## Evaluating Talk The Talk - Executive Summary

The evaluation, commissioned by Talk The Talk's John Bothamley was designed to measure the impact of programme against its objectives as played out in nine schools over a period of around four months. The research question: To what extent has the programme been successful in helping young people to use persuasive language techniques to get one's message across, to organise and present ideas with a sense of audience, body language and enhance employability skills?

It is described as 'An engaging confident communication masterclass run over a full school day' in which students learn how to deliver confidently without notes, how to plan and deliver a speech, in turn helping to develop a stronger essay writing structure and approach to assessment. From each class five young people were selected for interview on three occasions separated by a period of around two to three months. The data were triangulated to counterpoint the views of students, teachers, trainers and researchers.

There was an overall trend for young people to profess greater confidence with each iteration of the programme, illustrated by pupils' self rating as well as from comments by their teachers.
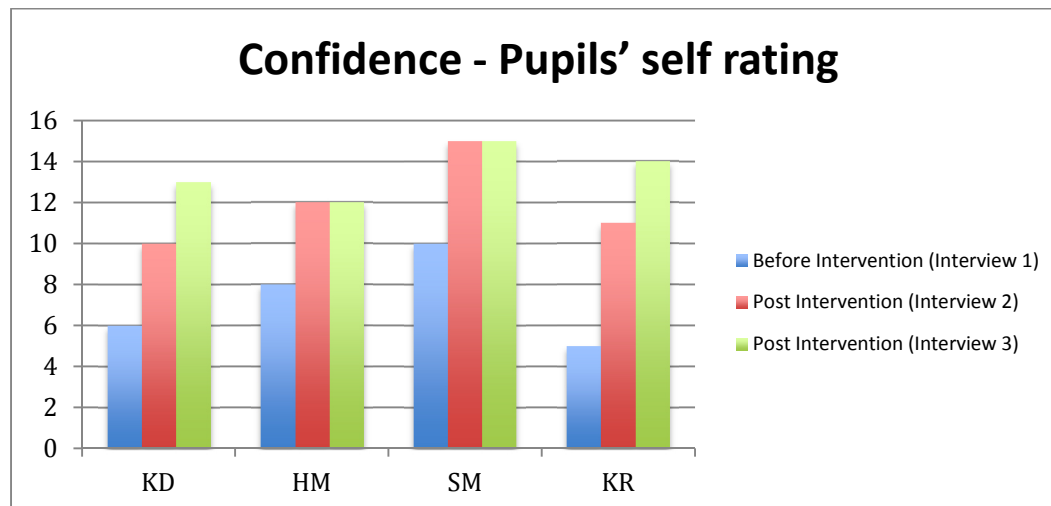
Much of their reluctance to volunteer came from a fear of being wrong and the attendant ridicule of their peers. By contrast, the ethos and culture of Talk The Talk sessions encouraged experimentation, creating a collegial and supportive ethos in which virtually all students felt able to contribute despite earlier inhibitions.

The TTT trainers are a select group, skilled at putting young people at their ease, able to speak their language, meeting as a group to prepare before sessions and exchange feedback following the event. Teachers commented on the trainers' skills: putting young people at their ease, speaking their language. In the words of one teacher:

"Well structured and planned, trainers are professional and competent"

Teachers' comments were consistently positive, often surprised at the manifest growth in their students' self confidence and presentational skills.

"They got an awful lot from it I think"

"Their confidence by the end of the day was a lot higher, they were a lot livelier, more likely to stand up in front of the class"

"I saw her really come out of her shell"

"There was a really nice atmosphere for the day where they worked together as a team to improve their presentation skills."

The following all appear to be key elements in the success of the programme

- The selection, training and skills of the training team
- The review and critique following sessions in the school
- The openness, desire for, and response to, evaluation
- The management of space and physical arrangements of classrooms
- The structure of a whole school day
- The pace, momentum and variety of activities
- The creation of a collaborative and non-threatening ethos
- The use of praise and positive feedback
- The encouragement of peer-to-peer feedback

The value and impact of the training is more than a sum of all these ingredients. It rests on a conviction that young people have a great deal more to offer. It rests on a conviction that through high expectations, support and challenge the inner talk of self doubt can be replaced by a positive, outgoing, confident self belief.

John MacBeath
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John MacBeath is Professor Emeritus at the University of Cambridge, Director of Leadership for Learning: the Cambridge Network and Projects Director for the Centre for Commonwealth Education. He acted in a consultancy role to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNESCO and ILO (International Labour Organisation), the Bertelsmann Foundation, the Prince's Trust, the European Commission, the Scottish Executive, the Swiss Federal Government, the Varkey Group in Dubai (Emirates) and the Hong Kong Education Department. He was a member of the Government Task Force on Standards from 1997-2001 and was awarded the OBE for services to education in 1997.