PEER TUTORING

COST	EVIDENCE	IMPACT	EFFECT
		+5	0.42

High impact for very low cost based on extensive evidence.

WHAT IS IT?

Peer tutoring includes a range of approaches in which learners work in pairs or small groups to provide each other with explicit teaching support, such as:

- fixed role, cross-ability tutoring in which one learner, who is often older, takes the tutoring role and is paired with a tutee or tutees, who are often younger;
- reciprocal role tutoring, in which learners alternate between the role of tutor and tutee.

The common characteristic is that learners take on responsibility for aspects of teaching and for evaluating their success.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Peer tutoring, on average, has a positive impact on both tutors and tutees and may be a cost-effective approach to delivering one to one or small group tuition in a school.

2. Peer tutoring seems most effective when used to review or consolidate learning, rather than introducing new material.

3. Training for staff and tutors is essential for success. It is crucial to allocate sufficient time to train both staff and tutors, to ensure training provides structure to the tutoring, and to identify and implement improvements as the programme progresses.

4. Four to ten week intensive blocks with regular sessions (4-5 times a week) appear to provide maximum impact for both tutors and tutees.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE APPROACH?

Peer tutoring approaches have been shown to have a positive impact on learning, with an average positive effect equivalent to approximately five additional months' progress within one academic year. Studies have identified benefits for both tutors and tutees, and for a wide range of age groups. Though all types of pupils appear to benefit from peer tutoring, there is some evidence that pupils who are low-attaining and those with special educational needs make the biggest gains.

Peer tutoring appears to be particularly effective when pupils are provided with support to ensure that the quality of peer interaction is high: for example, questioning frames to use in tutoring sessions, and training and feedback for tutors. In cross-age peer tutoring some studies have found that a gap of less than three years is optimal, although ensuring that the gap is wide enough so that the work is challenging to the tutee whilst easy enough for the tutor to support them is key. Regular tutoring sessions (4-5 times a week) of up to 10 weeks appear to be more effective than less intensive or longer programmes.

Successful approaches may also have other benefits, such as supporting the social and personal development of pupils and boosting their self-confidence and motivation for learning.

BEHIND THE AVERAGE

Effects are similar (+5 months) for both primary and secondary age pupils.

Impact is similar (+5 months) for both literacy and mathematics.

Lower attaining pupils tend to benefit more (+6 months) than higher attaining pupils.

A number of studies have been undertaken that use digital technology to support peer tutoring approaches, with similar overall impact.

CLOSING THE DISADVANTAGE GAP

While there is limited evidence that specifically examines pupils from a disadvantaged background, studies have shown that pupils who are low attaining typically receive additional benefits from peer tutoring. Peer-led tutoring approaches may help pupils to close gaps in their learning by offering targeted, peer-led support to consolidate within class learning, practice skills, and identify and overcome misconceptions. There is also some evidence to suggest that peer-led tutoring can offer tutors the chance to revisit

and revise skills, prior knowledge, and develop metacognitive understanding of topics.

HOW COULD YOU IMPLEMENT IN YOUR SETTING?

Peer tutoring relies on close interaction between two or more students with learners taking responsibility for aspects of teaching and for evaluating their success. When implementing peer tutoring approaches, schools should consider how to ensure high quality interactions between pupils. This might include:

- Carefully structured tasks so sessions focus on existing knowledge;
- Supporting peer tutors with teaching approaches, such as modelling knowledge, overcoming common misconceptions, feedback and evaluating progress;
- Careful consideration of appropriate pairing of tutors and tutees;
- Providing teaching aids and learning frames to guide tutors on how to structure learning, or the types of questions to ask tutees.

Peer tutoring interventions are typically delivered over four to ten week intensive blocks. Approaches may involve cross-age or same-age tutoring usually in pairs. Approaches may be based on a fixed tutee and tutor relationship, while others may be reciprocal.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

The average cost of peer tutoring is expected to be very low. The cost to schools is largely based on teacher training and learning resources. Implementing peer tutoring will also require a moderate amount of staff time, compared with other approaches.

Alongside time and cost, school leaders should consider how to maximise the quality of peer tutoring interactions and ensure sufficient time is allocated to identify and implement improvements to approaches. When utilising programmes, school leaders should assess the quality and strength of evidence behind them.

When introducing new approaches, schools should consider implementation. For more information see **Putting Evidence to Work – A School's Guide to Implementation.**

HOW SECURE IS THE EVIDENCE?

The security of the evidence around peer tutoring is rated as high. 127 studies were

identified that meet the inclusion criteria of the Toolkit. The topic lost a padlock because a large percentage of the studies were not independently evaluated. Evaluations conducted by organisations connected with the approach – for example, commercial providers, typically have larger impacts, which may influence the overall impact of the strand.

As with any evidence review, the Toolkit summarises the average impact of approaches when researched in academic studies. It is important to consider your context and apply your professional judgement when implementing an approach in your setting.

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