



The EEF Toolkit and Nurture Groups

The Education Endowment Foundation's Toolkit, a summary of educational research which provides guidance for teachers and schools on how to use their resources to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, has an extensive evidence base to prove the efficacy of 14 out of 34 components.

Nurture groups use 10 out of these 14 effective evidence-base components as part of their provision:

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY NURTURE GROUPS:

1. **Meta-cognition and self-regulation:** High impact for low cost, based on extensive evidence.
"Meta-cognition (sometimes known as 'learning to learn') and self-regulation approaches aim to help learners think about their own learning more explicitly. This is usually by teaching pupils specific strategies to set goals, and monitor and evaluate their own academic development. Self-regulation means managing one's own motivation towards learning. The intention is often to give pupils a repertoire of strategies to choose from during learning activities ... Meta-cognition and self-regulation approaches have consistently high levels of impact with pupils making an average of eight months' additional progress. The evidence indicates that teaching these strategies can be particularly effective for low achieving and older pupils. These strategies are usually more effective when taught in collaborative groups so learners can support each other and make their thinking explicit through discussion."
2. **Behaviour interventions:** Moderate impact for moderate cost, based on extensive evidence.
"Evidence suggests that behaviour interventions can produce large



improvements in academic performance along with a decrease in problematic behaviours, though there is relatively wide variation between alternative programmes. Effect sizes are larger for targeted interventions matched to specific students with particular needs or behavioural issues, than for universal interventions or whole school strategies ... The majority of studies report higher impact with older pupils. Different treatment approaches, such as behavioural, cognitive and social skills for aggressive and disruptive behaviour, seem to be equally effective. Parental and community involvement programmes are often associated with reported improvements in school ethos or discipline so are worth considering as alternatives to direct behaviour interventions."

3. **Social and emotional learning:** Moderate impact for very low cost, based on extensive evidence.

On average, SEL interventions have an identifiable and significant impact on attitudes to learning, social relationships in school, and attainment itself (on average around three to four months additional progress). Improvements seem more likely when approaches are embedded into routine educational practices, and supported by professional development and training for staff. In addition, the implementation of the programme and the degree to which teachers were committed to the approach appeared to be important. SEL programmes appear to benefit disadvantaged or low-attaining pupils more than other pupils, though all pupils benefit on average.

Approaches have been found to be effective from nursery to secondary school.

4. **Collaborative learning:** Moderate impact for very low cost, based on extensive evidence.

Collaborative or cooperative learning can be defined as learning tasks or activities where students work together in a group small enough for



everyone to participate in a collective task that has been clearly assigned. This can be either a joint task where group members do different aspects of the task but contribute to a common overall outcome, or a shared task where group members work together throughout the activity.

5. **Oral language interventions:** "Moderate impact for low cost, based on extensive evidence.

Oral language interventions emphasise the importance of spoken language and verbal interaction in the classroom. They are based on the idea that comprehension and reading skills benefit from explicit discussion of either the content or processes of learning, or both. Oral language approaches include targeted reading aloud and discussing books with young children, explicitly extending pupils' spoken vocabulary, and the use of structured questioning to develop reading comprehension. Overall, studies of oral language interventions consistently show positive benefits on learning, including oral language skills and reading comprehension. On average, pupils who participate in oral language interventions make approximately five months additional progress over the course of a year.

6. **Reading comprehension strategies:** Moderate impact for low cost, based on extensive evidence.

Reading comprehension approaches to improving reading focus on learners' understanding of the text. On average, reading comprehension approaches improve learning by an additional five months' progress over the course of a school year. These approaches appear to be particularly effective for older readers (aged 8 or above) who are not making expected progress.



7. **Small group tuition:** Moderate impact for moderate cost, based on limited evidence.

Here, small group tuition is defined as one teacher or professional educator working with two, three, four or five pupils. This arrangement enables the teacher to focus exclusively on a small number of learners, usually on their own in a separate classroom or working area. Intensive tuition in small groups is often provided to support lower attaining learners or those who are falling behind, but it can also be used as a more general strategy to ensure effective progress, or to teach challenging topics or skills. Research indicates that pupils taught in small groups make an average of four additional months' progress when compared with larger groups or whole class teaching.

7. **One to one tuition:** Moderate impact for high cost, based on extensive evidence.

One to one tuition is where an individual pupil is removed from their class and given intensive tuition. Short, regular sessions (about 30 minutes, 3-5 times a week) over a set period of time (6-12 weeks) appear to result in optimum impact. Evidence also suggests tuition should be additional to, but explicitly linked with, normal teaching, and that teachers should monitor progress to ensure the tutoring is beneficial. Studies comparing one to one to small group tuition show mixed results. In some cases one to one tuition has led to greater improvement, while in others tuition in groups of two or three has been as or more effective as one to one.

NURSERY AND PRIMARY NURTURE GROUPS:

1. **Early years intervention:** High impact for very high costs, based on extensive evidence.

Overall, the evidence suggests that early years and pre-school



intervention is beneficial with above average levels of impact (a typical impact of six additional months' progress). There is some international evidence that these programmes need to be for a whole day (rather than a half day which on average has less impact, though it should be noted the UK's Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) study did not find a difference) and of longer duration (up to a year or more) rather than for shorter periods of time ... In most studies, the impact on attainment tends to wear off over time, though impact on attitudes to school tends to be more durable. There is no established amount of time where the fade takes place, rather there is a pattern of decline over time. Early years and pre-school interventions are therefore not sufficient to close the gap in attainment for disadvantaged children.

2. **Phonics:** Moderate impact for very low cost, based on extensive evidence.

Phonics is an approach to teaching reading, and some aspects of writing, by developing learners' phonemic awareness. Phonics approaches have been consistently found to be effective in supporting younger readers to master the basics of reading, with an average impact of an additional four months' progress. Research suggests that phonics is beneficial for younger learners (4-7 year olds) as they begin to read.

The effective evidence-base components nurture groups did not have were: digital technology, peer tutoring, repeating a year and summer school. [Click here to see The Education Endowment Foundation's Toolkit in full.](#)