



Making great use of LSAs

John Brown SEN consultant

What is the evidence base?

All of the available evidence challenges the orthodox views that 1:1 support must be working:

- J Brown for Disability Rights Commission 2004
- University College London for DFE 2014-1015
Deployment and Impact of Support staff (Sharples J et al,)
- Institute of Education Sciences USA 2015
- Education Endowment Foundation 2016

All consistently show use of learning support through 1:1 is ineffective. In fact it makes things worse.

Research shows to use LSAs effectively:

(Taken from EEF 2016)

1. LSAs should not be used as an informal teaching resource for low-attaining pupils.
2. Use LSAs to add value to what teachers do, not to replace them: it is important that they supplement, rather than replace, the teacher.
3. Use LSAs to help pupils develop independent learning skills and to manage their own learning.
4. Ensure LSA s are fully prepared for their role in the classroom: schools should provide sufficient time for TA training and for teachers and TAs to meet outside lesson time.
5. Use TAs to deliver high-quality one-to-one and small-group support, using structured interventions.
6. Ensure explicit connections are made between everyday classroom teaching and structured interventions: interventions should extend work done during whole-class lessons.

Using LSAs for interventions

The LSA can be crucial to the application of interventions. However, not any old intervention will do. The EEF emphasises that it must be structured and well-supported with training. The evidence is intervention programmes should:

- Include brief and regular sessions of 20 to 50 minutes, three to five times a week over a sustained period of eight to 20 weeks.
- Be accompanied by training for teaching LSAs of around five to 30 hours per intervention. (one day-one week)
- Have lesson plans with clear objectives.
- Be linked to general classroom teaching.

Where does it go wrong?

- “Many TAs go into lessons ‘blind’. And this is through no fault of their own. The employment and deployment decisions made at the school level – often arrived at without a wider strategy or purpose – leave TAs with no time in which to communicate with the teachers in whose lessons they will be working.”
- “This lack of communication makes it difficult for them to prepare effectively. They do not know what content will be covered, what is expected in terms of pupil learning, and what appropriate feedback should look and sound like.”

(EEF report into deployment of teaching assistants 2016)

I want the science lecturer to teach me science!

- Low attaining pupils need support from the *classroom lecturer*.
- Support from teaching assistants **is not an adequate substitute** for high quality teacher input.
- In many colleges, an informal model of deployment has developed in which LSAs become ‘velcroed’ to students with low attainment or special educational needs (SEN) for long periods. This is being imported and stratified via some EHCP targets
- This is nearly always the result of good intentions and it is on one level intuitive, but the consequences are generally not positive at all.

The problem is.....

1. The situation puts undue responsibility on LSAs to support pupils with the greatest needs, something for which they are generally not adequately trained.
2. It diminishes the amount of contact between the teacher and these pupils, putting them at a further disadvantage by separating them from the classroom teaching.
3. When colleges institutionalise these practices, they narrow the potential for LSAs to be used in more effective ways.

Changing the game

- LSAs have much to offer pupils and teachers.
- Deployed effectively, they can have a fantastic impact on teaching and learning.
- Effective deployment requires *careful* thought and consideration from the college leadership team. In conjunction with teaching assistants and teachers, there needs to be a clear delineation of what role LSAs are to play in the College.
- This might involve supporting low-attaining pupils and students with SEN at times. More so in foundation learning and entry level.
- But it **will not** involve an approach in which LSAs only ever work with these students – and in which they become an informal teaching resource replacing necessary teacher-pupil interactions.

Adding value

- GROUP TASK:

In your groups, discuss the ways in which LSAs add value or could add value in your college without falling back on common deployment mistakes- “velcroing”.

Please record these.

Is there a consensus or are these effective impacts specific to just your college.



Thank you for listening

John Brown

Associate SEND consultant for
Natspec

jbrownsenconsultant@gmail.com