

Engaging with evidence

'Ironically, as the language of evidence proliferates, there is a risk that it loses its impact. Surface-level compliance is the biggest threat to any change in education.' (Francis, 2021)

Evidence "only leads to sustained change if there is time for informed debate and teachers can see the impact in practice" (Coldwell et al., 2017, p. 28)

Meaningfully engaging with evidence requires "communication, collaboration and interactions through networks within and beyond the school" (Godfrey, 2019, p. 209)

One way to avoid surface-level compliance is by talking about and engaging with the evidence. In doing so, we get under the surface, confront the implications, realise what we know and, just as important, what we don't yet know or what we may have misunderstood. Use the questions on this sheet as a way to prompt discussion about the body of evidence you are reviewing.

- 1 Use the prompts to discuss the evidence.
- 2 Which areas are priorities?
- 3 What are your next steps?

Active ingredients

Does our current understanding of the evidence allow us to define the active ingredients of the approach? (This [EEF tool](#) provides more guidance about active ingredients)

Acting on the evidence

Do we have a systematic plan for acting on the evidence? (See examples of schools' implementation plans [here](#))

Other voices

Have we been working on this in isolation? Should we seek other opinions? Might we have missed something others will see? (Reach out to the Research School Network [here](#))

Explaining the evidence

Are we struggling to explain the evidence clearly? Does this mean we need to dig deeper ourselves? (If you're using the EEF's Teaching and Learning [Toolkit](#), click on the headlines to read the 'What should I consider?' section)

Visualising practice

Do we have a clear idea of what this would look like in practice? (Thinking about what we might [expect](#), [support and reward](#) can help us visualise the practices we might see)

Interpretation

Are we taking the evidence at face-value? Should we question it? Do we know how robust the evidence is? (The prompts on the [That's a Claim](#) website encourage us to think critically about educational claims)

Logistical issues

Are we overlooking any logistical issues? Can we think about operationalising the evidence using the implementation cycle? (See the EEF's implementation cycle [diagram](#))

Fitness for purpose

How well does the evidence fit the context, purpose and issue we have in mind? Do we first need to gather and interpret data to identify our priorities? (This [EEF tool](#) will structure your thinking)

Confidence

Do we need to adjust our confidence in the evidence? (Are there references in the relevant [guidance report](#) or Teaching and Learning Toolkit we can follow up on?)

Professional development

What professional development will we need to act on the evidence? (This [EEF resource](#) explores the characteristics of successful professional development)

Accessibility

Is the evidence accessible to its users? (Many of the EEF's [guidance reports](#) contain vignettes that encourage engagement in an accessible way)

Quality of evidence

Do we have sufficient evidence? Are we aware of potential challenges or limits to the evidence? Is it high-quality evidence? (Check this [list](#) of EEF evidence reviews)

Coldwell, M., Greaney, T., Higgins, S., Brown, C., Maxwell, B., Stiell, B., Stoll, L., Willis, B., & Burns, H. (2017). Evidence-informed teaching: An evaluation of progress in England. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-informed-teaching-evaluation-of-progress-in-england>

Godfrey, D; (2019) Moving forward – how to create and sustain an evidence-informed school eco-system. In: Godfrey, D and Brown, C, (eds.) An ecosystem for research-engaged schools: reforming education through research. Routledge: London, UK

Francis, B., 2021. Why superficial compliance with research is dangerous. [online] Tes. Available at: <<https://www.tes.com/news/why-superficial-compliance-research-dangerous>> [Accessed 15 May 2021].

