

Let Teachers SHINE: findings from the implementation readiness evaluation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Let Teachers SHINE

Let Teachers SHINE is SHINE's funding programme for teacher-led innovation. It aims to stimulate and support projects that embody creative approaches to teaching, with a focus on disadvantaged students and on English, maths or science. SHINE identifies promising ideas through a national competition, and supports their implementation in the teacher-innovator's own school as a 'test bed'. This initial implementation is used to identify the projects with potential for further

development and for replication in other schools. In the long term, the aim is to nurture a small number of initiatives that have the potential to be scaled up substantially.

SHINE uses a 'staircase' funding model to support this. In each of four years, following the national competition, around 10 projects have been selected for an initial year of funding. Those that are most promising progress to a second, and some to a third, year of funding. Projects at all levels receive support from SHINE's project managers. At Level 2 and beyond the teacher leads can access further advice and help from mentors and business or education experts, including SHINE Trustees and staff from partners Bloomberg and CAPITA SIMS.

Let Teachers SHINE

- 4 national competitions run
- 505 applications received
 - ✓ 42 projects funded for an initial year (Level 1)
 - ✓ 8 projects funded for a second year (Level 2)
 - ✓ 1 project funded for a third year (SHINE Core Funding)

Total funding to schools: £1,100,000

Key learning from Let Teachers SHINE

Key learning points from the implementation readiness evaluation undertaken by The Colebrooke Centre for Evidence and Implementation (described below) are:

1. Let Teachers SHINE is demonstrating that schools can be positive and effective hosts of innovation. The fit of the project to aspects of the school infrastructure such as school culture, school strategy, the priorities of the school leadership team and existing staff roles is key here. Projects also needed to be supported by organisational processes and systems within the host schools: data collection, assessment and performance monitoring were particularly important. These aspects of the school infrastructure need to be intentionally engaged in support of projects. They also help to define the features likely to be needed in other school contexts for successful replication there.
2. Defining and specifying the core components of projects is challenging but an important part of the development process, and particularly important for impact at scale. The experience of delivery at Level 1, the flexibility to modify the project and the focused work on theory of change at Level 2 all helped teachers here. This will be an important area for further work for the projects

that go forward.

3. Many of the projects address or work on students' learning skills, so a useful question to ask is *"Will this project make someone a better learner?"* Again, there was scope to strengthen project design and implementation here, with explicit focus on the particular learning strategies the project aims to encourage so that they are visible to students, can be applied in classroom learning and (where learning is contextualised in other activity) transferred back to the core subject.
4. Successful projects are likely to be those that connect well with classroom-based teaching and are embedded in a wider pedagogical approach in the school. For many of the projects, the specific practices involved in the interaction between the project and classroom teaching needed to be made visible and explicit. Another question to ask of projects is *"Will this innovation make someone a better teacher?"*, and this would usefully be a focus in project design and implementation.
5. A recurrent message is that effective implementation takes time and requires the enduring support of the project lead as champion and of the school leadership team.

SHINE's monitoring and evaluation

Each funded teacher completes SHINE's monitoring and evaluation template. The teacher-innovators input data regarding student characteristics (sex, age, markers of disadvantage); attendance; baseline performance (using the school's own performance monitoring), and performance at the end of the year. This measures change in the performance of participating students, and could provide a basis for systematic comparison with progress in previous years or with a matched group of non-participating students. SHINE also tracks progress in delivery against an agreed project plan through regular contact with project leaders and project reports.

The Colebrooke Centre's implementation readiness evaluation

The Colebrooke Centre for Evidence and Implementation undertook a two-year implementation readiness evaluation. As a specialist implementation analysis and support centre, our approaches draw on theory, frameworks and methods from implementation science and are particularly well suited to analysing social innovations. Sustaining and scaling innovations is challenging and requires careful analysis of the conditions and strategies for effective implementation. These include understanding: the 'core components' (or 'active ingredients') of projects that are essential for success, how projects need to be supported by the infrastructure in which they take place, the settings where that

support is likely to be replicated, and how the necessary implementation support can be sustained.

Our implementation readiness evaluation advised SHINE on the selection of projects for further development and funding. The evaluation focused on two years of Let Teachers SHINE. In 2013-14 we evaluated the eleven projects funded at Level 1, and the three projects funded at Level 2. In 2014-15 we evaluated the ten new projects funded at Level 1, the three project from the previous year that had progressed to Level 2, and the project that had progressed from Level 2 in the previous year to SHINE Core Funding. In the evaluation we:

- assessed projects against the international evidence through a high level ‘evidence check’ based on existing evidence syntheses
- ran workshops with Level 2 teachers to help them clarify the ‘theory of change’ or logic model underpinning the project
- undertook and analysed an online implementation survey, completed by Level 1 teachers
- and carried out one-day school site visits to explore each project’s core components, implementation, and scope for replication. In the site visits we interviewed the teacher-developer, a representative from the school senior leadership team, other staff involved in the project or whose students were participants, and students.

The approach, and the key concepts and frameworks used, are described in an earlier summary paper¹.

The Let Teachers SHINE projects

Themes in Let Teachers SHINE projects:

Contextualised learning
Co-operative or collaborative learning
Meta-cognitive approaches
IT teaching and learning aids
Peer tutoring

Plus specific project focus eg school radio ... literacy support for traveller community ... school transition etc

The Let Teachers SHINE projects were very varied in their approaches. They connected with different theories and bodies of evidence about effective methods in teaching, and covered different aspects of teaching and learning. Some were whole school initiatives, some whole class, and some worked with targeted groups of students. They were also at varied stages of development when first funded by SHINE, a couple having already at that point been implemented across several schools.

¹ Lewis J and Ghate D (2014) *Let Teachers SHINE: key concepts and frameworks in an implementation readiness evaluation* <http://www.shinetrust.org.uk/what-we-fund/let-teachers-shine/let-teachers-shine-projects/external-evaluation/>

The project designs reflected teachers' own experiences, beliefs and professional expertise and experience. This perhaps helps to explain why our analysis of Level 2 projects, and the survey responses from teacher-developers of Level 1 projects, suggested they were generally well aligned with the school infrastructure. The teachers described their projects as fitting well with students' needs, values, preferences and relationships with staff and each other. They saw them as well supported by the values, skills and existing roles of staff. There was strong synergy with the school ethos, culture and strategies: having the support of the senior management team and a culture of innovation and improvement was particularly important. The projects also fitted well with aspects of the wider education system such as the curriculum and targets.

The teachers described being highly committed to their project. Our site visits, the survey responses from Level 1 projects and their reports to SHINE indicated that most projects were progressing in line with plans, although in each year one project was discontinued early and there were, as we describe below, some recurring challenges. Teachers themselves identified many positive impacts for students including in relation to progress, motivation, self-confidence, participation, active learning behaviours, teamwork and relationships. They identified benefits for the school including strengthening aspects of the school culture, helping to deliver on strategic priorities, providing professional development for staff, raising the profile of the school locally, and strengthening relationships with parents. They also described spin-off benefits where projects had led to other opportunities and activity.

Again in the survey and site visits, teachers also commented very positively on the opportunity and learning that Let Teachers SHINE had given them. Being successful in the national competition gave the project a higher status in the school and beyond; securing funding meant that essential costs were covered, and SHINE's monitoring requirements and support helped to keep the project on track. Overall our analysis shows clearly that schools could be effective hosts to innovation, and that Let Teachers SHINE was helping to foster and nurture innovation.

Implementation challenges

An area where our analysis highlighted that the design of many of the funded projects needed to be strengthened was the clarity of 'core components' – the key elements and 'active ingredients' that are essential and central to the project. This is important for effective implementation in the host school and for scaling up. It means other schools can make an informed decision about adopting a project, adopt it consistently and adapt it where necessary without diluting essential elements. It also makes for easier monitoring of both implementation and ultimate outcomes. All the projects, as they move forward, will benefit from experimentation with and fine-tuning of core components such as the target student population, the specific practices involved, and the duration, number of sessions or other measures of the amount of activity, to establish a feasible and effective project design. Some projects involved a complex set of activities and roles, likely to be a challenge to replication since work to simplify as well as standardise innovations is usually required at this stage.

Our analysis identified a number of other challenges to implementation in the host school and to replication by others:

- Some projects had required the development of quite extensive resources and materials – substantial work and costs for another school if they cannot use materials already developed
- Fitting the project into busy school schedules was often a challenge as the availability of space, equipment, students and staff needed to be aligned
- Engaging partners outside the school, such as families, other schools, venues for project activity or delivery partners, was sometimes more difficult than expected
- Many teachers found the management and administration requirements of their project greater than they had expected or allowed for in resource planning
- Teachers who had worked with other schools found that they did not always provide the same level of support (for example from the school leadership team, school context and a committed project leader) as the teacher-innovator had secured in their own school
- Finally, good teacher-innovators are also likely to be good at other aspects of their practice! Being promoted, given other leadership roles or offered other jobs elsewhere was sometimes a threat to the sustainability of projects.

Three examples of Let Teachers SHINE projects

To illustrate the range of projects and the implementation and replication issues our analysis highlighted, we describe three of the Let Teachers SHINE projects.

HegartyMaths: SHINE Core Funding

Developer: Colin Hegarty and colleagues, Preston Manor, Wembley, London

HegartyMaths is a web-based learning resource, aimed at students studying GCSE and A level curricula and at teachers. Students can access the website direct and use it to reinforce or catch up on classroom learning or help with homework. Teachers can use it in classroom teaching, and Colin and others use it in flipped learning (where homework is used for core learning and classroom time for tailored exercises, discussion and support). HegartyMaths was already well-established when first funded by SHINE, with a high number of users in the UK and internationally. Colin used the Level 1 and 2 funding to develop the online resources. With SHINE Core Funding 3 he and colleagues are developing a new and more ground-breaking website.

The approaches used in the project are well supported by the wider evidence about effective education approaches. There is good evidence for the use of IT in maths, and particularly the technology-based coaching that HegartyMaths provides. The approach resonates with wider evidence about the importance of explicit and systematic instruction, modelling problem solving, addressing motivation, formative assessment and differentiation.

HegartyMaths continued

Our analysis suggests the project has potential for large scale take – up. The main challenge we identified is that HegartyMaths remained a ‘product’ rather than a set of learning approaches. However the direction that Colin and colleagues are taking with the next stage of funding has strengthened HegartyMaths alignment to classroom teaching and incorporated a number of innovative approaches that are directly orientated to the core aspects of teaching.

Student Leaders: Level 2

Developer: Rhian Davies, Marple Hall School, Stockport

Student Leaders is a peer tutoring project – an approach that is very well supported by the international literature, which shows consistent benefits for both tutees and tutors from well-implemented initiatives. Rhian’s project involved students in Years 10 and 11 tutoring students in Years 7-9, in weekly after-school sessions. Two teachers coordinated the project and designed special resources for tutors to use, and three teaching assistants supported the tutoring sessions. The project ran for 32 weeks, with tutors working with students individually, in pairs or in small groups. The cross-age design and use of structured materials are supported by the literature on effective peer tutoring.

Our analysis highlighted that Student Leaders fitted well with the host school’s culture of collaborative learning and supportive student relationships, and other peer support initiatives had been established. It was supported by other features of the school setting, including students having a real sense of wanting to improve, staff valuing student tutors and seeing their own role as being to empower them, and lead teachers with close relationships with students which aided identifying and supporting potential tutors and tutees.

The project needed good communication between project staff and classroom teachers, and maintaining its place in the school schedule had been challenging given competition from other after-school activities. Our analysis highlighted that there was scope for more focus on the specific behaviours and practices involved in effective tutoring and on training for staff and tutees. Overall the project had strong potential for development with a view to replication. Further development would usefully involve experimentation and fine-tuning of the optimal number of sessions and other core components, and developing guidance for other schools to aid consistent implementation.

The project is working well at Marple Hall School and appears to be consistently achieving significant improvements in attainment. There are plans for further roll out in Greater Manchester from September 2016.

Active Phonics: Level 2

Developer: David Fallis, Springwell Learning Community, Barnsley

Active Phonics is a targeted phonics intervention that uses sport activity to engage students. It is aimed at students in Key Stages 2 and 3, and delivered by two members of staff to groups of usually around 4-6 children. It uses core phonic methods (repetition, reading, retrieval etc) contextualised in a range of sports and PE activity. David used it in two 30 minute sessions or one 60 minute session per week (depending on students' age) during the regular school timetable.

Phonics, and particularly synthetic phonics, is well supported by the international evidence. Formative assessment and differentiated teaching, both elements of effective phonics strategies, are central features of Active Phonics. The evidence base for contextualised learning is less developed.

The project fitted well in the host school, whose culture was seen as particularly supportive of innovation and of flexing teaching practice to children's learning preferences, and actively embraced fun as a learning approach. At Level 2, David was extending the project to work with other schools, developing and delivering a replication model involving training, demonstration, observation and coaching. He was also developing a suite of online resources and implementation guidance. Springwell is a special school and pupil referral unit and students have very high level of disadvantage, so a question about the project is whether it is as well suited to student needs, teaching approaches and school culture in other school environments.

The main area where our analysis suggested the project could be strengthened was the interaction with classroom teaching, through more systematic feedback, shared assessments and purposeful mutual reinforcement of learning between the project and classroom teaching. There was also a need to clarify core components, particularly the optimal number and duration of sessions (participation was currently open-ended) and target years. Our analysis suggests the project has good potential for scale up, providing a feasible and cost-effective training and support model can be developed.



About the Colebrooke Centre

The Colebrooke Centre for Evidence and Implementation (www.cevi.org.uk) is part of a new generation of intermediary organisations across the world, applying implementation science in real world practice improve services for children and families. The mission of the Centre is to improve the effectiveness of systems and services for children and families by promoting and applying an evidence-informed approach to their design and delivery. The Centre is founded on the recognition that high quality implementation is the key to better results, and that high quality implementation is evidence-informed. The Centre aims to harness the insights and tools generated in recent years by the movement towards evidence-based practice and implementation science for the benefit of the widest possible group of services and interventions.

The Centre is an independent not-for-profit company limited by guarantee (company registered in England and Wales, number 7712883). It is based in central London, and governed by a Board of directors drawn from leaders in children's services, policy, research, and implementation practice and science. The Centre is funded by means of grants, contracts, consultancy and donations.

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