

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'

Bec Tulloch

Full name:

St Ambrose Barlow RC High School
Swinton

School or Organisation:

Associate Assistant Head Teacher –
Oracy/Literacy/Solution Focused Coaching Lead

Role:

Written evidence:

I am a High School Teacher and Leader with 22 years of experience; in 2015 as I began my National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership, I took part in the EEF pilot research on Oracy with School21 as part of this and was subsequently appointed as my school's Oracy Lead. I would like to submit my evidence in three parts: as a teacher, as a leader and on behalf of my students:

As a teacher...

Teachers spend a phenomenal amount of time communicating at school with students, each other and parents. Yet the skill of talking is rarely taught within teacher training sessions, bar a session on register and intonation. Over the last four years as I have written developed and established a discrete oracy course for year 7 at our school, it has become woefully apparent to me how inadequate this is.

To convey information well, engage and motivate young people teachers' skill in using their voice is central to their success. The Oracy framework, which has been developed by Cambridge University and Voice21, effectively breaks down speech into understandable and improvable chunks. It is enormously helpful in teaching students how to use their voice, but the APPG should not underestimate the power of this document in helping teachers to build on their vocal skills. There is a meta-teaching and learning aspect to Oracy work in schools: the teacher and student engage in tasks which simultaneously develop them both.

When we established our speech day, I made a commitment to take part; I have written a speech and presented it every year that the programme has run. It has surprised me how much these experiences have enhanced and developed me as a teacher, professional and person. The challenge has been as valuable for me as it has been for my students and has been warmly appreciated by colleagues, parents and students. I have grown as a presenter through my experience alongside the students and found my voice as much as my students have – it has given me agency in my school and led to promotion. Oracy has changed my life as a professional and a person.

As a leader...

Schools are complex institutions with complex objectives. As a leader of teachers, my ability to communicate effectively, both concisely and clearly, is central to my school's success. The Oracy protocols have helped me to work with my colleagues and lead CPD.

We have tried to drive our CPD processes through Oracy protocols. We used Harkness Discussion Protocols to develop our action plan in response to an OFSTED judgment. Again here I would raise to the APPG's attention the indirect wins that schools make in using Oracy practices: relationships and community are strengthened through this work. Talking is at the heart of well being; it builds a strong sense of identity within the group and strengthens democratic principles. This is extraordinarily healthy for a working environment and enhances real communication and understanding.

As both a leader and as part of a staff body, Oracy has enhanced my sense of self, ability to communicate with others and understanding of others. Oracy has the capacity to change the way that schools are led and work.

On behalf of my students...

Our school is in Salford serving a predominantly white and working class community. Students are given the opportunity to study Oracy as part of a discrete curriculum with one lesson every other week in year seven, which works across three stages to help students to find their voice at High School after transition from primary school, learn how to use it and then celebrate it through a speech week where 225 year 7 students present a speech about something they are passionate about. We build on these skills with a pod cast project in year 8, a debate project in humanities in year 9, their speaking and listening exam in year 10 and a mock interview process in year 11.

Students have an extremely positive attitude to the study of Oracy which quickly resonates with their day to day experience. We focus the curriculum across two clear objectives:

1. Talking to Learn
2. Learning to present

These objectives ask students to assess themselves as a speaker and then develop their skill. Students who dominate classroom discussions learn to hear other voices and moderate their contributions, students who predominantly choose not to engage in talk are challenged to engage and understand how this builds their knowledge and finally those whose contributions are inconsistent are shown how their uneven contributions develop uneven understanding. We also develop explicit understanding of the power and significance of how we listen: the quality of listening will equal the quality of the talking.

Teaching talking and listening is the bedrock of foundational literacy, if a child can talk well, they are much more likely to write and read well. By explicitly teaching Oracy, we develop vital literacy and critical thinking skills which support students' ability to access the whole curriculum. Students need to learn to talk, but they also need to talk to learn effectively and currently in the majority of classrooms this is severely underestimated. In an area such as Salford, these skills are key to students' ability to function well in society as much as in education.

There is much talk about recall and knowledge in education at the moment and Oracy is at the heart of this process, if we accept that memory is the product of deep thought, discussion becomes a foundation for memory. Over the last two years as our GCSE Drama students sat the first ever written exam for Drama it has been heartening to hear students reflect that the exam is easy as they 'write down what we said in class'.

Over our last three years of speech days, we have witnessed a profoundly deaf student entertaining the crowd with why she is glad to be deaf, a young man asserting his deaf father's and disabled sister's right to respect and a particularly passionate speech about another student's love of chicken. The speech day allows students to assert their individuality and be heard: it shows us a side of their lives that we possibly would never hear. It delights parents, students and teachers alike and builds a true sense of belonging in a school where every voice is heard and everyone matters. Oracy has the capacity to change students' lives.

Bec Tulloch
Associate Assistant Head Teacher
Oracy and Whole School Literacy Lead
Solution Focused Coaching Lead