

Knowledge exchange



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What is knowledge exchange?

Knowledge exchange brings together academics, practitioners, and communities of interest to discuss their work, learn from one another, and exchange ideas, evidence and expertise.

How I use this method of engagement in my research

In January 2016, in partnership with Wiltshire Council and funded by the Public Engagement Unit, I led a pilot project which supplied 34 local schools with a *Toolkit for Supporting Parental Engagement with Children's Learning*, based on my research.

Schools signing up to the pilot agreed to use the toolkit for the year, and report back on both the process of using it and the impact it was having on parents' engagement with their children's learning.

The project included bringing school leaders, governors and parents together for three full days of training and sharing.

Perhaps the most profound outcomes of the project have been seen in the schools, which have moved beyond the toolkit itself, to incorporate the process it envisioned into their everyday working. Schools have reported making the toolkit ideas part of their school improvement or development plans.

At the moment, and again funded by the Public Engagement Unit, I'm working with schools across England in a project to support the home learning environment. The activity includes questions and tasks for young children to answer during a weekly family shop, and tips and ideas for parents to use at home.

My research

I'm very interested in parents' engagement with their children's learning, and what schools can do to facilitate that. Parental engagement with learning is one of the best levers we have to help narrow the achievement gap.

Other types of engagement I'm interested in

I regularly give talks about parental engagement with children's learning. I've given keynote presentations at conferences for head teachers, conferences sponsored by local authorities, and by charities, in England, Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland.

I've also led bespoke training for schools. I've advised members of the New Zealand, Welsh, Scottish and English Departments of Education. I've also been consulted by charitable organisations, including the Sutton Trust, the School Home Support Service, Teach First and the Relational Schools Foundation.

How public engagement benefits me

Public engagement has made my research much more useful to schools and families. One of the things I've had to do as a result of my engagement with schools is go back and re-evaluate some of the early work I did because it suggested an ideal of parental engagement which was not inclusive enough. Engaging with schools that are engaging with parents, talking to parents and finding out what's going on has made my work far better.

Through public engagement I've also improved my presentation skills, and become better at communicating my research to non-academic groups. In particular, it has helped me to make a change on the ground, to support children's learning. What is the point of research if it doesn't make a real-world change?

