



Confident Communicators
formerly known as Gift of the Gabs

IMPACT REPORT

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Due to expansion into other countries, "Gift of the Gabs" is now trading as Confident Communicators.

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1. Aim of the Report

The aim of this Report is to provide a summary of the impact that involvement and integration of the Confident Communicators Programme in schools has had, specifically with regard to raising confidence in pupils, improving their communication skills, increasing awareness of their own talents and abilities and encouraging re-engagement in the classroom. Evidence of the Programme's impact has been drawn from discussions with teachers, pupils, parents and trainers, as well as evaluation sheets which were completed by pupils who participated in the programme. Determined to Succeed also independently evaluated school results for 2006-2008.

Challenges facing participating schools included:

- Pupils lacking confidence especially when speaking in class
- Disengaged pupils who potentially may require More Choices, More Chances
- A need to improve discipline and pupil behaviour
- A need for restorative practice and improved interpersonal skills
- A need to raise academic performance
- A need to prepare young people for the workplace as part of enterprise skills
- A need to help teachers feel supported
- A need for resources that develop Curriculum for Excellence

2. Background

The aim of Confident Communicators is to deliver an educational programme to schools that helps develop confident individuals, successful learners, responsible citizens and effective contributors and which is designed to fit easily with the current curriculum.

This Report shows the direct results of embedding of the Programme into teaching and learning and the effect on pupil performance/behaviour, its benefits, its impact in the classroom and how this was measured.

The Programme has been operating for over 6 years, and in Scotland has been used at all stages of Primary and Secondary schooling including Nursery level, SENs and Residential Schools. A specially adapted version of the Programme is being used by Canadian authorities to tackle social issues amongst Inuit people in the Nunavut region and it has also been trialled in South Africa in orphanages and with young adults from townships.

The confidence and communication development Programme is aimed at pupils of all ages. Authentic, communication skills are taught through a variety of methods including classroom based activities, workshops and PSHE modules. Libby Hammond, creator of Confident Communicators, had found that teaching adults to have the confidence to stand up and present to an audience involves two key elements - learning to deal with their own 'internal terrorists' (which results in sustained authentic confidence) and learning to use positive verbal and non-verbal body language to influence (to 'sell' their message).

During voluntary work with Primary School pupils who were giving class presentations she discovered that the same principles applied. When taken through the same methodology – using simple worksheets and short activities - their confidence improved and the impact was seen in a measurable improvement, not only in oral literacy and curriculum subjects but also their enjoyment in taking part in public-facing activities. Significantly, discipline also improved.

Sustainability is ensured through Continuous Professional Development sessions for teaching staff and training a nominated member of staff under licence. After the delivery of the

training, support is ensured through on-line material and access to Confident Communicators support staff.

3. Method of Research

In producing this Impact Report, a wide variety of research methods have been used. These have included the following:

Pupil and Teacher Evaluation

At the beginning and end of the academic year, pupils were required to complete evaluation sheets which were then translated into graph form. Some pupils were videoed for evaluation on the benefits of the Programme. Teachers were asked to provide comments and evaluate in report form.

Statistical analysis of Pupil Evaluation

A detailed statistical analysis of evaluation sheets was undertaken from all participating groups and can be used for comparison purposes.

Survey by Interview

This involved semi-structured survey interviews with Head Teachers and Teachers. These survey interviews were predominantly concerned with exploring qualitative issues. Specific details of surveys are contained within the relevant chapters of this report. We conducted interviews with 36 Head Teachers and 62 Teachers.

Survey by Focus Group

Focus groups were held with 176 teachers (CPDs). In addition to group-based discussions, the teachers also provided individual responses to survey questions.

External Evaluation

A separate evaluation was carried out by Determined to Succeed, Dumfries & Galloway.

4. Findings of Research

Teaching staff

The introduction of the Programme in schools has had the following impact on teaching:

Benefits for curriculum requirements

Teachers found the material and activities particularly helped meet curricular requirements on oral literacy (listening and speaking skills), enterprise and literacy abilities. By engaging the young people with their talents and dreams, teachers found that pupils engaged better with their subject.

Links to curriculum for excellence –four capacities

Creating confident communicators had positive results for citizenship, community values, enterprise and social responsibility. In addition, pupils saw themselves as positive contributors.

Ease of teacher usage

As Programme material can be integrated as part of the curriculum, teachers found that the Programme elements designed to develop pupils' communication skills also helped them meet achievement levels. For example, preparing a talk involved each pupil in research, reading, writing, listening, talking, preparation and thinking of how to engage their audience.

Continued use of Confident Communicators resource material

Schools have continued to use the material beyond the first year of involvement, for example, one school now has introduced a Confident Communicators Life Skills module for S5, while another is using Confident Communicators as a Citizenship module for S5 pupils.

Benefits for school culture

Improved confidence has resulted in improved behaviour and positive discipline in schools. Pupils have entered positive mentoring relationships with younger pupils and several schools have said there has been a positive effect on the whole school culture.

Parent teacher relationships

Parents have emailed or contacted teachers with positive comments about how their children have benefited from the Programme. Improved behaviour in the class was also mirrored by improved behaviour in the home.

Enterprise in Education

Teachers have seen more confident and more creative presentations as a result of pupils preparing for, and thinking about, their audience, learning to “sell” themselves and their product and being more enthusiastic. They have also learned to construct talks that influence their audience.

Competition

The Confident Communicators end of term presentation competition, which all participating schools can enter, gives teachers a focus for class presentations and enables them to use the Programme’s presentation skills elements effectively. Certificates of Achievement were presented to all participating pupils.

Pupils

For most pupils involved in the Programme the key impact has been the measurable advancement in the individual’s confidence and academic performance, including the following:

Classroom performance

Pupils felt more confident about themselves and were more willing to participate in classroom discussions and help fellow pupils.

Raised confidence

Learning about eye contact, enthusiasm, and dealing with “internal terrorists” resulted in authentic confidence, and developed self-respect and accountability for pupils. Pupils were better able to handle potential conflict. Overall they became better communicators and felt more equipped for the world of work.

Presentations and oral literacy

Pupils developed more audience-centred and influencing presentations and generally improved in their interaction with adults at school functions e.g. plays, open days etc.

Increased awareness and development of individual skills, abilities and talents

Positive peer and self-evaluation during class talks, and the use of the Talking Triangle (a poster with Honesty, Respect and Good Choices, which is displayed in the classroom), engendered healthy self-esteem and confidence. This resulted in pupils being willing to take risks in talking and presenting in class. It also helped many of them feel better prepared for interviews. Pupils learned how to use their abilities to assist others who were not so able.

Entrepreneurial teamwork and enterprise

Pupils were encouraged to create team presentations that were audience centred and this resulted in developing “out-the-box” thinking. They began to understand how to market their “brand” in innovative ways. Most importantly, they understood the difference between

presenting and influencing and this impacted on how they constructed the content of their presentations.

Encouraging re-engagement in the classroom

By understanding why they were at school – it helps them to achieve their dream – pupils started to engage in school and with subjects that they had seen as irrelevant. Behaviour improved and academic achievements improved. Positive measurable outcomes were seen for most pupils very quickly.

Interpersonal skills and positive discipline

Positive self-discipline and improved interpersonal skills resulted in better behaviour in class and on school premises. Restorative practice was seen in action and conflict resolution improved. Pupils were more confident about taking visitors round schools.

Competition

Pupils really enjoyed the competition, which has been held in venues such as the Mitchell Library, and this year a showcase is being held in the Scottish Parliament. Pupils from schools who had not entered the competition said they would have liked to have done so. Pupils were included on the judging panel.

5. Summary

The study shows from the evidence available that the main strengths of the programme are:

- Confident Communicators Programme impacts positively on pupil behaviour in both primary and secondary schools.
- Pupils, teachers and parents consider that the Programme has a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Pupils' performance in basic skills such as reading and writing improve.
- Both weak and academically strong pupils benefit from the Programme.
- Teachers believe pupils are more motivated, enthusiastic and attentive in class.
- Pupils are helped to become more confident individuals and are introduced to the world of work and the importance of communication through visiting speakers.
- The Programme helps in restoring a sense of significance and healthy self-esteem in an individual, which results in the development of authentic confidence, improved behaviour and healthy choices.
- The Programme develops confident communication within individuals so that they become influencers for positive change in the community.

The following appendices are based on results from schools involved at present. These encouraging results would merit broader research so that as more schools take this on, quantitative and qualitative markers could be established.

Appendix 1 : Stat Results (Teachers' CPD)

A total of 176 teaching staff participated in CPDs of which 114 responded to a questionnaire asking how they rated aspects of the Confident Communicators Programme as follows:

	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Material content	-	7%	50%	43%
Workshop presentation and delivery	-	4%	30%	66%
Practical value of material	1%	12%	47%	40%

Appendix 2 : Stat Results (Secondary Schools overall)

A total of 756 pupils from 11 Secondary Schools completed evaluation forms which produced the following results:

Did being involved in the Programme help :	Not really %	A little %	Quite a lot %	Definitely %
Q1. In improving your confidence	3	14	33	50
Q2. In feeling more positive about yourself.	3	12	34	51
Q3. In finding your goals for the future.	8	15	36	41
Q4. In feeling more positive about coming to school	12	22	27	39
Q5. In being more aware of your personal strengths	4	12	32	52
Q6. In giving class presentations	6	18	30	46
Q7. In increasing your confidence to handle interviews	4	13	28	55
Q8. In feeling you personally benefitted from the programme.	6	12	28	54
Q9. In getting to know your fellow pupils better	6	17	27	50
Q10. In wanting to stay involved in future courses?	5	17	7	71

Appendix 3 : Stat Results (Primary Schools overall)

A total of 174 pupils from four Primary Schools completed evaluation forms, which produced the following results:

Did being involved in the Programme help:	Not really %	A little %	Quite a lot %	Definitely %
Q1. In improving your confidence	5	9	33	53
Q2. In feeling better about yourself	8	17	31	44
Q3. In liking school more	30	17	17	36
Q4. In understanding what you are good at	12	13	23	52
Q5. In being better at giving talks	9	10	21	60
Q6. In getting to know your classmates better	19	13	18	50
Q7. In wishing to continue using the Programme?	19	10	17	54

Appendix 4 : Sample Stat Results (Ballikinrain Residential School)

A total of 6 pupils from Ballikinrain Residential School completed evaluation forms which produced the following results:

Did being involved in the Programme help :	Not really (number of pupils)	A little (number of pupils)	Quite a lot (number of pupils)	Definitely (number of pupils)
Q1. In improving your confidence	1	0	1	4
Q2. In feeling more positive about yourself.	1	0	2	3
Q3. In finding your goals for the future.	0	1	0	4
Q4. In feeling more positive about coming to school	2	0	0	4
Q5. In being more aware of your personal strengths	0	1	0	5
Q6. In giving class presentations	0	1	1	4
Q7. In increasing your confidence to handle interviews	1	0	1	4
Q8. In feeling you personally benefitted from the programme.	0	1	0	5
Q9. In getting to know your fellow pupils better	1	0	0	5
Q10. In wanting to stay involved in future courses	1	0	0	5

Appendix 5 : Sample Evaluations (Teachers - Primary & Secondary Schools)

Airth Primary

The Confident Communicators Programme has been running for approximately 6 years at Airth Primary (under Gift of the Gabs) and was originally introduced as a pilot with Primary 6/7, it has evolved through each Primary stage and now runs from Nursery to Primary 7.

The school encourages all communication to follow the values highlighted by the Confident Communicators Talking Triangle (Honesty, Respect and Good Choices) and this starts at Nursery stage. To enable younger pupils to understand and adopt the principles, they have introduced a Bear System which is used throughout the week in class - across all subjects. At weekends, a pupil is chosen by the teacher to take the bear home and to continue using the principles of the Talking Triangle across all their activities. This system also involves the parents, as they have to keep a diary for the weekend, which is then fed back to the rest of the class, by the pupil, the following week.

The Programme fits very well with the four capacities highlighted by the Curriculum for Excellence and it inspires teacher confidence. It impacts on many of the school's PSE exercises and is especially relevant in English with many pupils now expanding talks rather than copying out chunks of text which they would normally repeat verbatim. Pupils are consulting a wider selection of resource materials, accepting other opinions and are able to justify/validate their information. Talking and listening skills have also vastly improved.

Children are particularly inspired by visiting business mentors who have been introduced to the schools by Confident Communicators, giving the pupils opportunities to demonstrate their speaking skills.

The entire school operates the Programme to a greater or lesser degree and found that even in very shy or reluctant individuals it has engendered greater confidence and more ease in handling situations that would otherwise have been challenging e.g. communicating with strangers. The increase in confidence reaches out into everything the pupils do and parents are especially delighted when their children have the confidence to perform or speak in public.

Pupils enjoy working through the 'buddy' system encouraged by the Programme and have responded very well to the team working approach and the help/encouragement they receive as part of it. It has also enabled pupils to better understand the concept of body language and that confidence shines through in one's physical presentation. Pupils are also better equipped to read other people's feelings/emotions which helps with development of their social skills and interaction within social groups.

In Primary 7 this has been particularly useful for their 'work experience' where they have tried out various jobs and had a sense of life outside the village. It has also made them aware of the concept of transferable skills. The confidence built by the Programme is also helping with transition into Secondary School. Pupils are more willing to participate in introductory classes held by secondary schools.

The Confident Communicators' strategies continue to be used from Nursery Class to Primary 7 and has been a very positive experience, with the pupils willing and eager to participate. Because the programme was easy to blend into the curriculum, it was accepted as part of class routine. They found that the materials provided proved to be useful and an excellent introduction to formal speaking. The worksheets and structure of the materials were also found to be simple and straightforward. Airth Primary are to continue to use Confident Communicators and are happy to endorse it to any other school.

Annan Academy

In 2006 Annan Academy ran a one year programme with a difficult S3 group. The successful results led to all first year pupils taking part in the Programme and an S4 mentoring group being developed and integrated into the school.

Teachers found that pupil response was very positive in their first year of involvement and that there was an increased willingness to participate in discussions or question and answer sessions. The group involved pupils with discipline issues and also some who acknowledged that lack of self esteem was an issue for them. With the aid of the Programme they were happy to try to remedy this and responded well and as a result, teaching them became easier. Teachers found it easy to integrate Programme material which they became more reliant on and in some cases found it added another dimension to their teaching strategy.

Cited as one of its main benefits was that shy and withdrawn pupils participated more actively when the Programme was used. There were perceptible improvements in that one shy 14 year old presented his talk in private to a visitor from Confident Communicators whilst another read aloud in class for the first time in his school career.

Wallace Hall Academy

Wallace Hall Academy ran a Confident Communicators Confidence Workshop in 2006 and subsequently has held a Confident Communicators Enterprise and Business Development Workshop along with Confident Communicators PSHE modules as part of the school curriculum.

Pupils introduced to the Programme at this school had mixed ability, behaviour and attitude. The school was attracted to the programme as they viewed communication as a very important lifelong skill to which little time is devoted within the school curriculum. Pupils were initially anxious but became more relaxed as the programme was used.

Pupils lost some of their inhibitions and hang-ups and became more accepting of public speaking as well as appreciating its importance. There was no pressure on the pupils to perform in any of the tasks but one boy who normally isolates himself from his peers mixed, talked and acted in front of others. The objectives of improving presentation skills and building confidence have been met and the school will be integrating Confident Communicators strategies into the new Life Skills S4 module. The school found the materials an essential part of the programme and greatly supported delivery of the programme. They found them well thought out, with a gradual build up to the different elements associated with communication. Induction material for new pupils now includes information on Confident Communicators.

Castle Douglas High School

In 2006 Castle Douglas and Dalry High School ran a collaborative workshop to integrate new pupils coming into the school.

The course has benefitted the pupils greatly, as experienced when they gave solo talks to the class on a subject of their choice. These talks showed that they have developed skills both verbally and non-verbal, which have enhanced their communication skills, **resulting in marked improvement in their grades**. Some evaluation from pupils has included them feeling better in themselves, less anxious when having to stand up and present something, and generally feeling more confident.

Appendix 6 : List of Participants in the Report

Airth Primary
Annan Academy
Ballikinrain Residential
Dalbeattie High
Douglas Ewart High
Dumfries Academy
Dunard Primary
Duncow Primary
Gielisland Secondary
Hawick Academy
Langholm Academy
Sanquhar Academy
Springholm Primary
Stewarton Academy
Wallace Hall Academy

Contact details

If you would like an additional copy of this report or details of individual school stat results, please contact Confident Communicators Limited on info@confidentcommunicators.uk.com or telephone 01387.252828 or 07764.465783.