

Written evidence

Members of the Oracy APPG will consider written, verbal and audio-visual evidence and oversee oral evidence sessions. All evidence will inform the final report.

The extended deadline for submitting written evidence is 20th September 2019. We would appreciate if the submissions would follow the following guidelines:

- Be in a Word format
- No longer than 3000 words
- State clearly who the submission is from, and whether it is sent in a personal capacity or on behalf of an organisation
- Begin with a short summary in bullet point form
- Have numbered paragraphs
- Where appropriate, provide references

Please write your evidence below and email the completed form via email to inquiry@oracyappg.org.uk with the subject line of 'Oracy APPG inquiry'

Laurus Trust and Altius Alliance

Full name:

Laurus Cheadle Hulme; Cheadle Hulme High School; Laurus Ryecroft

School or Organisation:

Trust Director for Oracy, Literacy and Reading; Trust Head of Voice

Role:

Written evidence:

- The Laurus Trust believes that Oracy skills should run as a thread through the entire curriculum.
- The key character traits which develop alongside the acquisition of oral proficiency have a particular relevance and urgency when seen in the context of the times in which we live.
- We acknowledge the dangers to society that exist in ignoring the fact that too many children leave school unable to speak with confidence and feel that this can lead to an apathy and acceptance of low-level aspiration.
- Our curriculum develops attributes and behaviours directly related to employability: we believe that employers want to recruit young people who have not only relevant technical knowledge and skills, but who are effective public communicators and collaborative problem solvers.
- For the sake of social equality, state schools must teach children the spoken language skills that they need for educational progress, and also for life in general.
- We assert that improving spoken language skills also plays its part in closing the gap: the educational consequences of social disadvantage can be compounded by children's difficulties in oral development and communication; talk can be an effective means of re-engaging the disengaged and closing the overlapping gaps of equity and attainment.
- By the time they leave us, we want each student to have that true sense of self-worth which will enable them to make wise choices, stand up for what is right and what they believe in and, in doing so, be of value to society.
- It is crucial that there is a comprehensive programme of professional development available to all teachers and trainee teachers regardless of experience or career stage.
- A Trust Head of Voice has been appointed to help us realise our plans to move this work beyond Oracy. To achieve this, we are continuing to develop the Cicero programme.
- Central to the Cicero programme is the belief that effective communication relies not only on the ability to present ideas and express opinions but also on the ability to listen and discern.
- The Cicero programme, using the Three Circles of Energy, equips students with the ability to listen with precision, to speak with clarity and to think creatively.
- Voice, Socratic Dialogue and Rhetoric are the triple pillars on which Cicero programme is built.

1. Why is Oracy so important?

At the Laurus Trust / Altius Alliance we recognise that if our students are to achieve their potential in school and progress to be able to compete at the highest level at top universities, apprenticeships and working environments, then they need to be confident, articulate and highly competent speakers. We also recognise, though that in many schools Oracy is seen as the 'Cinderella' of the required Literacy skills and that teachers are often unsure about how to increase their own vocal confidence and competence and include the development of Oracy skills in to the curriculum without seeming to be promoting old style 'elocution'. Our 'aim' is to ensure that ALL students and teachers, regardless of aptitude or ability, are taught the importance and power of the spoken word. Crucial skills

of vocal pace, breathing, audibility, clarity and eye-contact are promoted and taught in lessons alongside the development of logic, reason and empathy in order to develop confident, articulate speakers. Students and teachers are made aware from the earliest age or stage in their career that, quite simply, if you speak clearly and confidently, demonstrate knowledge and understanding through your choice of vocabulary and can listen and respond with thought and care then you will be more successful in life.

2. Oracy Training for All Teachers

Voice health is just part of the programme offered to all our Associate Teachers (PGCE) and NQTs as well as a regular provision of Further Professional Learning sessions designed to equip all teachers with a range of strategies for promoting and developing oracy and articulacy in the classroom. The development of a strong and rigorous speaking voice; good vocal expression and presence; gesture, posture, facial expression and eye contact are skills that are developed through a series of training sessions that are compulsory for PGCE and NQTs as well as optional for all teaching staff. Quality of spoken vocabulary, presence and clarity are part of the interview and classroom observation process at all levels – PGCE applicants and experienced teachers alike are expected to acknowledge the importance of good quality spoken language. Staff are encouraged to join the Oracy Ambassadors group – a team of oracy ‘experts’ who are responsible for ensuring that the skills introduced in training sessions become part of the whole school curriculum. This team produces guidance tips for staff, classroom posters, oversees celebration events and ensures that the quality of oracy in lessons is consistent.

Oracy Skills are included in the criteria for all Lesson Observation and Learning Walks, reinforcing how all staff are required to model effective use of spoken language and continually develop their own use of Oracy as well as that of their students.

There is also a whole school and Trust focus each year on Oracy: last year we developed strategies to encourage active listening, establishing a set of non-negotiable guidelines for all staff and having whole days devoted to trialling a range of strategies. This year our focus is the quality of spoken vocabulary – by students AND staff - with a view to embedding a culture of curiosity around language via immersion in Tier 2 vocabulary.

3. Classroom Practice

All staff in the Laurus Trust and the Altius Alliance are aware of the need for effective use of questioning and discussion and our students’ ability to communicate successfully is celebrated in every curricular area, written into every curriculum plan as well as showcased in extra-curricular opportunities that are open to ALL pupils. There is a clear set of expectations for every Key Stage outlined in our Framework for Oracy with regular opportunities to track and monitor the progress of every student by using our Oracy skills Assessment Matrix. We focus on three main areas: ‘Conversation, Discussion, Debate and Questioning’; ‘Reading Aloud and Presenting’ and finally ‘Listening and Responding’, but within each of those strands is a range of skills designed to develop the ability to shape situations with a carefully structured spoken delivery that uses the skills of rhetoric, pace, audibility and eye-contact. What starts in KS1 as the ability to participate in a two-way

conversation with respect, understanding and some empathy will move towards the ability to use logic, reason and rhetoric in debating whilst practising and employing Socratic styles of dialogue and questioning in Key Stages 4&5.

The removal of Speaking and Listening from the English GCSE can be viewed in different ways. In the first instance it has had a negative impact, as there is the obvious implication that Oracy skills play no part in the formal qualifications required to move through life with success. Pupils need to feel that there is a clear, tangible reason for being asked to work at something and as there is little or no value placed on the Speaking and Listening element of the English GCSE programme, it is hard for teachers to motivate students to participate with anything other than a 'tick-box' attitude. No amount of euphemistic packaging will change the fact that it makes no difference to the overall final GCSE result.

However, it must also be acknowledged that for schools who wish to promote the cross curricular importance of Oracy skills for life, it is no longer the sole remit of the English Department and this has opened up the opportunity for the expansion of voice and oracy skills across all areas of the school curriculum and life. This attitude, needless to say, requires a strong foundation of staff 'buy in' as well as an accepted level of accountability from all teachers. There is some mention of the skills that need to be 'taught' as part of the overall English Curriculum in the KS3 and 4 Programmes of Study but this is not helpful if Oracy is to be seen as a whole school skills area. Without the strong support of school leadership as well as high quality training and continued professional learning, schools will find it hard to justify yet another set of accountable benchmarks to an already over-stretched body of staff. There is no universal assessment tool for oracy but it could be argued that is impossible to fully assess the impact of developing oracy skills as they are so far-reaching. We would argue that good quality oracy enhances classroom teaching and learning in all areas and can only lead to better writing, better reading, better communication. To assess the curriculum provision and mapping as a whole instead of placing false, unrealistic measures on skills that can be shown in so many different ways is surely a far better means of assessing the impact. This is why it is crucial that Oracy and Voice are introduced into PGCE training and development as a compulsory skills-set for ALL subject disciplines.

4. Intervention and Celebration

The new Year 7 cohort are interviewed individually prior to their arrival in September. This is a highly successful strategy in 'breaking the ice' for our prospective students and allows us to glean background information whilst building relationships early on. However, we also make note of any pupil who is particularly reticent and nervous when speaking to a new adult and these students are ear-marked for Oracy confidence intervention. This can take the form of Confidence in Communication workshops as well as small social communication discussion groups: the intervention is personalised and adapted according to need but is part of our recognition of the importance of every child having a voice that is 'heard'.

Parents are encouraged to support the Oracy Curriculum with tips and strategies shared and at KS3 information evenings Oracy is afforded the same amount of time and attention as the skills of reading and writing.

Talk for Learning is of huge importance in the classroom and is clearly instrumental in affording less confident writers, particularly those who struggle with dyslexia, the opportunity to rehearse and share their ideas.

Students are always required to speak to parents either formally or informally at all school events and Open Evenings. They will present their own views about the school; deliver informative speeches and they also act as Tour Guides for prospective parents and staff. We feel that this exposure to different audiences is instrumental in preparing our students for a variety of functional contexts. Students in all Key Stages are invited to assume leadership roles in a range of different aspects of school life: all of these positions and teams will require students to present, discuss, debate and problem solve in some way – all crucial oracy skills for life.

We also recognise the value of the skill of using voice for effect and so all students participate in formal poetry or Shakespeare recital activities where clarity, pace, pitch, tone and empathy all play a part and they are also involved in public speaking competitions.

Staff with responsibility for Oracy across the Trust are invited to attend Departmental Oracy Showcase weeks and competitive events which emphasises to the students how we ALL recognise the importance of good Oracy skills.

5. Oracy as a Skill for Life

The 'vocabulary gap' is a much talked about topic in educational literacy circles but what is often ignored is that this starts with the quality of spoken language experienced by children from a very young age. Without exposure to quality spoken language or an environment that is word rich, where questioning, discussion and exploration of vocabulary nuances is encouraged, then a ceiling is being placed on the life chances of the children in our schools. Furthermore, we aim to engender in our students the ability to adapt their vocabulary and codes of expression to any social, academic or functional context – being aware of audience, listener and context is a crucial social communication life- skill and all students, regardless of academic ability, should be articulate, respectful and empathetic in any life situation.

At KS5 there is a particular focus on developing confidence in formal interview contexts as well as enhancing open debate and lively discussion. This empowering of students reinforces our belief that all students have the right to the skills required to express their opinions and ideas in a respectful, honest and confident manner.

However, as well as establishing the importance of Oracy in the curriculum it is also vital that every opportunity is taken to promote Oracy in the wider curriculum. This is where the enhancement of each students' cultural capital comes into play and indeed it is worth

remembering that many teachers' cultural capital may also be quite limited, depending on their life experiences prior to entering the classroom.

6. Beyond Oracy...

6.1 A paradigm shift

In today's increasingly technological and globalised society, our voices have a much larger audience than they have ever done before. Young people are constantly bombarded with information from more sources and through more media than ever before and it is essential that they are equipped to be discerning consumers of what they are told. In order to maximise their potential, it is vital that young people not only have a voice which can be heard but also have the skills to listen precisely and respond accordingly to the world around them. Effective communication relies not only on the ability to present ideas and express opinions but also on the ability to listen and discern.

It is essential that young people are not only prepared for the world of employment as collaborative and creative problem solvers but also that they are equipped with the necessary skills to be proactive, ethical and engaged citizens. Young people must be prepared for the modern world but they must also be *of* the world with the capability to question and critique what they see and hear.

6.2 The Cicero Programme

In many respects, modern society is stripping young people of the skills necessary for effective communication and thus depriving them of the natural ability to speak. At the heart of the Cicero programme are the Three Circles of Energy and a sequential chain of links which equip all young people, in primary school, secondary school or sixth form, with the skills to thrive in the future in every area of social interaction: to listen with precision, to speak with clarity and to think creatively.

6.3 A Cultural Process

Whilst the importance of the Oracy framework and application of these behaviours within the classroom is acknowledged, it must also be recognised that the behaviours that the Oracy frameworks are seeking to produce must move beyond a list of criteria and become embodied knowledge. Craft and mastery that is lived and practised by both students and teachers.

Before we teach the techniques of communication, we must first foster an environment where a young person feels that they are allowed to have a voice and that that voice is valued and respected. We must also nurture a young person's need to speak. If there is no need, then oracy will be reduced to empty technique and rhetoric will become sophistry.

A major part of this culture shift will be regular delivery of professional Voice and Presence coaching to teaching staff and trainee teachers in order to build good and effective voice use into the fabric of the Trust. This work will also sensitise staff to the

importance of human exchange in addition to the exchange of information in the educational process.

The Trust's newly-appointed Head of Voice is currently delivering and developing a programme of study for all Year 8, 9 and 10 students as well as a series of Sixth Form electives. Each Cicero workshop or elective will comprise three elements, as follows:

(i) *Voice*

Professional voice work delivered by the Head of Voice and Patsy Rodenburg to develop a flexible, expressive and responsive voice using crafted techniques and developing an awareness of the anatomy of the breath and voice. Through the repetition and regular craft work of body, breath, resonance and range and how they relate to each other the work will be experienced and embodied. Contextualisation of vocal technique through discussion and making manifest the human need to vocalise and what they have to say about the world in which they live.

(ii) *Socratic Dialogue*

The Socratic Dialogue stage of the Cicero programme will provide models of practice to develop a fluent, academic dialogue between students equipping them with the skills to discuss, examine, question and critique topics and arguments presented to them through great works of prose and poetry.

(iii) *Rhetoric*

We regard the Rhetoric stage as the bringing together and practising of Voice and Socratic Dialogue work - teaching young people how to structure and deliver their thoughts and arguments in various styles appropriate to the context.

The Cicero programme is a vehicle for the attitudes and qualities embedded in the Laurus Cornerstones:

“We want our students to appreciate that great writing gives us access to ideas which challenge our thinking; that the power of language gives us the opportunity to make our voice heard and present our own ideas with courage, conviction and impact.”
(Culture, Creativity and Rhetoric)

“By the time they leave us, we want each student to have that true sense of self-worth which will enable them to make wise choices, stand up for what is right and what they believe in and, in doing so, be of value to society.” (Leadership and Service)

6.4 Going forward...

As this work is in its infancy, we are not yet in a position to offer a full report on its impact. We would, however, like to propose that we could offer video evidence of its delivery, via workshops and electives in their current form across the Laurus Trust, and also its impact in 2020.

Additional guidance:

Value and impact

1. Given many teachers recognise the importance of oracy, why does spoken language not have the same status as reading and writing in our education system? Should it have the same status, and if so why?
2. What are the consequences if children and young people do not receive oracy education?
3. 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)?
4. How can it help deliver the wider curriculum at school?
5. What is the impact of quality oracy education on future life chances? Specifically, how does it affect employment and what value do businesses give oracy?
6. What do children and young people at school and entering employment want to be able to access, what skills do they want to leave school with?
7. What is the value and impact of oracy education in relation to other key agendas such as social mobility and wellbeing/ mental health?
8. How can the ability to communicate effectively contribute to engaging more young people from all backgrounds to become active citizens, participating fully in social action and public life as adults

Provision and access

1. What should high quality oracy education look like?
2. Can you provide evidence of how oracy education is being provided in different areas/education settings/extra-curricular provision, by teachers but also other practitioners that work with children?
3. What are the views of teachers, school leaders and educational bodies regarding the current provision of oracy education?
4. Where can we identify good practice and can you give examples?
5. What factors create unequal access to oracy education (i.e. socio-economic, region, type of school, special needs)? How can these factors be overcome?
6. Relating to region more specifically, how should an oracy-focused approach be altered depending on the context?

Barriers

1. What are the barriers that teachers face in providing quality oracy education, within the education system and beyond?
2. What support do teachers need to improve the delivery of oracy education?
3. What accountability is currently present in the system? How can we further incentivise teachers to deliver more oracy education to children and young people?
4. What is the role of government and other bodies in creating greater incentives and how can this be realised?
5. What is the role of assessment in increasing provision of oracy education? What is the most appropriate form of assessment of oracy skills?
6. Are the speaking and listening elements of the current curriculum sufficient in order to deliver high quality oracy education?
7. What is the best approach – more accountability within the system or a less prescriptive approach?

8. Are there examples of other educational pedagogies where provision has improved and we can draw parallels and learn lessons?