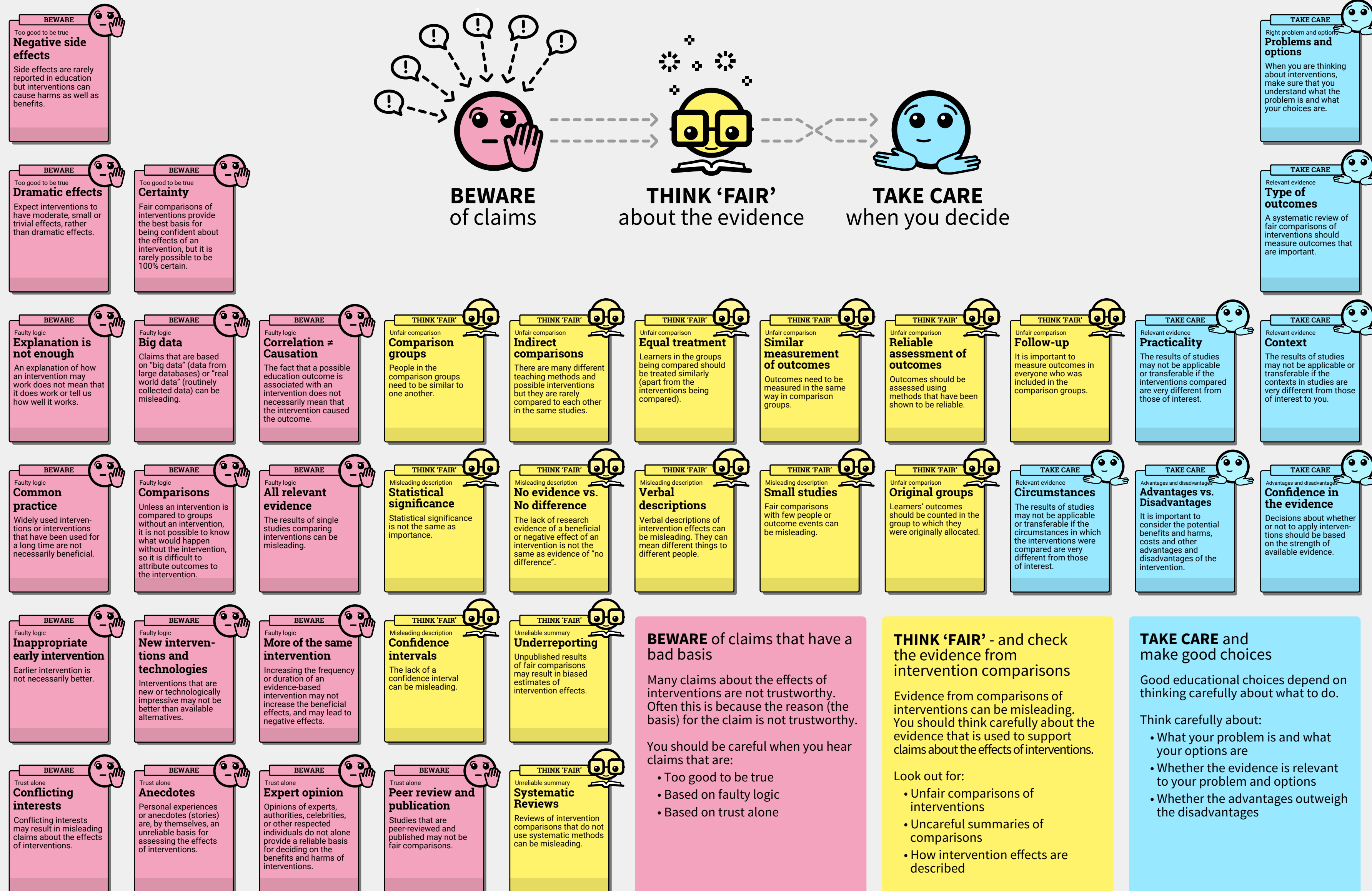


That's a claim!

Key Concepts for thinking critically about educational claims



Introduction

What and how should we teach young people? There are lots of claims about what is and isn't effective and you have probably come across many of them yourself. A claim is something someone says that can be right or wrong. For example, there are claims that extending the school day improves pupils' learning, increases attendance, and adds to teacher stress. How can you know which of these claims are trustworthy? And how should you decide when to act on claims like these?

An educational "intervention" refers to any kind of change to the practices within a school that is intended to achieve better pupil outcomes – for example, restructuring the curriculum or introducing a new teaching method. An **effect** is something an intervention makes happen – like improving pupil attainment or reducing the incidence of problem behaviours.

People make lots of claims about the effects of interventions. How can we tell which claims are right or wrong? To do this, you need to look at what supports their claim – its **basis**. For example, someone's personal experience is not by itself a good basis for a claim about what is effective teaching. This is because we don't know what would have happened if that person had done something else.

To know if an intervention (like extending the school day) causes an **effect** (like improved attainment), the intervention has to be compared to something else (like not extending the school day). Researchers compare an intervention given to people in one group with something else given to people in another group. Those comparisons provide **evidence** – facts to support a conclusion about whether a claim is right or wrong. For those comparisons to be **fair**, the only important difference between the groups should be the interventions they receive.

A **good choice** is one that uses the best information available at the time. For education choices, this includes using the best available evidence of intervention effects. Good choices don't guarantee good outcomes, but they make good outcomes more likely.

www.thatsaclaim.org/educational