

ECT Mentor session

Module 5: Fulfilling professional responsibilities

Week 3: Reflection and research in professional development

Session Elements



discussion
with mentor



analyse
artefacts

Learning Intentions for this session

Your ECT will learn that:

- 8.5** Teaching assistants (TAs) can support pupils more effectively when they are prepared for lessons by teachers, and when TAs supplement rather than replace support from teachers.

Your ECT will learn how to:

Build effective working relationships, by:

- 8j.** Sharing the intended lesson outcomes with teaching assistants ahead of lessons.
- 8k.** Ensuring that support provided by teaching assistants in lessons is additional to, rather than a replacement for, support from the teacher.

Introduction

As part of the self-directed study session, you have explored how research evidence can be used to improve learning. Today, you are going to apply what you have learnt to the evidence about working with TAs to support pupils' learning.

Research and Practice Summary

Working together

Phoebe is an experienced TA who supports the Year 4 class which Liberty is teaching this year. Liberty has seen the impact that Phoebe has when she leads targeted interventions away from the main class for pupils who are struggling with their reading, but is less sure about how to deploy her effectively during whole-class teaching.

What should Liberty consider to work effectively and efficiently with Phoebe?

TAs can have a dramatic impact on pupils' learning. However, you have an important role to play to maximise the impact of TAs.

There is increasing evidence that when TAs are used to deliver high-quality, targeted interventions, they can have a dramatic effect. If TAs are used in a whole-class situation, it is important to ensure that:

- **TAs understand their role** – this starts by sharing the learning intentions for the lesson ahead of the lesson. This will allow TAs to effectively prepare for their role. This may include ensuring that they understand key concepts linked to the topic if they are not a specialist in a particular area. Further, it can also help to clarify how you want TAs to support learning. For instance, you may want TAs to prompt pupils about their use of specific vocabulary
- **supplement, do not replace yourself** – TAs can improve pupils' learning, but, on average, they are less effective than teachers. Therefore, it is important to ensure that you work together with your TA colleagues to jointly improve pupils' learning, rather than using TA to replace your own input. A common mistake is for TAs to focus their work on pupils with the greatest learning needs and for teachers to then abdicate responsibility for the pupil. Irrespective of the work of TAs, teachers remain responsible for all pupils in their classes

Differentiated, but coordinated roles

After considering the evidence about how to make best use of TAs, Liberty realised that she was not doing enough to maximise Phoebe's effectiveness in her lessons. Liberty seldom explicitly shared the learning intentions with Phoebe ahead of lessons – they often just had a hurried discussion. To be more effective, Phoebe and Liberty briefly met once a week to discuss the week ahead. Liberty also shared key planning documents with Phoebe so that Phoebe could prepare effectively for lessons.

As part of their catch-up, they discussed how they would work together with differentiated but coordinated roles to support all pupils in the class. This meant that pupils with the greatest needs were no longer just receiving support from Phoebe – they got combined support. Sometimes they also swapped their more traditional roles, with Phoebe leading activities with the whole class, while Liberty worked intensively with some of the students who needed the most support.

Mentor Meeting Activities

Throughout the session, try to refer explicitly to the learning intentions, and encourage your mentee to record key points in their learning log. Tailor your use of the theory to practice activities below in response to the review and plan sections of this session.

Review and Plan (5 mins)

- (1) Start this session by briefly following up on the actions that the mentee set at the end of last week's session. Ask your mentee to summarise:
 - a. what they did
 - b. the impact of this on their workload and wellbeing (including how they are evaluating this)
 - c. what they will do going forward to build on these actions

- (2) Clarify the learning intentions for this session with your mentee.

Theory to Practice (35 mins)



1. Discuss with mentor

As part of their last self-directed study session, your mentee reviewed a research article. They were supported to select a piece of research evidence, consider the credibility of the research and consider the applicability of the research.

Ask your mentee to share their reflections on this activity. You may find the following prompts useful:

- what piece of research evidence did you select?
- how did you source the research evidence?
- what were the main claims made in the research?
- how credible do you think the research is? And how do you know?
- how applicable do you think the research is in your context? And how do you know?



2. Analyse artefacts and discuss with mentor

Explore the recommendations in the Education Endowment Foundation's Guidance Report [Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants](#).

To engage with these recommendations, you could:

- take 10 minutes to read recommendations 1 and 2, while your mentee reads recommendations 3 and 4
- each take a couple of minutes to summarise to each other the key messages from the sections of the report that you have read
- discuss common themes and how it relates to the research summary you have already read

Then evaluate the resource using the criteria addressed last week in relation to the effective use of evidence.

You may find it helpful to consider the following questions:

How credible is the evidence?

- what are the key claims made?
- who funded, undertook and published the research?
- what types of research were used to support these claims?
- what limitations are there to the research?

How applicable is the evidence?

- what context was the research undertaken in?
- does the evidence address a problem or issue that you have?
- how do the claims compare to your own professional experience?
- are the approaches described likely to be suitable and feasible in your own context?

The answers to these questions are open to professional debate, but you may find the following prompts useful:

Overall, there are a number of different claims made and they are credible. Perhaps the central claim is that TAs can make a big difference to pupils' learning, but that this requires effective deployment. The report was funded and published by the Education Endowment Foundation, which is an independent charity known for the quality of its work. The report itself describes the rigour of the process used to develop the materials. This includes an evidence review stage and the systematic involvement of a range of professionals to develop the recommendations.

In terms of applicability, this is open to even more professional judgement, and will depend on your own context. For instance, if you already have very effective practice around TA deployment, then the potential benefits of the recommendations are likely reduced.

Next Steps (5 mins)

Agree with your mentee how they will now put their learning from this week's session(s) into practice in their teaching. Help your mentee to clarify:

1. the action(s) they will take and how these actions are expected to contribute to improving pupil learning
2. what success will 'look like' in relation to these actions
3. how they will evaluate their success in taking these actions

Note the date of your next mentor meeting, when you will check on your mentee's progress.