

How can we use collaboration with colleagues to make the best use of research?

This is what we at CUREE call a research 'taster'. This micro-enquiry tool helps you to investigate and collect evidence about both your pupils' and your own learning. We know that those interested in Expansive Education are committed to helping young people develop the 'habits of mind' that will enable them to become independent and successful learners, and see teacher research and enquiry as a powerful way of driving this development. This taster helps you explore both independent learning and collaboration (a key aspect of effective teacher research).

Evidence about independent learning

Student focused learning environments have been found to help students create new ideas and materials, talk about their methods for solving problems and take the initiative to interact with teachers and peers. These learning environments include collaborative learning activities, peer teaching, and the use of classroom talk that requires multiple levels of thinking. Such approaches (see http://www.gtce.ora.uk/tla/rft/pupil_participate/) have promoted students' motivation and engagement with their work and teachers have spent less time than usual managing their students' behaviour.

Evidence about teacher collaboration

Classroom enquiry is a key feature of effective professional development. When you use and respond to different sources of evidence (from formal research as well as your own enquiries), this helps to model teaching and learning practices that support active and independent learning among students. One approach is to create a partnership with a colleague through which you can collect and interpret evidence about how new approaches work out for both you and for your pupils.

Your evidence and reflections

Try working through the following activity with a colleague.

What opportunities for classroom decision-making and choice of resources do you or would you like to share with your students? What risks or difficulties does/would this present for you, your school or your students?

You might like to think back to one or two recent lessons and consider:

- Who chose the learning activities?
- Who chose and prepared the materials?
- Who chose the seating arrangements?
- Who created the pairs/groups?
- Who checked the work?
- Who decided what follow-up work/homework, if any, would take place?
- Who gave explanations?
- Who decided which questions and problems were explored?
- Who decided what had been learned, and how well?



Are there any patterns in your data? How often did you offer your students responsibility for the task? How did your students respond? Can you identify opportunities where you could have given your students more responsibility?

After you have worked through this initial exploration, take time to reflect with your colleague on what difference it made working with someone else. For example, did having two people widen the pool of examples you could learn from? Did working with someone help you clarify your ideas because you had to explain your thinking and assumptions? What else made a difference?

Putting the evidence to work

Once you have some evidence and reflections on how using research collaboratively has helped you move forwards you might want to:

- tackle new research tasters with other colleagues;
- design your own mini enquiry to test out strategies to enable your students to make more decisions about their learning;
- share your findings with colleagues inviting them to try the same thing to build a bigger pool of evidence about the extent to which students take an active role in making decisions about their learning; and
- share your experience with other Expansive Educators.

Find out more

You may want to read Practitioner engagement in and/or with research and its impact on learners (available at <http://www.curee.co.uk/resources/publications/purr-summaries>). This highlights the importance of working with colleagues when using research and evidence.

For further tasters visit <http://www.curee.co.uk/our-products-and-services/research-tasters> or contact Rebecca Raybould (rebecca.raybould@curee.co.uk) for tasters focused around your class's or school's needs.

To find out more about increasing student's active participation, and independence in learning you may wish to read: CUREE (2009) Pupil Participation Anthology: *GTC Research for Teachers Summary*. Available at: <http://www.gtce.org.uk/tla/rft/pupil-participate/>

Who are CUREE?

A wholly independent company led by Philippa Cordingley, we are internationally recognised for the quality and impact of our work supporting practitioners, leaders and policy makers. The CUREE team of experienced teachers, researchers, writers, information scientists and facilitators help clients to interpret and use research to enhance teaching and learning.

We work in collaboration with a range of individuals and organisations. We work with schools, networks and Local Authorities across the country to support and inform CPD. For further information, visit www.curee.co.uk or contact kirsty.bond@curee.co.uk



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