EVIDENCE-INFORMED TEACHING:

Self-assessment tool for teachers

Louise Stoll[1], Toby Greany[1], Mike Coldwell[2], Steve Higgins[3], Chris Brown*, Bronwen Maxwell[2], Bernadette Stiell[2], Ben Willis[2] and Helen Burns[3]

[1] **UCL Institute of Education**

[2] **Sheffield Hallam University**

[3] **Durham University**

Evidence-informed teaching:
Self-assessment

Use of evidence

Effective use of evidence and research has enormous potential to help schools and teachers improve educational standards and outcomes for pupils. Used well it can offer a way to make more informed decisions, to evaluate and understand the impact of changes, and to improve professional learning and development of teachers.

Background

In August 2014, the Department for Education (DfE) commissioned us to carry out a two-year study, *Evidence-informed teaching: an evaluation of progress in England,* to assess progress towards an evidence-informed teaching system.

This tool, and another at school level, are products of the data collection and analysis, including interviews with 82 teachers, carried out as part of that study. We would like to acknowledge the support from the DfE in commissioning the study and are delighted to partner with the Chartered College of Teaching to publish the tools.

Purpose

This self-assessment tool is for teachers. It is designed to help teachers evaluate and consider their own levels of interaction with evidence in terms of awareness, engagement and use; and illustrate, based on real examples and quotes, what different levels of interaction look like in more or less evidence-informed schools.

Our introduction on the next page explains how to use the tool, and importantly that levels of evidence engagement vary and that it is okay to be at different stages. We hope that teachers will use this tool to make decisions around the level of interaction with evidence they need, and any actions they could take to help reach that level.

For more information

- The published study report[1] contains useful information on use of evidence in schools and environments where evidence-informed practice can flourish. It also gives examples of cases where schools applied evidence in ways that they found helpful, and links to sources of evidence used by schools in the study.
- Our project team also put together a selection of evidence sources, which may be helpful to teachers and schools in engaging with relevant and credible evidence. These are available at the end of this document. Please note that these sources are simply suggestions, and there are many other credible evidence sources available.

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[1]Coldwell, M., Greany, T., Higgins, S., Brown, C., Maxwell, B., Stiell, B., Stoll, L., Willis, B. and Burns, H. (2017) *Evidence-informed teaching: an evaluation of progress in England. Research Report. July 2017*. Department for Education.

Evidence-informed teaching:
Self-assessment tool for teachers

This tool is designed to help you consider your engagement, and your colleagues' engagement, with research evidence, and the areas you may need to develop to deepen and embed this engagement in your practice. We encourage you to talk about it with colleagues, thinking not only about yourselves but about teachers generally in your school. To use this for personal self-assessment, you can replace the word 'teachers' with 'I'. An equivalent tool for whole-school assessment is also available.

Features of evidence-informed teaching:

- **Awareness -** whether you understand what research evidence is, know how to access research, can judge how robust research evidence is, know that it can help improve practice and how it does that, and know how you can go about being 'evidence informed' (3 indicators).
- **Engagement -** how important you think it is to draw on research evidence to inform and improve practice and to have conversations about the evidence (6 indicators).
- **Use -** the degree to which research evidence is actively used to investigate and change practice (7 indicators).

Three phases of development you may go through in developing evidence-informed teaching:

- **Starting out -** this represents limited awareness of, engagement with and use of evidence-informed teaching.

- **Deepening -** once started, anyone seriously interested in the potential of evidence-informed teaching in this phase should be aiming to deepen their awareness, engagement and use of evidence.

- **Embedding -** as the name for the most mature phase intentionally suggests, the process has not ended. More can always be done to ensure that evidence-informed practice becomes part of 'the way we do things'.

The descriptions are drawn from findings of the *Evidence-informed teaching* project (Coldwell et al, DfE, 2017). They are neither comprehensive nor judgmental, but are intended to stimulate thinking. We have also included illustrative quotes, to show how the different phases of development might look in practice. In reflecting on and discussing your own experience, you might want to consider:

- **Depth -** how deep your awareness/engagement/use is – if it is serious and rigorous.

- **Breadth -** how broadly spread awareness/engagement/use is – if you apply it to everything/ most of your practice or just occasionally, and if it involves just a few staff, many or most.

- **Length -** how long you have been aware of, feeling engaged and using evidence-informed practice - if it has been a long time or recent.

For each area of development, you can note down your own examples - or evidence - under the appropriate descriptor. You can then mark where you think you currently are on the scale by circling one of the points on the line. You might even wish to date these, so you can see your progress. You will find a summary sheet at the end of the tool with questions to stimulate further conversation and inform decision-making.

Awareness: teachers

Understanding what research evidence is, knowing how to access research, being able to objectively judge how robust research evidence is, knowing that it can help improve practice, how it does that, and how to go about being 'evidence informed'

Area of development	Starting out (Descriptor)	Deepening (Descriptor)	Embedding (Descriptor)
A1 - Teachers understand the meaning of evidence-informed practice and what high quality evidence is	Teachers prioritise their experience, informal observations and other teachers' suggestions over any other evidence. They aren't clear about what it means to be 'evidence-informed'.	Teachers understand how different forms of evidence can inform practice including research evidence. They are not confident in critiquing research evidence.	Teachers can explain how evidence informs practice. They understand different forms of evidence, consider what it means in their context, and can critique research. While keeping an open mind, they are able to challenge evidence.
Illustrative quotes from the research	*"It's [evidence-informed practice is] a broad range of things from things you have observed and kind of experienced yourself as well as things that are more external".* [Teacher] *"It's tricky" [when asked what evidence-informed practice means].* [Teacher]	*"There was definitely some professional articles that had been written by teachers, by researchers, but I couldn't remember what they were, in all honesty, off the top of my head".* [Teacher]	*"Research done elsewhere would highlight and inform us … and that type of evidence would give us food for thought, which we would then apply in our school. So it's the evidence from outside research and then it's the evidence that we would accumulate within the school, based on our research and our experience".* [Teacher] *"He knows an awful lot about it. He'll read stuff and evaluate it pretty critically".* [Researcher talking about teacher]
Your examples			
Where do you think you currently are on the scale? Circle one of the points on the line. You might even wish to add a date so you can see your progress.	Starting out	Deepening	Embedding

Area of development	Starting out (Descriptor)	Deepening (Descriptor)	Embedding (Descriptor)
A2 - Teachers understand how evidence impacts upon practice	Teachers understand how some forms of evidence, especially data, pupil voice, teacher feedback and judgements of other leaders and teachers, can be used to influence change and improvement. They are less clear about how research evidence can be used to help develop their teaching and promote improvement.	Teachers can use research alongside other forms of evidence to inform their practice if it is provided to them and it directly links with their own specific practice needs.	Teachers actively seek out research evidence that is likely to make a difference to their teaching and pupils' learning. They consider critically how it might relate to their own context, and think carefully about the impact their teaching has on the pupils.
Illustrative quotes from the research	*"If somebody's used it and it has worked, it just makes you more likely to do it, rather than if someone's just said, 'Oh, try this. It might work".* [Teacher]	*"I do think that as important as it is [in proving it's worked for a large number of children] … you do need to adapt things to your … cohort, you know the area, the children and things like that".* [Teacher]	*"Having [evidence-based research] information available that has got some level of indication that it's effective".* [Teacher] *"That means I have access to reliable information about what I can do to improve my practice".* [Teacher]
Your examples			
Where do you think you currently are on the scale? Circle one of the points on the line. You might even wish to add a date so you can see your progress.	Starting out	Deepening	Embedding

Area of development	Starting out (Descriptor)	Deepening (Descriptor)	Embedding (Descriptor)
A3 - Teachers are aware of where and how to access resources for evidence-informed practice	Teachers don't know where or how to find resources to support them in using evidence in their teaching. If any evidence is used, it's what happens to be 'out there'.	Teachers can find research evidence alongside other evidence forms, but can't always distinguish between research-based and non-research-based sources.	Teachers know where and how they can find a range of resources to support them in using evidence in their teaching. Finding physical or online resources is never a barrier to using evidence.
Illustrative quotes from the research	"I . . . just had a look what was available and came across, so I didn't really look much further than what was available to me". [Teacher]	"X has been really fantastic this year at providing blogs and information and lots and lots of quotes or research on things that actually could be really interesting in helping us in our teaching. I don't feel I have the time to find all of this research, so I'm really grateful that somebody else is available". [Teacher]	"what we've got available to us online, which is a significant body of research . . . when I was looking at the fractions unit of work, I was trying to find reviews of research not just particular papers, but research that has looked at evidence from a number of different sources and tried to look across that to work out what a whole body of evidence seems to be saying about a particular topic". [Teacher] "I'm aware of how to find it, and I'm aware of how to cascade it out so that everyone is using it. I'm also aware of the people to go to get it". [Middle leader]
Your examples			
Where do you think you currently are on the scale? Circle one of the points on the line. You might even wish to add a date so you can see your progress.	Starting out	Deepening	Embedding

Engagement: teachers

Thinking that it is important to draw on research evidence to inform
and improve practice, and having conversations about the evidence.

Area of development	Starting out (Descriptor)	Deepening (Descriptor)	Embedding (Descriptor)
E1 - Teachers have an evidence mindset (it's how they think about practice) – they are conscious of the need to engage with research and feel confident to do so	Teachers don't really think about research. They may know it's 'out there', but either don't have time, can't see the value or don't feel equipped.	Teachers know that they need to engage with research, would like to engage more, and would like to feel better equipped to do this.	Teachers believe that using evidence can support their own, self-directed development and improve their teaching. They find using evidence in their teaching engaging and are confident when they doing this.
Illustrative quotes from the research	*"I suppose the evidence I see [as] most useful is the stuff that's been done with the people on the ground, so to speak". [Teacher]* *"What I haven't done a lot of, is looking at other people's research and seeing how I can apply that to my own knowledge". [Teacher]* *"You could argue why change things that don't need changing". [Teacher]*	*"I wouldn't say that I would be really confident if someone just kind of asked me to do something straight away that was because of this evidence". [Teacher]*	*"A big priority in my own teaching is really honing down what I think is best practice in terms of formative assessment. Looking at the very strong evidence base that's out there for it and implementing that across my classroom practice". [Teacher]*
Your examples			
Where do you think you currently are on the scale? Circle one of the points on the line. You might even wish to add a date so you can see your progress.	Starting out	Deepening	Embedding

Area of development	Starting out (Descriptor)	Deepening (Descriptor)	Embedding (Descriptor)
E2 - Teachers consider evidence relevant and applicable	Teachers are generally sceptical of research and researchers. They find it difficult to translate to their own teaching situation because it's 'not done in my school/with our teachers or teachers like us'.	Teachers are open to considering research evidence related to important issues in their practice, and think about how it may apply in their own teaching situation.	Teachers actively seek out evidence related to issues in their practice and think seriously about how they may apply it. This is often backed up by observing impact or hearing trusted colleagues discuss how it had improved their practice and outcomes for pupils.
Illustrative quotes from the research	*"Rather than somebody . . . where they've not been into a school for 20 years [but] you see where it's relevant and it's relevant today"*. [Teacher] *"If I found that interesting or suitable to what I was doing, I would study it further"*. [Teacher]	*"Various people bring to the table research or evidence that they've come across and that helps inform things"*. [Headteacher] *"Something like teaching science to A level students … might not be so relevant to you as something to do with say primary schools"*. [Teacher]	*"If the research base is not making us better teachers, then we're either not engaging with it properly or the research is - whatever – inaccurate"*. [Teacher] *"We'll find a piece of research that looks like it fits our school, we'll try it out and if it works, it works, and we'll carry on using it"*. [Teacher]
Your examples			
Where do you think you currently are on the scale? Circle one of the points on the line. You might even wish to add a date so you can see your progress.	Starting out	Deepening	Embedding

Area of development	Starting out (Descriptor)	Deepening (Descriptor)	Embedding (Descriptor)
E3 - Teachers talk to colleagues about evidence, face to face and through social media	Informal conversations between teachers are largely focused on practical issues. They rarely talk about evidence in face-to face conversations or through social media.	Teachers' professional conversations relate to a variety of forms of evidence: research evidence may form part of these conversations.	Teachers talk to each other one-to-one, in small groups and to school leaders about evidence and the impact of using it. Social media connections are used to access and support research.
Illustrative quotes from the research	*"There's a lot of teachers from this school will talk to other teachers . . . and these kind of things get passed around about what works and doesn't work . . .actually it's probably quite a long way from what I'd hope would be good, evidence-based practice".* [Headteacher]	*"We are definitely more interested in the practical sides of it – how we can apply that rather than…. actually looking at the citations and where ideas have come from".* [Teacher] *"Over 50% of our teachers are using social media – 'we speak to a colleague, we speak to a friend and we get on the internet' ".* [Headteacher]	*"We … talked all around this until we came up with ideas which linked in … we were doing lots of work and research on collaboration and also learning attitudes and the children's autonomy in their learning. So the idea of peer support … naturally comes out of that".* [Teacher] *"Some people [are] still affected by research that other people may have taken out, because if people have tried it, they'll suggest 'why don't you do this'?"* [Teacher] *"I follow lots of things on Twitter – people who create their own research".* [Teacher]
Your examples			
Where do you think you currently are on the scale? Circle one of the points on the line. You might even wish to add a date so you can see your progress.	Starting out	Deepening	Embedding

Use: teachers
Any activity where research evidence is actively used to investigate and change practice.

Area of development	Starting out (Descriptor)	Deepening (Descriptor)	Embedding (Descriptor)
U1 - Teachers read research/ summaries and can articulate how they use evidence	Teachers rarely read research summaries, articles or books. When they explain their practice to others, they do not refer to evidence use.	Teachers sometimes read research summaries, articles or books. When they explain their practice to others, they may refer to how they are using evidence.	Teachers often read research summaries, articles or books on their own and with colleagues. They can explain to other colleagues, school leaders or visitors how they are using it in their practice.
Illustrative quotes from the research	*"I think we saw some articles, although I couldn't, off the top of my head, tell you what they were".* [Teacher] *"Earlier in my career I did do a lot more reading of books. Maybe they were more anecdotal than research based . . . Perhaps I was looking for more ideas when I was younger".* [Teacher]	*"I don't think I could comfortably plough into the internet and see what I could find and know what I was looking at was completely reliable, unless it was something like, 'Oh, I saw the Sutton Trust. I know the Sutton Trust'".* [Teacher] *"I wish I could do more in terms of really researching the techniques I'm using, ensuring that there is the evidence base behind it. But what I tend to use is techniques that I learned on my PGCE that do have an evidence base behind it".* [Middle leader]	*"When planning a unit of work on fractions, which is a very challenging mathematical concept that we need to teach in Key Stage 2, the first step that I and my colleagues took in planning that unit of work was to go and find evidence based research on pedagogical strategies for doing that".* [Teacher] *"We share research and ideas and current thinking through the staff meeting cycles and Inset days. I like to think we are a very reflective school, so we spend a lot of time considering various reports and research".* [Teacher]
Your examples			
Where do you think you currently are on the scale? Circle one of the points on the line. You might even wish to add a date so you can see your progress.	Starting out	Deepening	Embedding

Area of development	Starting out (Descriptor)	Deepening (Descriptor)	Embedding (Descriptor)
U2 - Teachers are involved in evidence-informed enquiry projects and share experiences and findings	Teachers rarely use research in their own practice. Where this happens, they don't tend to share their experiences and findings.	Teachers apply research in their practice through informal experimentation. They rarely assess impact. Their experiences and findings may be shared with close colleagues or within teams. Teachers may be involved in forms of lesson study.	Teachers use research in their own practice, through systematic action research or enquiry projects. They collect baseline data against which they can later assess impact. They are involved in research-informed lesson study and teacher learning communities to support joint practice development. Teachers share their experiences and findings in school or through local networks.
Illustrative quotes from the research	*"In my school, staff are reliant on SLT for what 'good practice' is – there's no engagement with research".* [Teacher	*"… use the Kagan structures that I didn't previously use … so that has really helped bring me on but also helped me to encourage the children to work together and things".* [Teacher]	*"… trying to bridge that link between research that's gone on outside of the school, to which we can respond, but then putting it into practice in our own context and seeing as professionals how we evaluate the strategy. Do we think that was successful for the children within our school? Do we think it needs tweaking?"* [Teacher]
Your examples			
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Area of development	Starting out (Descriptor)	Deepening (Descriptor)	Embedding (Descriptor)
U3 - Teachers are likely to be engaged with further evidence-related professional learning or higher degrees	Teachers are rarely involved in professional learning opportunities that support them in using evidence in their teaching. Few teachers are engaged in higher degree study.	Teachers are involved in some professional learning opportunities that support them in using evidence in their teaching. Some teachers are engaged in higher degree study.	Teachers are involved in a range of professional learning opportunities that support them in using evidence in their teaching. It is common for teachers to be engaged in higher degree study.
Illustrative quotes from the research	*"When we have a training day at the start of September …there is a suggestion that we do that this year, everyone is full of energy and enthusiasm, but we've got to look at that with the realities of what's going to happen the following week when everyone is in the thick of teaching".* [Teacher]	*"My MA lecturer passes things on to me that are quite interesting. Because I'm doing my MA, I've got an Athens login so I get to access all of the things on there, which I love".* [Teacher] *"I went on a few half days of training for it, and the headteacher makes sure that all new members of teaching staff and TAs go on the training".* [Teacher]	*"The MA has really helped that because I've got a real drive as to how and why to do stuff the right way".* [Teacher] *"I've actually carried out my own research as part of my masters which I've then cascaded down to other teachers and they then carried out that research and used that model themselves in class to raise attainment".* [Teacher]
Your examples			
Where do you think you currently are on the scale? Circle one of the points on the line. You might even wish to add a date so you can see your progress.	Starting out	Deepening	Embedding

Summary questions for reflective conversations

Area of development	Where have we placed ourselves and why?	If we're quite far along, what factors have helped us? For areas where progression has been slower, what has been holding us back?	What do we need to do next to move us forward, or keep up the momentum? What support do we need? Where might we find this?
Awareness			
A1 - Teachers understand the meaning of evidence-informed practice and what high quality evidence is			
A2 - Teachers understand how evidence impacts upon practice			
A3 - Teachers are aware of where and how to access resources for evidence-informed practice			

Area of development	Where have we placed ourselves and why?	If we're quite far along, what factors have helped us? For areas where progression has been slower, what has been holding us back?	What do we need to do next to move us forward, or keep up the momentum? What support do we need? Where might we find this?
Engagement			
E1 - Teachers have an evidence mindset (it's how they think about practice) – they are conscious of the need to engage with research and feel confident to do so			
E2 - Teachers consider evidence relevant and applicable			
E3 - Teachers talk to colleagues about evidence, face to face and through social media			

Area of development	Where have we placed ourselves and why?	If we're quite far along, what factors have helped us? For areas where progression has been slower, what has been holding us back?	What do we need to do next to move us forward, or keep up the momentum? What support do we need? Where might we find this?
Use			
U1 - Teachers read research/ summaries and can articulate how they use evidence			
U2 - Teachers are involved in evidence-informed enquiry projects and share experiences and findings			
U3 - Teachers are likely to be engaged with further evidence-related professional learning or higher degrees			

Organisation	Summary information
Education Endowment Foundation (EEF): Toolkit – an accessible summary of educational research on teaching 5-16 year olds: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/ Information on the research schools network: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/our-work/research-schools/ A range of guidance reports: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/guidance-reports/ Information on completed and ongoing evaluations: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/our-work/projects/reports/ and, a range of other useful resources: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/	Independent grant-making charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement, who fund rigorous evaluations of innovative projects aiming to raise pupils' attainment.
The Alliance for Useful Evidence: www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/	UK-wide network that promotes the use of high quality evidence to inform decisions on strategy, policy and practice.
Teaching & Learning Academy: www.tla.ac.uk/site/Pages/RfT.aspx	Organisation which aims to help teachers and those working in support roles in schools/other educational settings to improve their practice and gain professional recognition for doing so.
Evidence 4 Impact (E4I): www.evidence4impact.org.uk/about.php	Aims to provide a simple evidence rating system, along with evidence summaries and a database of programmes. Collectively these are intended to help users make a well-informed judgement on the extent to which a programme's effectiveness is proven.
The Super Blog: https://schooluniversitypartnership.wordpress.com/access-to-research/	Aims to post links to any freely available research that is not hidden behind paywalls, e.g. Open Access journal articles, conference papers, reports, research digests etc (presented A-Z). Also includes research by teachers in their own schools, freely available research digests, reports etc.
University of York - Institute for Effective Education: www.york.ac.uk/iee/research/index.htm	The IEE conducts evaluations of programmes and practices used in schools and Early Years settings, as well as interventions focused on the home learning environment.
Best Evidence in Brief: www.beib.org.uk/	A fortnightly e-newsletter produced by the Institute for Effective Education (IEE) at the University of York, and the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University. This website is an archive containing all previous articles from Best Evidence in Brief. It has been organised so that, by using keywords, you will be able to find research specific to the subject you are interested in.
National Foundation for Education Research: www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/	Research reports and summaries, policy papers, practical guides, classroom materials and professional development tools are all available here to download or buy
The Campbell Collaboration www.campbellcollaboration.org/lib/	Free access to systematic reviews and meta analyses conducted for the Collaboration on a wide range of topics, including education

N.B All links are up-to-date at time of publication

Organisation	Summary information
Teacher Development Trust www.tdtrust.org	Works to promote evidence-informed professional development for teachers
New Zealand Ministry of Education www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515	NZ Government's best evidence synthesis iterations draw together, explain and illustrate through vignette and case, bodies of evidence about what works to improve education outcomes, and what can make a bigger difference for the education of all our children and young people.
Institute of Education - Digital Education Repository Archive (DERA) dera.ioe.ac.uk/	Digital archive of documents published electronically by government and other relevant bodies in the areas of education, training, children and families.
Centre for the use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) www.curee.co.uk/home	Centre of expertise in school and college improvement and evidence-informed leadership and practice in education
National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM) www.ncetm.org.uk/enquiry/	Site includes information about teacher enquiry and research, as well as study modules to help teachers access research
The EPPI-Centre eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=53	Aims to inform policy and professional practice with sound evidence, through systematic reviews and research use.
Education Development Trust www.educationdevelopmenttrust.com/en-GB/our-research	Aims to fund and share research that is free to download and helps policymakers to make informed decisions and teachers to benefit from the latest best practice.
Evidence for the Frontline www.evidenceforthefrontline.com/	A service to help teachers to use research evidence to support their practice in the classroom. Teachers submit questions and are matched with evidence resources, given advice by a university researcher, or put in touch with another school with relevant experience to help them to answer that question. Currently this is only available to 30 pilot schools, but you can sign up to be kept informed of future developments.
UCL Institute of Education (IOE) Research and Development Network www.ioe-rdnetwork.com/	The network aims to promote research engagement and research use to help create tangible, positive impact for member schools.
Sheffield Institute of Education www.extra.shu.ac.uk/cse/ern/	Research engaged practice network for teachers, practitioners and leaders across all educational phases to share their research findings and make contact with other professionals with similar research interests.

At the time the research was undertaken, Chris Brown was at UCL Institute of Education. He is now at the University of Portsmouth.