

The Story Time Trial: A Teacher Choices Trial

School Information Sheet

Please note that the previous trial activities were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the school closures in the academic year 2019-20 and 2020-21. Schools are being re-invited to take part in this trial.

What is the Teacher Choices project?

The Teacher Choices project is exploring the feasibility of running robust evaluations of teachers' everyday choices in the classroom. In every lesson, teachers choose how to approach teaching and learning such as how to read aloud to their class, how to start a lesson or how to manage behaviour. The Teacher Choices project aims to find out how everyday choices are implemented and how they affect outcomes in the classroom, exploring if a randomised controlled trial (RCT) methodology and text-specific tests can be used to do this. This document gives further details about The Story Time Trial.

Who is conducting the study?

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has commissioned and funded this study. The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is conducting the evaluation.

What is The Story Time Trial?

The Story Time Trial is the second trial in the Teacher Choices project. It will evaluate two different approaches to class teachers reading aloud to the whole class in primary schools. The trial examines how teacher choices impact pupils' learning in, and attitudes to, primary reading via an RCT – this means schools will be randomly allocated to one of two groups, each of which will be assigned a different way of reading to their classes. **The random allocation ensures that, as far as possible, there are no systematic differences between the two groups of schools in factors that may affect outcomes in the classroom.** It will enable us to determine the cause and effect relationship between the choices and outcomes in the classroom.

The trial will compare two popular ways that teachers read in their classroom: a sustained reading – 'GO! Approach'; and reading with pauses to ask questions – 'STOP! approach'. Reading the story without pausing is a popular way of reading aloud that builds on an established tradition of sharing stories, exposing children to a wide range of texts and seeking to instill in pupils an enjoyment of, and motivation for, reading. In contrast, there is evidence to suggest that reading the text and pausing to ask questions may help to model to children the implicit processes that accomplished readers undertake when reading, helping them to develop these skills for themselves.

Year 4 and Year 5 teachers in primary schools in England can take part. The trial will recruit from June 2021 until the end of September 2021 and the choices will be implemented in school during the second half of the autumn term 2021 (November – December 2021).

Participating teachers will be given a short teacher guide to enable them to implement the reading approach that their school is randomised to - either a 'GO! Approach' or a 'STOP! Approach'. The teachers will use only one of the reading approaches for approximately three weeks. The type of reading approach for each school will be randomly allocated to schools by researchers at NFER.

After the random allocation, NFER will provide the book that should be read as part of the intervention. A copy of the book, [The Iron Woman by Ted Hughes](#), will be sent to each teacher along with a guidance document. At this point, EEF will approach schools via an email to offer support on the reading approaches.

At the end of the trial, participating schools will receive a £100 gift token, which can be used to expand the CPD library. This will be accompanied by a list of Education Endowment Foundation recommended titles that they think schools will find particularly useful, although the choice of texts will be up to the school and the school can of course choose titles not on the list. The gift token will be paid to schools once they have completed all of the data requirements of the evaluation.

Which schools can take part?

The Story Time Trial is being run in Year 4 and Year 5 classes in state-funded primary schools in England. To join the trial, the headteacher will sign up after consultation with the relevant classroom teachers. We would request that one teacher from the school acts as the main contact with NFER throughout the trial. See 'Joining the trial' for further details.

In most schools, we will need at least one Year 4 and one Year 5 class to participate. Beyond this, schools are welcome to nominate as many Year 4 and Year 5 classes as they wish to participate. If the schools do not nominate all Year 4 or all Year 5 classes, the nominated classes need to be mixed ability rather than streamed or set classes. Please note that if your school has a Year 4 or Year 5 class as a mixed year group with Year 3 or Year 6, it will not be eligible to participate. However, if Year 4 and Year 5 are taught together, this class can take part in the trial.

Schools will need to confirm that they have not already read the book, [The Iron Woman](#), with participating classes.

Which teachers can take part?

The trial will involve Year 4 and Year 5 teachers with a classroom teaching responsibility for the nominated classes. Teaching assistants or school leaders are not eligible to take part.

To participate in this trial, we are asking teachers to read aloud [The Iron Woman](#) (which will be provided to the school) over a period of approximately three weeks to their whole class. Schools will be randomised to either the GO! or STOP! approach.

Schools that are randomised to STOP! can complete reading the book aloud in approximately two to three weeks in 15-minute daily sessions involving 10 minutes of reading interspersed with 5 minutes of questions. The questions for the STOP! condition will be provided along with the book.

Schools in the GO! condition can complete reading the book aloud in approximately two weeks in 15-minute daily reading sessions.

If the teachers complete reading [The Iron Woman](#) to their class, they can continue using the same approach they were randomly allocated to by selecting and reading a different age-appropriate book. More details will be provided in the guidance document.

What will the evaluation involve for teachers and schools?

Joining the trial: Each school's headteacher will sign the online Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and nominate a participating teacher as the point of contact for the trial. Schools will identify which Year 4 and Year 5 teachers will be involved with the project and share their contact details with NFER. In the MoU, the headteacher will also confirm that the teachers have not read [The Iron Woman](#) with the classes nominated to take part in the trial.

Pupil data and baseline data: NFER will provide a parent withdrawal letter and a template on the secure school portal for teachers to provide pupil data required for the trial. Schools will supply class lists for each teacher to collect, name, date of birth, free school meals eligibility (FSM), gender, and English as an additional language (EAL) for each pupil. Schools should not provide NFER with any data for pupils where their parents have requested that the pupil's data is not shared and have submitted a withdrawal letter to the school.

In order to understand how the different Story Time sessions have had an impact on pupils' attainment, we assess their progress compared to a baseline. In this instance, we aim to use their previous year's summer assessments as a baseline. We know that in the summer term 2021, some schools will use standardised assessments in the normal course of their practice. We might use this data for the evaluation and, if so, will gather it directly from the assessment providers. Please look at the Privacy Notice for further information about this.

Random allocation: Schools will be **randomly allocated** by NFER to the GO! or STOP! approach. This means, all nominated teachers within a school will implement one or the other approach to be used with their classes for a period of approximately three weeks during the second half of the autumn term. Further guidance on this will be given by NFER.

Follow-up test and pupil survey: NFER will send follow-up test booklets and a survey for each pupil, which will be administered by the teachers and completed by the pupils in November/December 2021. These booklets and surveys will be pre-populated with each pupil's name and class. We will provide schools with the information to return them by secure courier to NFER.

Daily recording sheet: Teachers will be provided with a **daily recording sheet and guidance** to help them briefly log each reading session during the three week trial if they wish. This record can be used by teachers to inform their responses to the teacher survey (see below).

Other evaluation data: All teachers involved will be asked to complete a short online survey at the end of the trial to provide their views about the approaches and the trial. A sample of schools will also be invited to facilitate observations of the approaches in practice, and for teachers and senior leaders to take part in interviews to explore their views on the approaches being piloted and their experiences of being part of the trial. If possible, NFER researchers would also like to gather pupils' views about their experiences of whole-class reading sessions and attitudes to reading, through interviews/group discussions as part of visits to a small number of schools. A small number of teachers will also be invited to take part in focus group discussions exploring ways to make the Teacher Choices trial reports accessible and appropriate for practitioners.

If safety measures and social distancing regarding Covid-19 are still in place, NFER will follow the most current government safety guidelines when collecting in-person data. If in-person data collection is not possible, alternative approaches will be used to collect participants' views remotely. Please see the full timeline of when the data will be collected.

When will my school need to get involved?

Date	Activity	Further information
June 2021 - September 2021	<p>Schools can register their interest to take part in the trial by completing an Expression of Interest Form (EoI), see the link towards the end of this document.</p> <p>Following the completion of the EoI, schools can sign-up to the trial via the headteacher signing the MoU on NFER's Portal. Here you will identify the teachers to be involved.</p> <p>Schools provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key contact name and contact details, name, job role and contact details of the Year 4 and Year 5 teachers who are willing to participate. • Pupil names, date of birth, gender, EAL, FSM, for all participating pupils and their class name and year group. 	<p>NFER will provide an online Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and data template for schools to complete the required pupil data.</p> <p>We will also provide schools with a letter for parents that explains the research and gives them the opportunity to withdraw their child from the data collection for the study. This should be shared with all parents in the relevant classes before supplying NFER with pupil data.</p>
October 2021	<p>Schools will receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the results of the randomisation • teacher guidance document (prepared by EEF) • a copy of The Iron Woman for each participating teacher. 	<p>NFER will provide the materials to participating schools.</p> <p>EEF will approach schools via email to offer support on the reading approaches.</p>
November – December 2021 (second half of autumn term)	<p>Teachers start the intervention by delivering the GO! or STOP! approach, as per the randomised allocation.</p> <p>Participating teachers to complete a brief daily recording sheet based on how the story time reading sessions were delivered.</p> <p>Teachers administer a survey and an assessment for all participating pupils and return these to NFER.</p> <p>In a sample of schools, observations of STOP! and GO! in practice, and interviews with senior leaders, teachers and pupils will take place.</p> <p><i>(If researcher visits to schools are not feasible, participants' views will be collected remotely).</i></p> <p>Teachers to provide their views on taking part in this study in a short survey. They can use</p>	<p>NFER will provide an online and paper-based template for teachers to record this data.</p> <p>NFER will send pupil surveys, test booklets and an attendance register for teachers to administer. All test materials will be sent to and from schools via a secure courier</p> <p>We will provide an online survey to be completed by teachers that participated in the trial.</p>

	their notes from their daily recording sheets to help inform their answers.	
January – February 2022	<p>A small number of telephone interviews with teachers who have participated in the survey.</p> <p>At the end of the trial, participating schools will receive a £100 gift token, which can be used to expand the CPD library with titles that are recommended by EEF.</p>	
March - June 2022	<p>Analysis and report writing (NFER)</p> <p>A small number of teachers to take part in focus groups to explore ways to make the report accessible and appropriate for practitioners.</p>	
Summer 2022	Summary report sent to schools.	

How will my school and teachers benefit from taking part?

The trial aims to provide evidence that will be useful for teachers and schools when making decisions about everyday teacher choices in their classrooms. Your school's participation will help to strengthen the evidence on the impact teacher choices can have on pupils' learning and how to robustly evaluate teacher choices.

By participating in the trial, we hope teachers will learn practical information that improves their teaching, benefit from the experiences and results of the trial and help generate new knowledge that can benefit all teachers' everyday classroom decisions.

Schools that complete all the trial requirements will receive a £100 gift token which can be used to expand their CPD library.

How will the findings be used?

All teachers involved will receive a summary of the trial findings and this will also be freely available on the NFER and the EEF websites. The findings will also be used to provide a report to EEF on the feasibility of running Teacher Choices trials in future.

Who needs to give agreement for participation in the trial?

Schools will join the trial once their headteacher has signed the MoU. We will provide you with an information sheet for your Year 4 and Year 5 teachers.

NFER will provide schools with a letter for parents to inform them about the study and their child's participation. Schools should share the letter with parents/carers of the pupils in the participating Year 4 and Year 5 classes before sharing their data with NFER.

Note that in a randomised controlled trial all data is important. It would be really helpful if we could collect data about all participating classes/pupils taught by the teachers involved. This

way, we can compare the effects of the two reading approaches on pupil outcomes on a complete dataset. The trial team really appreciates schools' and participants' support for the data collection.

What happens if a school, teacher or pupils wants to withdraw from the trial?

A school, teacher or pupil can withdraw from the trial and/or from their data being used in the trial at any time. Schools must notify NFER of any pupils or teachers who withdraw from the study. Schools can do this by emailing storytimeRCT@nfer.ac.uk

Parents can choose to withdraw their child from the data collection of the trial at any time. They can do this by returning the form on the bottom of the parent letter to their school. Schools must not provide data about children whose parents withdraw them from the data collection. If the withdrawal takes place after the trial commences, schools must notify NFER immediately of such pupils so we can remove them from datasets and subsequent analysis.

How will NFER use and protect the data collected?

All data gathered during the trial will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016/679 and will be treated in the strictest confidence by NFER.

Your school's key contact details and teacher contact details for the study will be shared securely between NFER and EEF – so that EEF can get in touch with schools and teachers to provide guidance and support.

The pupil personal data collected by NFER will not be shared with any organisation. All teacher and pupil-level data shared by schools with NFER will be collected via a secure school portal. For the purposes of the trial, all pupils will have an ID number.

No school, teacher or pupil will be named in any report arising from this work.

A Privacy Notice for the study is available at the following link:
www.nfer.ac.uk/eetc2privacynotice

Who can I contact to take part in the trial or to receive more information?

If your school would like to participate in the trial, please click on the following link to express your school's interest: <https://surveys.nfer.ac.uk/uc/eetc2eoi/>

If you have any questions about the trial please contact the project team by email:
storytimeRCT@nfer.ac.uk

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