Dialogic Teaching

Dialogic Teaching aims to improve pupil engagement and attainment by improving the quality of classroom talk. Teachers are trained in strategies that enable pupils to reason, discuss, argue and explain rather than merely respond, in order to develop higher order thinking and articulacy. The programme uses video review, print materials and in-school mentoring to support teachers’ practice across English, maths and science lessons.

EEF Summary

We know that the nature and quality of teaching practice in the classroom has a big impact on pupil learning. Pilots of dialogic teaching in the UK have suggested that it can change teachers’ practice, and there is other evidence that cognitively challenging classroom talk can lead to gains for pupils in language, mathematics and science, but this is the first trial of this approach.

This trial found consistent, positive effects in English, science and maths for all children in Year 5, equivalent to about 2 months additional progress. The result was similar when looking only at children eligible for free school meals. This is consistent with other EEF trials focusing on cognitively challenging talk, such as Philosophy for Children, and Thinking, Doing, Talking Science. The consistent results across subjects and the lack of any subject specific content in the training suggest that the approach may improve children’s overall thinking and learning skills rather than their knowledge in a given topic.

The majority of teachers felt they needed more than two terms to fully embed the approach in their classrooms and thought it would have more impact over a longer time period.

EEF will explore options for testing the approach using a model that could be made available to a large number of schools.

An addendum to the report was published in April 2019, which did not find an impact on KS2 results. No process evaluation was conducted as part of this follow-up, and it is likely that many schools did not implement the programme in Year 6, prior to the KS2 testing.
Research Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome/Group</th>
<th>Impact - the size of the difference between Dialogic Teaching pupils and other pupils</th>
<th>Security - how confident are we in this result?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>1 Months’ Progress</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maths (FSM)</td>
<td>2 Months’ Progress</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2 Months’ Progress</td>
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<td>Science (FSM)</td>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
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</tbody>
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Were the schools in the trial similar to my school?

There were 76 schools in the trial, located in Leeds, Bradford and Birmingham.

59 of the 76 were Good or Outstanding schools.

Around 35% of the pupils in the schools had been eligible for free schools meals at some point (EverFSM).

Around 50% of the pupils in the schools had English as a second language.

Could I implement this in my school?

The programme was delivered by a team from the Cambridge Primary Review Trust and the University of York. Robin Alexander’s A Dialogic Teaching Companion - a text that builds on the project and its professional development materials and draws on extensive research from other sources too - will be published by Routledge in April 2020. Another core resource for intervention participants - Towards Dialogic Teaching by Robin Alexander - is available now.

For each class delivering the intervention, the classroom teacher needs to attend 3 days of training.

In addition, 1 ‘teacher mentor’ attends 4 days and the head teacher attends 1 day.

Each teacher has a fortnightly session with the mentor for 2 terms, which lasts around 90 minutes.

Schools need to be able to video record lessons for review and reflection.
Evaluation Conclusions

1. Children in Dialogic Teaching schools made two additional months’ progress in English and science, and one additional month’s progress in maths, compared to children in control schools, on average. The three padlock security rating means we are moderately confident that this difference was due to the intervention and not to other factors.

2. Children eligible for free school meals (FSM) made two additional months’ progress in English, science, and maths compared to FSM children in control schools. The smaller number of FSM pupils in the trial limits the security of this result.

3. The intervention was highly regarded by headteachers, mentors, and teachers who thought that the Dialogic Teaching approach had positive effects on pupil confidence and engagement.

4. The majority of participating teachers felt that it would take longer than two terms to fully embed a Dialogic Teaching approach in their classrooms. It could therefore be valuable to test the impact of the intervention over a longer period.

5. This intervention requires teachers to change classroom talk across the curriculum, supported by training, handbooks, video, and regular review meetings with mentors. Future research could aim to differentiate the effects of these different elements.