# Research-Engaged Practice in Education

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This month the [Research-Engaged Practice Network](#) (REPN) are back after a brief period of rest, with research being presented from a range of practitioner-led perspectives, including the Primary Science for All project, the Research Schools Network and South Yorkshire Futures. For those that aren't aware of the REPN, it provides a way in which all those engaged in research can learn about each other's research, develop their research skills and share findings from their own research. The environment is informal, friendly and supportive: we are all researchers together, no matter what your level of engagement and we all learn from each other.

**Practitioner engagement with research why is it important?**

In education, over the last few years, emphasis on practitioners' engagement with research has grown. The Welsh government commissioned [us](#) to help to strengthen the capacity for an evidence-based, research-informed initial teacher education system in Wales. Meanwhile, organisations such as the Research Schools Network and ResearchEd are also gaining strength. Colleagues in schools who are leading or working on bids to the Strategic School Improvement Fund or to the Education Endowment Foundation will have responded to the requirement to provide evidence of "what works".

At school level, it's great that increasing numbers of teachers are engaged in research through activities such as lesson study, action research or teacher research groups. However, it can be a challenge for teachers to turn evidence from research into improved practice. As my colleague Mike Coldwell has [pointed](#) out, evidence for some strategies can gather unwarranted traction in the system, while evidence for others may be largely ignored.

Colleagues in the SIOE, working with the University of Durham and the UCL Institute of Education, recently published a report for the DfE on the ways in which schools engage (or not) with research. They suggest that there are three ways in which schools and teachers engage with research:

- looking for evidence from research carried out by other organisations
- use of school data to identify problems, followed by adaptation of research evidence to the school context
- carrying out research into or evaluation of changes in practice

Findings of this report have now been developed into a set of practical [tools](#) for teachers and school leaders. These tools help teachers to engage with and utilise research findings.

In the SIOE, not surprisingly, we also engage with research, and we have our own version of the three ways listed above to show a variety of types of engagement with research:

- engaging in reading, listening to or otherwise learning about other people's research
- drawing on our own, colleagues' and others' research in our practice
- carrying out our own research
- using research to influence policy and other people's practice
- supervising postgraduate research students

These different types of engagement show that practitioners can engage with research on multiple levels at different stages of their career, depending on their confidence and expertise. We know that, whatever your experience of engaging with research, there is great value in sharing this with other practitioners. Indeed, my colleagues reported that, while many teachers valued research evidence, they were unlikely to be convinced by it unless they heard colleagues discuss its impact on their practice or saw this impact for themselves.  The REPN events offer a friendly forum for this work to be shared amongst colleagues.

We hope to see you at the April Research-Engaged Practice Network (REPN) event and other that follow.