

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Oracy  
Education Endowment Foundation response  
September 2019

**1. What is the value and impact of quality oracy education at i) different life stages, ii) in different settings, and iii) on different types of pupils (for instance pupils from varied socioeconomic backgrounds or with special educational needs)?**

Oracy education is valuable at all stages of education, in all settings and for all types of pupil, especially children from low income backgrounds.

The first recommendation in the EEF's [Preparing for Literacy](#) guidance report is that settings should prioritise the development of communication and language, noting that language provides the foundation of thinking and learning.

The EEF's [Early Years Toolkit](#) finds that studies of communication and language approaches consistently show positive benefits for young children's learning, including their spoken language skills, their expressive vocabulary and their early reading skills. On average, children who are supporting with in communication and language approaches make approximately six months' additional progress over the course of a year. All children appear to benefit from such approaches, but some studies show slightly larger effects for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The EEF's guidance reports [Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1](#) and [Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2](#) both begin by emphasising the importance of developing pupils' speaking, listening and communication skills. The EEF's guidance report [Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools](#) highlights the value of providing opportunities for structured talk to all students across all subjects. The report emphasises the idea that talk matters both in its own right and because of its impact on other aspects of learning.

The EEF's [Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#) concludes that there is an extensive evidence base on the effectiveness of oral language interventions, suggesting that oral language interventions can be successful in a variety of environments. Although more studies relate to younger children, there is also clear evidence that older learners, and particularly disadvantaged pupils, can benefit. On average, pupils who participate in oral language interventions make approximately five months' additional progress over the course of a year.

**2. How can it help deliver the wider curriculum at school?**

The EEF's guidance report [Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools](#) highlights the value of providing opportunities for structured talk to all students across all subjects. The report emphasises the idea that talk matters both in its own right and because of its impact on other aspects of learning, including reading and writing across the curriculum, noting that: "In many subject areas – not just English – developing students' skills of communication and argument is [...] a curricular end in itself."

The report also highlights the value of metacognitive talk, which focuses on the processes of learning, and on dealing with barriers to learning. Metacognitive talk will often be task and

subject-specific and is likely to be a promising approach for all learners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### **3. Where can we identify good practice and can you give examples?**

The EEF has identified a range of promising projects focused on improving oracy. These include:

- [Nuffield Early Language Intervention](#)
- [Dialogic Teaching](#)
- [Talk for Literacy](#)
- [Thinking. Doing Talking Science](#)

In addition, the EEF's [Research School Network](#) provides high-quality, evidence-informed training to schools across England. Its courses on improving Literacy in Key Stage 1, 2 and in secondary schools include an emphasis on high-quality talk.

### **4. What support do teachers need to improve the delivery of oracy education?**

High-quality professional development is essential to support teaching to improve the quality of oracy education. Investing time and ensuring the buy-in of school leadership is important to ensure that training opportunities are sustained and consistent.

For all oral language interventions, certain factors are associated with higher learning gains, suggesting that careful implementation is important. For example, approaches which explicitly aim to develop spoken vocabulary work best when they are related to current content being studied in school, and when they involve active and meaningful use of any new vocabulary. The attention to detail needed to maximise the impact of oracy approaches underlines the need for training and high-quality support for teachers.

#### ***About the Education Endowment Foundation***

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement, ensuring that children and young people from all backgrounds can make the most of their talents.

We know that as children move through school the attainment gap increases. To tackle this issue, the EEF aims to raise the attainment of 3-18-year-olds, particularly those facing disadvantage; to develop their essential life skills; to prepare young people for the world of work and further study.

We do this by generating evidence of 'what works' in education, funding robust trials of high-potential programmes and approaches which have yet to be tested. We then support schools, nurseries and colleges across the country to put this evidence to good use so that it has the maximum possible benefit for young people.



We believe that evaluating practice and building evidence is key to securing equitable outcomes for all pupils. Our priorities are driven by what the evidence suggests will have greatest impact on young people, and we work to ensure that our research agenda is relevant to teachers, practitioners and policy makers.