

Deploying Support Staff

Education

The finding that surprised schools, and what changed as a result.

Teaching assistants support learning most when they are prepared, given a defined role and used to supplement teaching. Used as a substitute for teacher contact, the effect can be negative.

STUDY
DISS, 2009

EFFECT DEPENDS ON
deployment

- The DISS project found negative associations with progress.
- The cause was deployment, not the staff themselves.
- Velcro support reduces independence and peer contact.
- The pupils with most need got least teacher time.
- Structured interventions delivered by TAs work well.
- Preparation time before the lesson is the key variable.

LOOK FOR IT

Scaffold towards independence: prompt, then clue, then model, then correct. Start with the least support that works.

Educational reference. The finding is about how schools deploy support, not about the value of the staff, and it changed national