Schools resource

MPs & Students Speak for Change during Covid: How oracy supports wellbeing and access to the workplace

Virtual chats with MPs to gather evidence for the Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group

As part of a parliamentary inquiry to improve oracy education in every school, we're gathering the voices and views of students from across the UK about **oracy (speaking and listening)** and why it's important to develop your oral communication skills at school, particular now and as we emerge from the current Covid crisis. There are **two ways** to have your students' voices heard:

1. Work with us to organise a 30 minute virtual chat with your constituency MP.
2. Film your students' responses to our questions and submit as evidence to MPs who are members of the Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group.

This is a chance for students to engage with the democratic process and have their views heard directly by MPs. To support this, **we've included some resources below to instigate and capture a discussion on the importance of speaking and listening.**

We are hugely grateful for your support, and the input of your students and schools to help raise the status of oracy education across the UK and ensure every child has the opportunity to develop their speaking skills in school.

Why are we organising virtual chats now?

Throughout October and November 2020, schoolchildren from primary and secondary schools around the country are being invited to input their views into the Oracy Parliamentary Inquiry which is seeking to ensure that every child has the opportunity to develop good oracy skills (speaking and listening skills) while at school.

MPs are concerned that not enough priority is given to oracy in some schools and they are producing a report to call on the Government to do more to raise the status of oracy in our education system and support teachers. The current Covid-19 crisis has emphasised the need for future workforce to develop skills like oracy, and has highlighted the importance of oracy to drive learning and language development and support children and young people's wellbeing and reintegration into school life.

The Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group is setting up virtual chats between MPs and schools in their constituencies so MPs can listen to the views of students and understand why developing oral communication skills and confidence to use their voice has never been so important. Their evidence to the Inquiry will be included in the final parliamentary report and will help encourage their MP to champion the importance of oracy education in Parliament.

Discussion points

1. Why do you think it's important to learn how to speak well and share your thoughts confidently?
2. Do students need to be explicitly taught oracy?
3. Should students do more of the talking in the class than teachers?
4. How has developing your speaking and listening skills helped you personally (eg. with your studies, confidence, socially)
5. Why is learning to express your views and feelings even more important following the challenges of lockdown and ongoing uncertainty?
6. Did opportunities to develop your speaking skills lessen during lockdown, and do current restrictions in the classroom make this more difficult?
7. Why are speaking skills important for future success, particularly in challenging economic times?
8. Is the ability to speak up and express your views crucial to engaging with democracy and politics?

Please adapt these questions as necessary for primary school children

Format of the MP virtual chat

- Students will need a session to prepare answers to their questions to the above questions. Or your students may want to devise their own questions.
- After the students have had their discussion, gather summaries and the best points from each group on their key points and nominate a few students to feedback and speak directly to their MP.
- For the virtual chat, the selected students will need to be seated in front of the camera and closer to the microphone at the front of the class so they can be heard.
- The Oracy APPG/ Voice 21 will support the session by undertaking all the necessary liaison with your MP's office, including arranging the time slot with the MP and briefing the MP. We will also set up the zoom and be present on the day to provide 'back office' support.
- We will be recording the event via the Zoom platform as part of our evidence gathering process for the Oracy APPG. We will need student permissions to use the recording (or clips of the recording) either as part of the final digital report or on social media to launch the report.

Alternative option to collect evidence

- If you have expressed interest in participating, we will approach the MPs office for their agreement. In many cases we have already been able to match interested schools with supportive MPs, but there is a chance your MP won't be available to participate. If this is the case, collecting your students evidence would still be hugely valuable to the Inquiry.
- Use the discussion points to instigate a discussion with your students. After the students have had their discussion, gather summaries and the best quotes from each group on their key points and nominate a few students to feedback to the class and agree final responses.
- You submit your evidence via this online form.
- And/ or you can capture your students in discussion, or presenting their ideas back to camera or the class. These videos can be submitted as evidence too but must be no longer than 2 minutes each. Video recording of student responses are subject to the same permissions as the zoom recording. Further information on video submissions is here: www.oracyappg.org.uk/submit-evidence-here.

Facilitator guidance for gathering evidence from students

Oracy is to speech what literacy is to writing and numeracy is to maths. The ability to speak eloquently, articulate ideas and thoughts, influence through talking, collaborate with peers and have the confidence to express your views, are fundamental skills that support success in both learning and life beyond school.

There are two aspects to oracy - learning to talk and learning through talk. Speaking effectively is about a lot more than just the words you say, it's about your tone and pace, how you engage your audience and the words that you choose, for example. Using oracy in the classroom also deepens understanding and develops critical thinking skills. *You can download the Oracy Framework for free here.*
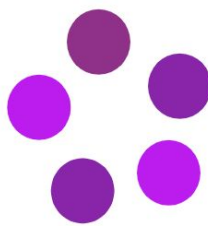
Setting up the discussion

How many students are in each discussion?

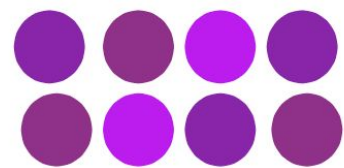By using groupings, you can ensure that everyone has a chance to have their voice heard. Why not try...

Trios   **Circles**   **Traverse**

What roles are your students taking in each discussion?

Roles can help to structure talk. Students don't have to stick to one role during the discussion. Encourage students to think about which role they are taking and which would help move the discussion on.

Discussion Roles

Discussion roles help students to manage talk and encourage the development of certain speaking and listening skills.

voice 21

Instigator
Starts the discussion or opens up a new topic for discussion

Will say:

I would like to start by saying ...
I think we should consider ...
We haven't yet talked about ...
Let's also think about ...

Prober
Digs deeper into the argument, asks for evidence or justification of ideas

Will say:

What do you think would be the effect of ...?
Why do you think ...?
Can you provide an example to support what you are saying?

Challenger
Gives reasons to disagree or presents an alternative argument

Will say:

I disagree with you because ...
You mentioned X but what about ...
To challenge you X, I think ...
I understand your point of view, but have you thought about ...?

Clarifier
Simplifies and makes things clearer by asking questions

Will say:

What do you mean when you say ...?
Can you explain a bit more about ...?
Does that mean ...?
Please can you clarify what you meant by ...?

Summariser
Identifies the main ideas from the discussion. This might be during the discussion, to help move the conversation forward, or at the end of the discussion.

Will say:

Overall, the main points were ...
The main ideas raised today were ...
Our discussion focused on ...
The three main things we talked about were ...

Builder
Develops, adds to or runs with an idea

Will say:

I agree, and would like to add...
Building on that idea, I think ...
Linking to what X said, I think..

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Permissions
Before agreeing to a zoom session or sending through the recordings of your students, please make sure they have the correct permissions that meet the safeguarding standards in your school. The APPG will seek additional permission sign off from you in the instance that the recordings are chosen to be used publicly.

About the Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group Speak for Change Inquiry
All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) are informal groups within Parliament that are interested in various issues or geographical areas. Members of both the House of Commons and House of Lords can be members of an APPG. They do not have an official role within Parliament to oversee the work of Government (like select committees do on various topics) but they undertake very important work through inquiries which investigate many different policy areas, in order to shine a light on specific issues that the government should be addressing.

Emma Hardy, a former teacher turned MP, set up the Oracy APPG in order to help raise the profile among parliamentarians regarding why oracy skills are so important. MPs leading the APPG are concerned that oracy is being undervalued and overlooked within our education system, denying the majority of children and young people the opportunity to develop these vital skills and hampering social mobility, educational achievement, wellbeing and future employability.

The Group wants to ensure every child can benefit from being extensively taught oracy and having the opportunity to practice their oracy skills in school. The *Speak for Change* inquiry is investigating why this isn't happening in every school and what the Government, school leaders, teachers and others can do to change this. The inquiry will run over a year, taking written and video evidence as well as organising events to take oral evidence and include the views of young people and other professionals who can help the Inquiry.

Specifically, the inquiry is exploring the following questions:
i) Value and impact: What is the impact of oracy education at different life stages from early years through to employment, and how can the delivery of effective oracy education contributes to individual and societal outcomes?
ii) Provision and access: What is the current state of provision of oracy education across the UK, who is missing out and what factors create unequal access to oracy education?
iii) Barriers to improving oracy education: What are the barriers to provision of a quality oracy education for all, and what is the role of government and other bodies in incentivising provision
The Inquiry will result in practical recommendations for government, policy makers, educational bodies, and school leaders to ensure every child receives quality oracy education.

To find out more information please visit: www.oracyappg.org.uk/school-resources.

For any queries please contact, Gemma Carroll, inquiry@oracyappg.org.uk.

THANK YOU!