Oracy Cambridge Conference at Hughes Hall, 7th October 2017

Oracy: why spoken language skills are important today

Programme for the day

9.15 Arrival & coffee

9.30 Welcome to Hughes Hall: Anthony Freeling, President of Hughes Hall.

Neil is Emeritus Professor of Education at Cambridge and the Director of Oracy Cambridge. As a leading researcher in the field, he will explain why the development of spoken language skills is important for children’s cognitive and social development. He will also set oracy in a wider political and social context, as a basis for discussion later in the day.

10.15 Conversations in care: Nick Andrews
A former social worker, Nick is a Research and Practice Development Officer at Swansea University, where he has led the innovative and successful approach to improving communications between carers and the people in their care. He will describe the nature and outcomes of this work in this session.

11.00 Break

11.15 Rethinking Education: James Mannion
James is Director of Rethinking Education, specialising in evidence-informed school improvement, and an experienced secondary school teacher. He will describe how a 5-year a whole-school approach involving oracy training has led to significant academic gains for students, especially among those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

11:45 Interthinking in practice: Lyn Dawes
Lyn has taught in primary and secondary schools, specialising in science and spoken language. She has trained teachers at Bedford, Northampton and Cambridge Universities, and now provides ‘talk for learning’ workshops across the UK and abroad. She will use this interactive session to illustrate the ways talk can be used most effectively for collaborative learning and joint problem solving.

12.15: Discussion session: ‘Why should I care about speaking and listening?’
In groups, participants will discuss the relevance of effective spoken language skills to their own life experience and professional contexts.

12.45: Lunch

1.30 Find your voice: Cathy Mellor
Cathy is the Principal of Find Your Voice, which aims to improve children’s confidence in speaking in public. She will describe the work she has done at Bourne Westfield Primary School in Lincolnshire, and illustrate this with video examples.

2.00. The spectrum of children’s language abilities: Wendy Lee
Wendy is a speech and language therapist who has worked in education, health and the third sector, with a focus on children’s communication. She was Professional Director at The Communication Trust where
she led on a number of projects promoting the importance of oracy skills. She will describe the kinds of problems with spoken language development that some children face, and how these can be addressed.

2.30 Professional learning through talk: Pete Dudley
Pete has led developments in the key role of talk in teacher learning and school leadership through an adaptation of the collaborative approach called Lesson Study (which he introduced to the UK). He has held national education roles, was until recently Director of Education for Camden and is now a Lecturer and Fellow of Hughes Hall at Cambridge.

3.00 Panel discussion session: Oracy in the wider world
The speakers will form a panel which will respond to questions and comments offered by participants, leading into a consideration of the importance of oracy skills training and if/how it might be given more attention in educational settings, the workplace and government policy.

3.45 Final summary (Neil Mercer)

4.00 Conference closes

7.00 Formal Hall for Hughes alumni (optional)