Research Learning Communities

Research Learning Communities (RLC) was an intervention that aimed to raise teachers’ awareness, understanding, and use of educational research in developing their practice, with the ultimate aim of improving pupil outcomes. Evidence Champions from each school attended RLC workshops in which they discussed research with academic experts and colleagues from other schools.

EEF Summary

Creating knowledge of what works in education is a useful first step. But if this research does not reach teachers or is not acted upon, then a growing evidence base will not be enough to improve pupil outcomes. For this reason, the EEF has funded this study, along with a number of related projects on research use in schools, which aimed to test the best ways of engaging teachers with relevant research.

The evaluation did not find any overall improvement in pupils’ reading results. However, the study suggests that there may be a relationship between how engaged teachers are with research, and the attainment of their pupils. There was also some tentative evidence that being in an RLC increased teachers’ disposition towards research. While these results should be treated with caution, they are of interest because they suggest one possible way in which RLC could improve pupil outcomes over the longer term: by promoting a teacher characteristic - research engagement - which is linked to positive pupil outcomes.

Teachers in the study reported several challenges to engaging with research, particularly lack of time and staff turnover among research champions. The Education Endowment Foundation will continue to explore innovative ways of encouraging teachers to use research, including through our Research Schools and on-going Campaigns.
Research Results

### Outcome/Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact - the size of the difference between Research Learning Communities pupils and other pupils</th>
<th>Security - how confident are we in this result?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>0 Months’ Progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Were the schools in the trial similar to my school?

There were 159 primary schools in this trial. 89 were rated Good or Outstanding, and 102 were located in urban areas. Around 21% of pupils were eligible for free school meals and 26% had English as an additional language.

### Could I implement this in my school?

In this intervention, schools need access to an academic partner to facilitate discussions and access to recent high quality evidence.

The programme is delivered by the UCL Institute of Education. It is not currently commercially available to schools.

### How much will it cost?

The average cost for each school is around £860, or £3 per pupil per year when averaged over three years. The costs vary depending on the number of schools in an RLC, and the number of pupils in each school. In this intervention, there was also a one-off cost of £2500 per RLC for social network analysis, which was used to determine who would be best placed to act in the role of evidence champion.

### Evaluation Conclusions

1. The project found no evidence that Research Learning Communities improves reading outcomes for children at Key Stage 2.
2. The project did find a positive impact on teachers’ disposition towards research. There was, however, some evidence that this impact may have been influenced by other factors such as the level of postgraduate qualifications or seniority of teachers that took part in the intervention.

3. Exploratory analysis identified some evidence of a small positive relationship between teachers’ disposition towards research and pupil outcomes, irrespective of involvement in an RLC.

4. Evidence Champion roles in each school were intended to be held by the same people throughout the intervention, to support the development of a research-focused culture within each school. Staff turnover was therefore a barrier to implementation.

5. Some teachers felt that it may take a number of years for participation in an RLC to change teaching practice and improve pupil outcomes. Future research could therefore examine longer term impacts.