

Teaching & Learning Toolkit school leader reflection tool

Introduction

The Teaching & Learning Toolkit (the Toolkit) is a summary of 30 approaches that schools might choose to use to support making decisions about how to improve learning outcomes, particularly for children and young people experiencing disadvantage.




The Toolkit aims to be a starting point for schools considering evidence. Further information about how to make effective use of the Toolkit is available [here](#).

Key features of the Toolkit

The Toolkit is divided into 30 strands, each focused on an area of school practice. Each strand is summarised in terms of:

1. its average impact on achievement;
2. its cost; and
3. the strength of the evidence supporting it.

The following table demonstrates each of these domains for the 'Feedback' strand.

Impact on achievement	Cost	Strength of evidence
		
<p>The 'Feedback' strand shows that in the research studies included in the Toolkit, improving the quality of feedback had an average impact of six additional months' progress.</p> <p>This means that students in the classes where feedback interventions were provided made, on average, six months' more progress than similar students in other classes over the course of one academic year.</p>	<p>Feedback is low cost—it is unlikely to involve employing additional staff or purchasing costly intervention packages. However, there is an associated opportunity cost which should be considered.</p> <p>The cost ratings in the Toolkit range from very low (\$160 per student per year, or up to \$3,000 for a class of 25 students) to very high (\$2,000 per student per year, or up to \$50,000 for a class of 25 students).</p>	<p>Feedback has extensive evidence strength, meaning it contains between 45 and 69 studies with relevant outcomes, and studies with methods and analysis which enable researchers to draw moderate conclusions about impact.</p> <p>In general the 'padlock' rating for each strand is based on: the number and types of research studies available; the outcomes measured in those studies; the quality of the studies and whether they enable researchers to draw conclusions about impact; the consistency of the impact estimates in the different studies.</p>

Using the Toolkit effectively

1. Consider your context and what you want to achieve.

In your school, it is crucial to consider the needs of your students, what you want to achieve, and any barriers you might face before adopting an approach.

2. Look behind the headlines and think about what is 'behind the average'.

While the Toolkit does not make definitive claims as to what will work to improve outcomes in a given setting, it provides a starting point on what might be valuable, helping to identify 'best bets'. It is important to explore the detail in Toolkit strands, including the impact of approaches for different ages or subjects.

3. Think about cost and evidence as well as impact.

Some approaches may be effective but not cost effective. Other approaches may have a lower overall impact but may have a more well-established evidence base.

4. Draw on your professional expertise and consider implementation.

The Toolkit can tell you whether an approach has a good track record, but your professional expertise, other resources and ongoing evaluation are also important in making well-informed decisions on what is best to support student's learning. Adopting a new approach requires careful planning, implementation and monitoring.

Limitations to the Toolkit

The Toolkit does not make definitive claims as to what will work to improve outcomes in each school. Rather, it provides high quality information about what is likely to be beneficial based on existing evidence.

The Toolkit summarises studies that have been conducted in the past. It cannot make a prediction about how an approach will be received in any particular school or classroom. With the padlock rating, we try and summarise the quality of the evidence base overall—considering:

- How many studies are there and in how many schools have they taken place?
- How recent is the evidence?
- How close are studies to regular classroom practice?
- How much variation is there in the outcome data collected in the research?
- Were the studies conducted independently and with a rigorous methodology?

The padlocks give a guide on the 'risk' connected with the evidence base. In the new Toolkit some strands are labelled as "very low" security, and a month's progress figure has not been provided, as we do not have enough confidence to believe that a measure of impact is rigorous.

Even with these limitations flagged through padlocks, it is important to remember that all research in the Toolkit is a description of "what has worked" and not "what works". By understanding these trends in previous research, we hope that it will give schools more information on approaches that are promising and approaches that carry risks.

School Leader Reflection Tool

This School Leader Reflection Tool may prove to be helpful in a school leadership team meeting or planning session, a peer review with external colleagues, in conversations between senior leaders and, for example, parent groups or professional learning providers. It can begin conversations about educational evidence in an accessible way, so that school leaders can explore 'best bets' for their school improvement priorities.

The following questions aim to provide useful starting points for discussion to help you ensure that your policies and practices are informed by the best available evidence. The aim is to prompt reflections and encourage considerations around the specific needs of students, what you are doing currently that is working, as well as promoting some new thinking and ideas.

1. Are you clear on the improvement priorities for your school, particularly those likely to improve the outcomes of students experiencing disadvantage?

For example, students are struggling to fully access the primary school curriculum. School leaders explore specific strands addressing literacy, such as oral language interventions, phonics, and reading comprehension strategies. School leaders then reflect on what tightly defined approach may support students to better access the curriculum.

2. Have you looked beyond the headlines of the Toolkit and dug deeper into the challenges of implementation?

For example, you might implement one to one tuition for students struggling in mathematics, but have you considered how links will be made between the tutoring and timetabled lessons, and how you will support students and class teachers to ensure the impact is sustained once they return to classes?

3. Have you considered the cost and evidence strength of an approach, as well as potential impact?

For example, some approaches—such as one to one tuition—may be effective for students learning mathematics, but it may not be cost effective. Other approaches, which may have a lower overall impact, such as small group tuition, or peer tutoring, may prove cost effective, whilst still proving a 'best bet' in terms of evidence strength.

4. Drawing upon your professional expertise, what is the likelihood of an approach having an impact in your specific context?

For example, on average, feedback may prove a 'best bet', based on extensive evidence, but feedback comes with an 'opportunity cost' when it comes to teachers' time spent giving written feedback. Equally, a school or system may have well established feedback approaches and policies, so any proposed change may prove a challenge.

5. What risks are there to this approach and how can you address these risks?

For example, a school considering extending school time has an array of implementation challenges to change such ingrained structures and habits. The Toolkit only provides evidence about what has worked in the past, not what will work in your context. To consider more fully the challenge of implementing new school improvement priorities, see our [guidance on implementation](#).

6. Have you considered other evidence sources and resources which can be used alongside the Toolkit?

The Toolkit is a summary of evidence from a wide range of sources that is a useful starting point for the evidence. Our array of guidance reports provide detailed recommendations for classroom practice. We also have several supporting resources grouped by theme, such as webinars, blogs and illustrations of practice, which may help you explore how others have applied the evidence in their setting.