Learner Response System

A Learner Response System (LRS) is a classroom feedback tool. Teachers and pupils use electronic handheld devices to provide immediate feedback during lessons. Pupils can respond instantaneously to a teacher question using the device, or work through problems individually, with answers and feedback provided at a tailored speed. This trial used Promethean handsets and software.

EEF Summary

Responsive high quality feedback is recognised as an essential element of the teaching and learning process. But embedding continuous feedback in standard practice can be challenging, and some popular approaches such as triple impact marking have been criticised for their impact on teacher workload. In this environment, Learner Response Systems are becoming increasingly popular.

We tested a Learner Response System using Promethean handsets to assess whether it could improve pupil outcomes by increasing the speed and quality of teacher and pupil feedback.

This robust evaluation found no evidence that Key Stage 2 results in maths and reading were improved for children using the system for 2 years.

Teacher and pupil views of the system were generally very positive however. Overall, teachers liked being able to immediately review pupil responses and give instant feedback, and felt that the LRS helped to engage pupils and allowed them to work at their own pace. Some pupils and teachers reported that the system did not provide enough opportunity for children to ‘show their working’, making it hard for teachers to identify sources of error, and sometimes resulting in negative feedback when a pupil got everything right apart from the precise detail of the final answer.
Research Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome/Group</th>
<th>Impact - the size of the difference between Learner Response System pupils and other pupils</th>
<th>Security - how confident are we in this result?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maths (cohort A)</td>
<td>0 Months' Progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading (cohort A)</td>
<td>0 Months' Progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths (cohort B)</td>
<td>-1 Months' Progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading (cohort B)</td>
<td>0 Months' Progress</td>
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Were the schools in the trial similar to my school?

The trial involved 97 schools from the North West and West Yorkshire. 35% of pupils in these schools were eligible for FSM compared to 18% for all state primaries in England.

Key Stage 1 test scores in these schools were similar to those for schools with high rates of FSM eligibility from these regions, but below the average for state primaries in England.

19% of the pupils in these schools had English as an additional language, compared to 18% for all state primaries in England.

Could I implement this in my school?

The ActivExpression handsets and ActivInspire software used in the trial are commercially available.

For each participating class, 1 teacher attended 9 full days of training over 2 years, but this training is no longer available to buy.

Delivered by Teachers | Participant group | Intervention length
Whole Class | 2 Years

How much will it cost?

The full LRS package for one class cost around £7000, or £77 per pupil per year when averaged over 3 years. Running costs after the first year were low. Schools also needed to meet the cost of staff cover for 7 days of teacher training in the first year and 2 in the second.
Evaluation Conclusions

1. The project found no evidence that the LRS improved Key Stage 2 results in maths and reading for either cohort.

2. The project found no evidence that the LRS improved the average scores of boys, girls or pupils who have ever been eligible for Free School Meals.

3. Classroom teachers and children were generally positive about the LRS. Teachers welcomed the ability to quickly assess pupil responses for certain types of tasks and give instant feedback. They felt that the LRS helped to engage pupils and allowed different pupils to work at their own pace.

4. Some teachers and pupils felt that the inability of the system to let children ‘show their working’ was a weakness. There was also a concern that incorrectly programmed or over-specified answers meant that pupils occasionally received negative feedback when in fact their answer was wholly or partially correct. There was some criticism from pupils and teachers that the small size of the handset made it difficult to type properly.

5. The intervention was variably implemented, with a number of teachers not meeting the weekly targets for usage. Reasons given for this included staffing issues, lack of time, and the inability to use the system to its full potential. However, even in schools with high usage, the analysis did not find evidence of an impact.