

Blog

There are downsides to a late Easter but it did mean some nicer weather - I hope you had chance to enjoy it! Here is a photo from a sunny day in the fabulous Oxenber woods near Austwick in Yorkshire amongst the primroses, cowslips, false oxlips, wood anemones and orchids. Plus an owl flew out of its nest at eye height during this walk - to distract us from the two eggs in its nest – quite magical!

And it isn't only in the natural world that sap seems to be rising. Interest in engaging teaches in and with research is snowballing. For example, Just before Easter several CUREE colleagues had a very interesting day at the regional ResearchEd conference in Birmingham. About 160 people, mostly teachers, gave up their Saturday to think and work together to make engaging with other people's research and in action research a central part of professional life. Energy levels were high (and so too were the buns and cakes this time – refreshments were a bit thin

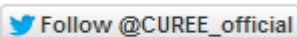


on the ground at the first event). So was a new form of scholarship – from three different presenters including Daisy Christodoulou, Joe Kirby and David Weston using Daniel Willingham's book on "Why don't students like school" to re-think a number of burning questions such as "why most dissemination is useless and how we can fix it?". There was less empirical research about teaching and learning than you might have expected and fewer teacher researchers making presentations than I would have liked. But there were plenty in the audience including a fascinating teacher, just finishing her PhD on a randomised controlled trial on supporting extended writing, who greeted me with "it's your fault I am here" – in a very cheerful tone of voice because I had alerted her to the launch of the [Ben Goldacre paper on education research](#) about 18 months ago. So let's hope she will be presenting soon. You can find out more about the session on our research into what makes exceptional schools exceptional below and by exploring the twitter contributions on the day at #rEDb .

Just a couple of weeks later I spoke at a packed session at the ATL conference on Evidence informed professionalism. Discussion built into my contribution involved unpicking illustrative examples of what the research tells us really works in for teachers and their students in making effective use of evidence. Contributions were lively, insightful and action focused. Alison Ryan, our ATL convenor described how ATL is committed to helping to ensure that teacher expertise mediates counterproductive beliefs and ideologies from whatever source and everyone there was fired up to campaign in their schools for opportunities to get involved – and, once I had described it to the group, to use evidence like Viviane Robinson's fabulous synthesis about what leaders do that really makes a difference (investing in CPDL) to do so (<http://www.curee.co.uk/news/2009/12/school-leadership-and-student-outcomes>).

Finally I have been involved in some very exciting conversations just before Easter with R&D Leads from teaching school alliances who are leading the Close the Gap - Test and Learn projects to ensure that the next training round for the programme is rooted in practice on the ground. I was particularly struck by one Lead who described not only very effective implementation of Response to Intervention for literacy in her own school but a plan for using the underpinning principles to focus attention on the most vulnerable pupils in other subjects. The Champion of Research Lesson Study in another Alliance's showed great enthusiasm for the RLS intervention and for trying out a different one, RTI, next year based on evidence from another school in his Alliance to support an influx of 4 NQTs. It wasn't just infectious enthusiasm that was driving decisions; it was in-depth analysis and challenging interrogation of evidence too.

Philippa Cordingley

 Follow @CUREE_official

 Follow @PhilippaCcuree

What makes exceptional schools exceptional? A view from a session at ResearchED



A big lecture theatre, black walls, no daylight and an after lunch slot on a Saturday at a conference for teachers. Not the most promising start. But from the first five minutes of activity just ten minutes into the session it was clear that the people there wanted to understand, prod, poke and test the sometimes controversial findings. This session drew on research we did for Teach First to help them target support for participants. We found some rather surprising and potentially important differences between strong schools and exceptional ones serving vulnerable communities but also strong similarities between the exceptional ones Teach First recognized the broader relevance of the research and

agreed to its wider dissemination.

My session directly followed David Weston's dissection of why dissemination doesn't work so I was glad I planned an active learning session with plenty of opportunities to connect with what people knew already, chunking of findings and an active and critical approach to the evidence. You can find the report and the PowerPoint [here](#).

But what caused a stir? Three things stood out in the session and in the fast and furious twitter dialogue:

- Exceptional schools invest systematically and heavily in teachers' professional learning and at the same time in rigorous and challenging performance management. Teachers who don't show sustained evidence of effective practice leave. Did this, people wanted to know, suggest a supportive exit strategy or was it bullying?
- Everyone supporting other teachers was trained in doing so – there was no assumption that being good at x or y meant you could coach or mentor others do the same without proper chance to learn how to do that to a high standard.

- In exceptional schools, subject knowledge is seen as more important than pedagogic knowledge and skills- and indeed as the thing that enables teachers to design effective teaching and learning activities. In strong schools subject knowledge was often seen as being in opposition to knowledge about effective teaching and learning; and
- From the twitter debate especially, (with thanks to Helen Galdin-O'Shea) just what exactly were the coherent models of pedagogy that the exceptional schools insist everyone adopts and contribute to?

We are currently digging back into our data to follow up this last question which was not part of the Teach First set of research question. So the learning goes on.

BFI

CUREE are currently working on an exciting and, for us, unusual project. We are in the process of creating a baseline for film education, in conjunction with the 5-19 programme being delivered by Into Film (in partnership with the British Film Institute) over the next few years (2013-17). Over this period we will be capturing what impact the programme has had, as well as progress that has been made in comparison to the baseline. For this project, we will be visiting around 40 schools across the UK in a range of phases, including several special schools.

We are also carrying out online surveys, so if you are a film club leader and have received a survey link we are looking forward to hearing from you and your members! This work is helping us to both further our experience of working within the film education sector, and capturing how the education systems work differently in each of the nations- a substantial task, but an informative one. During our research so far, we have been really impressed with the range of benefits emerging from film education, when used either within or outside of the curriculum. In particular, we have been interested to find out that:

- Two evaluations reported 'hard' evidence (from objectively measured assessment data) of **improved attainment in writing** for the children and young people who had participated in film projects.
- Practitioners used film as a way of **developing pupils' comprehension** and found this was particularly effective e.g. for developing inference skills for children that had poor literacy skills. Film club pupils were able to access and complete activities at a significantly more challenging levels than was usual when working with written text.
- Making new friends and building relationships at film clubs was seen as a key lever for securing **integration in the school**. For instance, one film club leader remarked how the club had been especially beneficial to a newly arrived pupil from overseas; the pupil had been struggling to make friends, but film club had really helped her.



If you are doing any interesting work with film or are planning to, or if you want further information on how film can help your pupils, please contact deanna.coles-jordan@curee.co.uk.

Making the most of CPD

Understandably leaders are increasingly concerned to measure the impact of any professional learning opportunities provided – fundamentally to know that time and money are being well spent and are improving the quality of teaching and learning (as well as satisfying Ofsted!). So many of you will have had a conversation with the CPD leader at some stage of your career along the lines “...can



you make sure you fill in the evaluation form? Or can you share what you learnt at the next staff meeting? “

Both of these practices are important in not only measuring impact and when done well can really help deepen learning. We are keen to learn more about your experiences of CPD and add to the existing research findings about the effect of CPD by taking part in our [survey](#).

Designing effective CPD and evaluating its impact go hand in hand – why not sign up for our **Evaluating the Impact of CPD** seminar and learn from research how to make the most of your CPD?

Teach First- Early Years evaluation



We’ve already mentioned one project with Teach First (Exceptional Schools). We are delighted to be working on a new project for Teach First - an evaluation of their new Early Years/ Foundation Stage programme. To borrow their description:

Teach First’s mission is to end inequality in education by building a community of exceptional leaders who create change within classrooms, schools and across society. As part

of this mission, Teach First has recently expanded its primary provision to include the placement of teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The first cohort of 16 Teach First EYFS teachers was placed in schools in London and the South East region in September 2013.

CUREE will provide Teach First with an evaluation of how the programme has succeeded in achieving its goals, what the experience of the programme’s participants has been like, and what impact it has had on learners. Our approach will marry evidence from the programme itself with the wider research knowledge base we have acquired and analysed for over 15 years

Evaluating how well you are doing is, of course, an activity not confined to national organisations and big programmes. Schools do this routinely against Ofsted criteria but that is not always the best way; indeed even Ofsted are increasingly crediting schools for commissioning external reviews of aspects of their work. For example, recently St Thomas More School found that their SKEIN report came in handy during an Ofsted inspection, when it was used by inspectors as evidence of their

dedication to professional improvement. We can support you in evaluating your work against objective benchmarks from individual projects all the way up to a comprehensive school-wide review. Email Natalia.buckler@curee.co.uk to find out more.

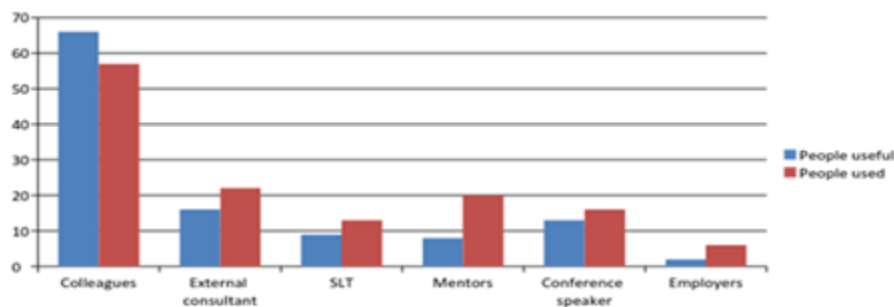
Next steps for supporting vocational literacy and numeracy learning



With English and maths skills for post-16 learners now a national priority, CUREE, with its partners at emCETT, have recently completed some research for the Education and Training Foundation and found some interesting evidence.

Teachers were generally pretty confident about meeting the challenge of L2 attainment in English and maths, but they wanted more subject specialist training and better opportunities to collaborate with colleagues to ensure maths and English are delivered to students in their vocational contexts. It was good to learn that the focus on English and maths has provided some teachers with a fresh impetus and opportunities for professional growth. How we get all learners to succeed at Level 2 in English and maths continues to fuel a debate. The evidence from research and from the practitioners responding to our survey and taking part in our focus groups suggests that the solution includes

- developing practitioners' understanding of the underpinning teaching and learning rationale for these subjects;
- providing support for that development in forms that work and practitioners find useful and accessible.



This chart shows the people thought to be important in CPD. Some respondents unpacked the term people to include in roughly equal numbers subject learning coaches and course tutors plus, in a few cases, teachers from other areas

We understand that the full report will be published on the Excellence Gateway

Becoming good, and remaining good

As well as being Chief Executive of CUREE, Philippa is a governor (or Chair of Governors) for several schools in the West Midlands, and in this capacity she recently attended a seminar hosted by Ofsted on the subject of getting to and maintaining good status. The seminar's objectives were to explore

and discuss key issues around improvement, and in particular to look at the evidence Ofsted themselves have amassed regarding what features schools which improve (and, for that matter, those which don't) have in common.

Raising expectations of pupils and teachers



Our analysis of inspection reports of schools that have become good provided a broadly similar picture:

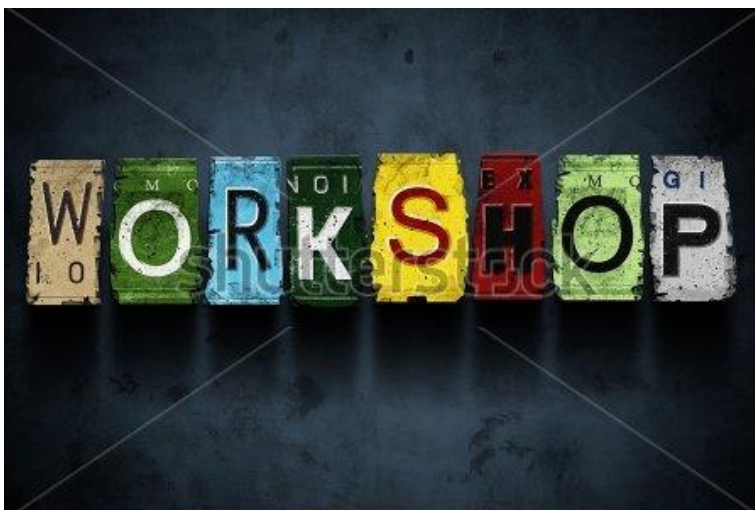
- more consistency across the school in high quality subject leadership
- better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses
- high levels of accountability and strong performance management
- stronger commitment to raise standards and team approach to achieve this
- no inadequate teaching tolerated with significant investment in coaching and developing staff
- sustained action to improve learning focussing on reading, writing and mathematical skills.

What was particularly encouraging from a CUREE perspective is that Ofsted's analysis of schools that successfully improved their teaching matched very closely with our own conclusions, drawn from the international evidence base about what makes schools good. Key factors included frequent, rigorous diagnostic monitoring of teaching and learning, the use of identified best practice within the school in areas such as coaching, and monitoring the delivery and impact of initiatives (note that this is not a comprehensive list!).

In addition to a gratifying confirmation of the conclusions reached from the international evidence base, the findings Ofsted provided suggest that there is a clear path for schools to follow in their quest to achieve and maintain good teaching practice. While it's obviously not as simple as providing a magic how-to guide everyone can follow, awareness of how schools are performing in relation to these common characteristics can provide useful sign-posting of that school's progress overall.

If you would like to find out what the international evidence means about your school's performance, why not take advantage of CUREE's SKEIN service? We can provide you with a detailed picture of your school's professional practice, identifying areas of strength as well as advice on what and how to improve. If you would like to know more, please email Philippa.cordingley@curee.co.uk.

Upcoming Events



CUREE have a particularly busy summer term coming up as we're running quite a few workshops over the next few months. You can find out about all of our workshops on our [website](#) where you can also find exclusive offers and useful resources. You can also see an overview of all the programmes and workshops that we're offering this term, [here](#).

Wednesday 14th May – Maths across the curriculum

This workshop is designed to explore the key features of effective Maths teaching and learning as Mathematical skills are a significant concern for educators and employers in the UK. To learn more about this workshop, click [here](#).

Monday 2nd June – Facilitation of research-based CPD and Professional Learning

We understand the evidence about what works in effective teaching and learning, the leadership of it, how to create high quality, good value professional development, and learning activities which make a difference to pupils. This workshop will put this expertise in your hands, find out how [here](#).

Tuesday 17th June – Evaluating the Impact of CPD

How do you know that your CPD programme is having an impact on staff and student learning? This workshop explores the question, and provides you with tools and resources to answer it. Find out more [here](#).

Monday 23rd June – Effective Mentoring and Coaching

Our coaching workshop shows you how to use coaching in ways which make a positive difference to both staff and student learning. If this is something that interests you, you can find out more [here](#).

Thursday 26th June – Developing Growth Mindsets

This workshop involves learning how to change a ‘can’t do’ attitude to a ‘can do’ one by looking at student motivation and achievement and beliefs that students hold about themselves. To find out more about this workshop, click [here](#).

Furthermore, Philippa will be at:

- EIPPEE (Evidence Informed Policy and Practice in Europe) Conference from 13-15 May 2014
- LSRN (Learning and Skills Research Network) Workshop 23rd May 2014
- ASCL CPD Conference 16th June 2014

CUREE will be at:

- Warwickshire Deputy Head Teachers Conference 6th June 2014
- Inspiring Leadership Conference – Birmingham 11-13th June 2014
- Warwickshire Head Teachers Conference 4th July 2014

We hope to see you there!

Contact Us

8th Floor, Eaton House
Eaton Road, Coventry, CV1 2FJ
Registered in England No 4936927
Tel: 02476 524036
Email: info@curee.co.uk
Website: <http://www.curee.co.uk>

CUREE News is a product of CUREE Ltd. To unsubscribe, [click here](#).