The Douglas Barnes Award



Further the understanding of high-quality oracy education

January – May 2023

voice 21

The Douglas Barnes Award

The Douglas Barnes Award for oracy classroom research aims to further our understanding of high-quality oracy education.

The award will celebrate the most innovative, reflective and well-designed classroom research into oracy teaching and learning.

It is supported by a self-led online learning module in the Voice 21 Exchange on inquiry into your own practice.

Who is the programme for?

Any teacher in a Voice 21 Oracy School is eligible to take part. The award is open to teachers who wish to engage with the latest research and use their classroom to carry out small-scale research, focusing on issues relevant to the context in which they work in order to better understand or improve them.

Douglas Barnes

Douglas Barnes was a teacher and researcher who, whilst at the University of Leeds, investigated the role of spoken language on young people's learning. In 1976, having analysed tape recordings of classroom talk in a Leeds secondary school, Douglas Barnes wrote 'From Communication to Curriculum'. Since then, Barnes' work has inspired a wealth of school-based educational research on classroom talk and the relevance of his ideas today are an enduring legacy to his work.

Barnes' seminal work on classroom talk has shaped the field of oracy education and is fundamental to Voice 21's approach; we are therefore honoured to have his name associated with this prize.

The impact of a high-quality oracy education

Oracy is our ability to articulate ideas, develop understanding and engage with others through spoken language and listening.

In school, oracy is a powerful tool for learning; by teaching students to become more effective speakers and listeners we empower them to better understand themselves, each other and the world around them.

Evidence suggests that improving the quality of classroom talk has a measurable impact on academic attainment, boosting retention of subject-specific knowledge, accelerating vocabulary acquisition and developing students' reasoning skills.

The benefits of oracy also extend beyond the classroom, supporting the development of students' confidence and self-esteem. The oracy skills acquired by students at school are also prized in the world of work; good grades and qualifications may get a candidate to interview but it will be their performance there that lands them the job.

But how can schools know whether 'what they do' is actually helping to improve student outcomes?

> Guides to 'what works' can only point us towards what works on average; for any given area of practice, there is always huge variation in terms of efficacy, ranging from the highly effective to the highly counterproductive.
>
> We need to work out what works for us – in the contexts in which we work. In the drive to become a more evidence-informed profession, we need […] to engage both *with* and *in* research
>
> ***James Mannion, Oracy Cambridge***
>
> *Evidence-informed practice: The importance of professional judgement by James Mannion*

Key outcomes

Outcomes for participants

The Douglas Barnes Award will enable you to become an expert oracy practitioner. You will:

- Develop a critical understanding of the active ingredients of a high-quality oracy education through engagement with academic research
- Design, implement and reflect on an oracy-based intervention in your classroom
- Actively participate in an online ‘community of practice’ to support the research process
- Write up and share your findings with practitioners across the Voice 21 network

Benefits for your students

The evidence shows that speaking and listening skills underpin so many facets of school life, from attainment to wellbeing, literacy to life chances. Providing a high-quality oracy education to your students is linked to:

- Improved academic outcomes
- Increased confidence
- Improved social and emotional wellbeing
- Skills for thriving in life beyond school, particularly further study and career prospects

Benefits for oracy practitioners

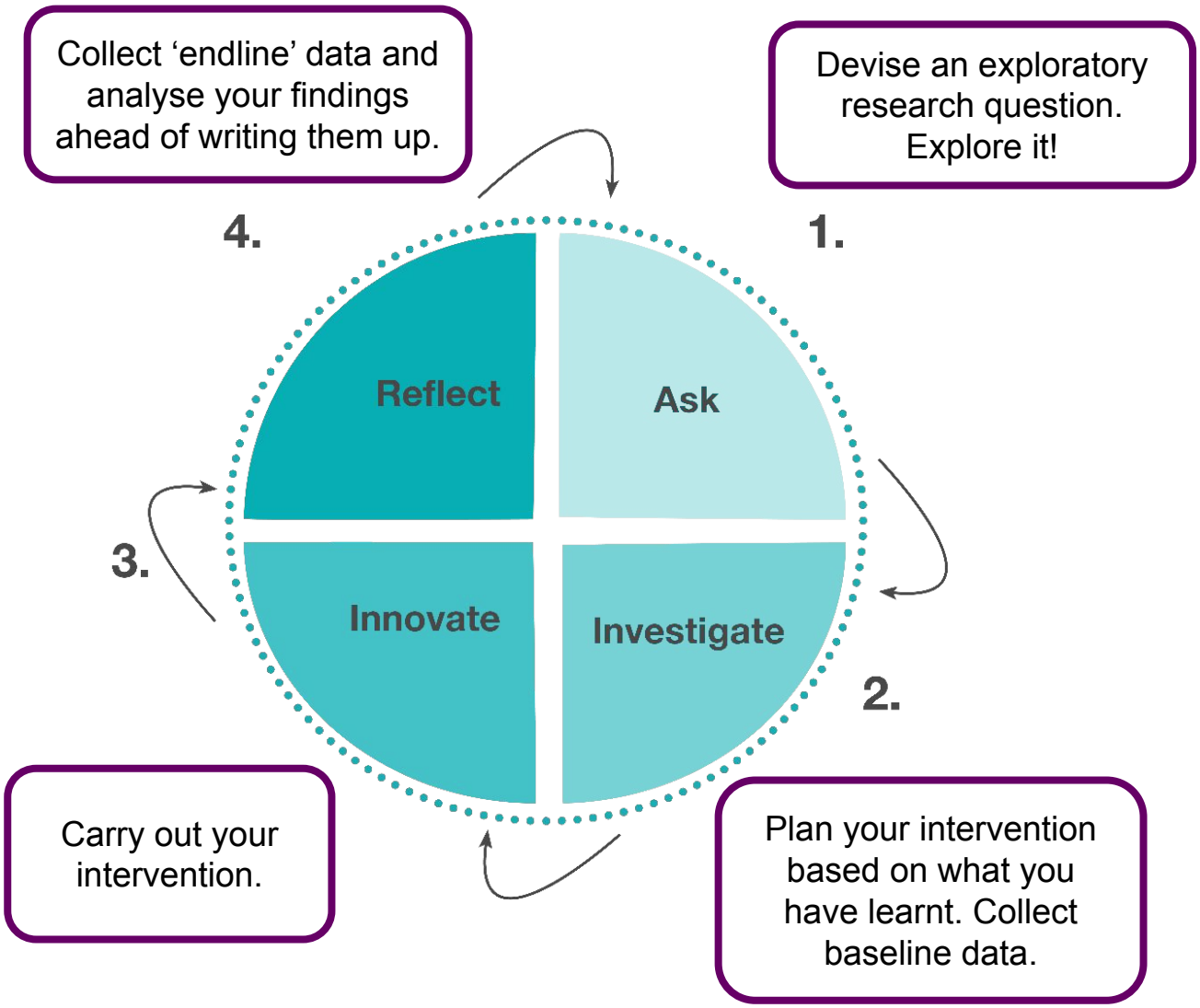
A journal will be published showcasing a selection of research, furthering the understanding of high-quality oracy education.

Sign up here

Module outline

The self-led module consists of four units and three live webinars held between January and May 2023. All webinars will be facilitated online via Zoom, enabling you to network and share ideas with teachers across a range of different schools.

Sharing and discussion is key to this module and you will actively participate in an online 'community of practice' to support the research process. Reflective and collaborative communication is encouraged at various stages throughout the module, enabling contributors to engage in reasoned decision-making toward defined pedagogical goals.



Award timeline



Half term

Easter

Live webinar
Wednesday 25th January, 15.30 - 16.30
Introduction to the Douglas Barnes Award

Unit 1: Big Ideas
3 hrs self-led
What is close-to-practice research?
Developing an online 'community of practice'
Oracy and the work of Douglas Barnes
The Oracy Framework and the Oracy Teacher Benchmarks

Unit 2: Exploring good practice
4 hrs self-led
T-Seda, Talk Tactics
Independent literature review

Share Learning
Wednesday 22nd February, 15.30 - 17.00
Live webinar to share learning around area of interest

Unit 3: Planning for impact
3 hrs self-led
Defining your outcome and identifying baseline measures.
Defining and planning your intervention.
Formulating your research question.
Research ethics.

Share Intervention
Wednesday 8th March 15.30 - 17.00
Live webinar to outline your intervention and Q&A on implementation

Task
Carry out your oracy intervention

Unit 4: Reflecting on impact
4 hrs self-led
Analysing your data
Writing up your impact project
Reflect on impact and plan for next steps with V21 School lead

Share Impact
Wednesday 17th May, 15.30 - 17.00
Live webinar to troubleshoot with peers, share key findings and reflect on impact

Submission date: Wednesday 24th May 2023

Final word



Rachel Mayes, winner of the inaugural Douglas Barnes Award, explored the explicit teaching of discussion skills with a group of pupil premium students. Rachel's research has created an invaluable resource for teachers across the country to learn from her findings.

> As a result of completing my impact project I regularly shadow students' experience of oracy in my classroom. I found writing this report a really useful experience for my own teaching.
>
> **Rachel Mayes**
> The Oaks Primary School

Read Rachel's winning project here



Email us: research@voice21.org
Tweet us: @voice21oracy

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