- a. Professor Coe and others at CEM, have produced an excellent paper entitled 'What Makes Great Teaching.' The report outlines specific practices which are well-supported or heavily challenged by research findings. The three links below provide a headline summary, a short reflection and the report itself - all worth a read!
 - <http://news.tes.co.uk/b/news/2014/10/30/thou-shalt-not-praise-the-seven-deadly-sins-of-teaching.aspx>
 - <https://thewingtoheaven.wordpress.com/2014/10/31/new-report-by-the-sutton-trust-what-makes-great-teaching/>
 - <http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/What-makes-great-teaching-FINAL-4.11.14.pdf>
- b. The EEF continually updates its research evaluation tool. This does mean that certain interventions can move up and down its ranking system. Whilst you may be aware of the headlines, it is the individual summaries which provide more useful insight. Kevan Collins (EEF) is keen to encourage teachers to move beyond the headlines (feedback's great, TA's aren't) to the finer details. There are conditions which lead to feedback failing, or TA's having a significant impact.
- c. Twitter is an excellent source of information in this area and in education as a whole. The following accounts are worth following:
@researchED1 @HuntingEnglish @judeenright @C_Hendrick @GuardianEdu @surrealanarchy

Upcoming events:

Research Symposium

On Tuesday 2nd December (9:30-3:00)

The Marsh Academy is hosting our first symposium in its well-appointed (and catered☺) Conference Centre. There will be expert input on both feedback and staff development; practical workshops on the implications of research insights; a review of Professor Coe's 'Seven-Deadly Sins of Teaching; and plenty of opportunity to share ideas and experiences with like-minded colleagues from local schools.

Twilight Sessions:

Tuesday 9th December @ Phoenix Primary School(16:00-17:00)

The main items for discussion will be:

- Practical implications arising from the symposium.
- A spotlight on the fantastic work which Heidi is heading up at Phoenix Primary School (our host for the evening)
- Headteacher James Tibble has promised some excellent refreshments!

Tuesday 3rd Feb @Towers School (16:00 – 17:00)

The main items for discussion will be:

- What does research use look like?
- First-hand experience of a recent Ofsted inspection.
- Spotlight on an innovative approach to alternative provision at Towers School.

What is happening where?

The following gives a brief overview of what is happening where. At our next five twilight sessions, the host school will give us a little more of an insight into their own projects.

Phoenix Primary School: Discussions with both James and Heidi led to the decision to focus on ‘**Effective Questioning.**’ Heidi has taken the lead with a small group of teachers both to review research relating to effective questioning and conduct local investigation of what happens in their own classrooms. The insights gained from both large-scale research and careful examination of lesson practice have been most informative. We look forward to hearing more of this at our next twilight.

Brockhill Park School: John Black and a group of staff keen to engage with educational research have embarked on a research informed review cycle, designed to clarify staff and student perceptions of ‘What Learning Looks Like’ in specific subjects. Once the first review cycle is complete, we will be considering the implications of insights gained and deciding on new steps to take to help improve genuine student learning.

Towers: We have been most impressed by the work of Paul Moran in restructuring and refining the school’s internal ‘Alternative Provision Unit’. His overarching aim of encouraging healthy, happy, successful students has informed a carefully tailored programme of support. We hope to hear more about this at the twilight in January. More recently, we have been working with Tara McVey in reviewing and improving an evidence-based CPD programme.

Marsh Academy: Following a brief foray into the issues surrounding effective research and evidence use and a some consideration of what makes ‘Homework’ effective, the Marsh Academy educational research team will be moving on to developing a school based research project later this term. Helpfully Cartwright and Hardie have published a practical guide to evidence based change. We look forward to seeing how this project develops.

Highworth Grammar School: At Highworth a group of 15 staff have been reviewing both established research findings and school practice in relation to effective assessment. Following an introduction to the topic, staff have been considering the aims and effects of their own feedback and how it is perceived and ‘used’ by students. There has also been a trial of RLS (Research Lesson Study) designed to inform the school’s CPD programme for the year.

And finally, in the small corner of the twitterverse which I have been exploring in recent weeks, there was a fascinating discussion about what ‘Research Use’ actually is. Many teachers are expressing a genuine interest in using research and there are a few individuals around the country employed to help schools to do so. However, as yet, there is not agreement about what it actually is! In my view, *pedagoginthmacine* has made a great contribution in providing this model.

INSERT LINK AND IMAGE HERE

Research use and theory clearly should inform teaching praxis but this, in turn, needs to be informed by conscious reflection of our actions in the classroom. We hope that your involvement in the project makes a contribution to your own attempts to become a better teacher. Any feedback you have in relation to this idealistic aim is much appreciated!