Supporting Pupil Premium Attainment in Science at KS3

Introduction

It has been widely understood that there is a link between the family income of a student and that student's achievement in school. In recent times the government has enacted a policy of identifying students from low income families and giving schools extra funding, called pupil premium. However, as this is a relatively new initiative, schools have come under pressure to account for the spending of this money. Schools now face the challenge of assessing the impacts of pupil interventions, with little previous evidence on which to base decisions. This research focuses on how schools close the gap between the attainment of students eligible for pupil premium, and those that are not, measured by improved attainment of pupil premium students.

This research project is based in ‘School A’ which is a typical inner city mixed comprehensive school.

Findings so far

- 29% of the school cohort currently receive pupil premium funding.
- Preliminary in house assessments have shown that interventions that have occurred over a sustained period of time have had the greatest impact in improving student attainment.
- Interventions that students felt were the most beneficial include:
  - Personalised interventions
  - Interventions conducted as small group or one to one activities
  - Interventions bounded by the timings of the school day

Research Questions

1. How are decision made in school A which lead to interventions?
2. What interventions lead to the greatest improvement in pupils attainment?
3. What are the common factors for successful intervention?

Methodology and Rationale

The government has recently published potential research topics that utilise pupil premium funding. The report also highlighted gaps in understanding of the impact of intervention strategies.

This action research cycle takes place over a whole school year. The interventions investigated included:

1. KS3 revision guide
2. KS3 workbook
3. Tutor time revision sessions
4. Online revision tools
5. KS3 homework club
6. Trips
7. Master classes

Future Work

To add further evidence for how interventions are impacting students attainment the results from the end of year assessments (due in July 2015) will be analysed.

This research will also be expanded to include KS4 and use GCSE results to investigate how interventions impact KS4 students. Interventions specific to KS4 includes; specialist tutors, extended masterclasses and specialist online training programs.

Researched by Jacob Lean and supervised by Dr Jane McNicholl