

## 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](mailto:inquiry@oracyappg.org.uk) with the subject line of 'Oracy APPG inquiry'

---

Full name:

School or Organisation:

Role:

Written evidence:

## Summary

- Oracy should be linked to literacy.
- Participation in drama develops emotional intelligence, empathy, self-confidence and good communication skills.
- The study and speaking of literature teaches literacy and oracy skills.

1. As a theatre voice coach, I know that access to literature increases an individual's ability to speak confidently and listen well. I also know that access to theatre as both practitioner and audience member can lead to a better understanding of one's own life and emotions, and empathy with others. Acting, whether professionally or in schools and clubs, and engaging with drama leads to greater self-confidence and better communication skills.

2. I believe that oracy in education must be linked to literacy, the study of literature, and the opportunity to participate in drama.

3. At the National Theatre, we have just opened the third in a trilogy of plays, researched, written and directed by Alexander Zeldin. Each of the plays is concerned with members of society who find it hard to speak or be listened to, and when given the opportunity to speak, cannot express themselves. These are people whose education and early experiences have failed to prepare them for life, and who are judged by society to be of little value, in part because they lack the ability to express themselves and to thereby claim their place in the world.

4. Some of the actors in those productions have come from the very backgrounds depicted in the plays, including some who have been homeless. Their access to better living conditions and into professional acting has been via drama workshops where they were able to find their voice.

5. When Nicholas Hytner, the former Artistic Director of the NT, met a group of drama school voice teachers, he told them he needed actors who could speak. It may surprise you to know that we often meet young actors who have access to their feelings but don't seem able to trust that words, clearly and loudly spoken will carry the truth of those feelings or will transform them into ideas and action.

6. I also meet young voice teachers who have training, knowledge and fine instincts for teaching, but who lack personal speaking skills and therefore do not communicate clearly or give others confidence in their ability to work with complex texts.

7. Speaking can be cathartic, transformative and persuasive, when one has the vocabulary and fluency to turn thoughts into coherent and constructive sentences. Familiarity with literature gives access to language that can dig deep into people's stories, that expresses emotion, wrangles with social and political issues and describes the human condition. Speaking that language aloud, whether poetry, plays or prose, allows people to experience the power of complex language. Through familiarity with good writing, one learns good grammar and syntax. Skills learned then need to be practiced. The spoken word needs to be valued and encouraged as much as the written word.

8. Perhaps the often commented upon frequency with which privately educated actors are currently getting the plumb roles is that they are confident, practiced speakers who have ease with sophisticated language. They have been educated in a system that encourages debate and discussion, studies rhetoric, prioritises participation in theatre and drama and understands the power of the spoken word. This is a power that should be available to all young people.

9. If oracy skills are linked to literacy and the study of literature and drama in the state education system, then it is my belief that we equip young people to push beyond their boundaries with a better ability to negotiate the world and to understand themselves, their emotions and those of their neighbours.

10. I refer you to a submission made by my colleague, Lorna McGinty, 'Let's Play' Programme Manager at the National Theatre. She discusses the importance of oracy education to primary school age children and the role of drama-based pedagogy.

*September 2019*