



Parents seek solution to shortfalls in children's communication skills

A recent survey has found that parents are so concerned about their children's communication skills that they want public speaking to formally be embedded in the school curriculum. The survey, conducted in April by the website Public Speaking for Kids, revealed that 71 per cent of parents were in favour of such an inclusion, 25 per cent were unsure and 4 per cent were against.

Set up by Andries Smit, an accountant and founder of several small businesses, Public Speaking for Kids is a website providing advice, guidance and tips on how parents can get their children involved in, and make the most out of, public speaking, to improve their communication skills and academic attainment.

Many parents have found the site hugely beneficial. One such parent, Anna Holding, who came across the site after searching for ways to improve her children's presentation skills, has since been applying the advice she discovered: "I have enrolled my two teenage children in the local Toastmasters club. I regularly read the site for tips on how I can keep my children engaged in public speaking and ways to make the practicing of it more fun around the home. I have also found the advice given has brought me closer to my children as we now spend more time together doing more than just making routine small talk"

The site is certainly filling a gap, particularly in the UK. Smit says: "There is grave concern that new technologies could impede children's interpersonal skills in the future. With SMS messaging, social media and the internet, communication is becoming increasingly informal. This informality is seen as normal and acceptable by children but does not go down well on exam papers or at job interviews. We already have a Generation Y who are struggling because of the weak economic environment. We could be in for a Generation Z next; those unable to make their own way in the world because of a lack of communication skills".

Currently the site is much like a blog, updated thrice weekly. There is an exclusive e-book for sale: *The A-Z of Public Speaking for Kids*. In coming months it will offer many more products and services.

So can this ambitious site help parents achieve their goal of bringing public speaking into the school curriculum? Andries Smit: "We have much planned for the latter half of the year and we will certainly be reaching out to policymakers".

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Visit: www.publicspeakingforkids.org

Public Speaking for Kids is a new website providing tips, advice and coaching for parents and teachers to help their children and pupils improve their public speaking and communication skills.