

# ESU IMPACT REPORT 2023-24

*'It was so incredible to talk to so many people from so many places, learning new things and unlearning old beliefs'*



ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION

discovering voices

# INTRODUCTION

With the recent publication of reports by the Oracy Education Commission, the National Literacy Trust and The Sutton Trust, among others, it's clearer than ever that oracy skills should be an intrinsic part of every child's schooling. They help with attainment, with confidence and with emotional well-being. They boost social mobility, and help close the growing disadvantage gap. And they promote healthy civic engagement and social equity, allowing everyone to make their voice heard.

We are proud to support the cause through our range of highly-regarded public speaking, debating and performance competitions, which support young people in acquiring these abilities. Our oracy awards recognise and celebrate those schools and teachers who do so much to equip their students with these essential life skills, while our Continuing Professional Development workshops and commitment to oracy research encourages teachers to discover exactly what works for them.

Uniquely, as well as working across all types of schools in England and Wales, we also have a global reach. Our membership structure domestically and internationally allows us to connect with young people around the world, where we run national public speaking competitions which feed into our flagship International Public Speaking Competition in London each May. Together with our international exchanges and scholarships, these all contribute to the realisation of our mission: to give young people the speaking and listening skills and cross-cultural understanding they need to live their lives to the fullest.



## IN BRIEF

**115,435**

young people were involved in our competitions worldwide

**6,327**

children in England & Wales whose speaking skills we improved

**4,230**

pupils were involved in our competitions in England & Wales



## OUR COMPETITIONS & PROGRAMMES

### ESU-Churchill Public Speaking Competition (Years 9-11)

Generously sponsored by the International Churchill Society, the ESU-Churchill Public Speaking Competition uses the format of a public meeting – with a chair, speaker, and questioner – to develop vital speaking and listening skills alongside self-confidence.

### Performing Shakespeare (Years 7-9)

A drama and oracy competition which engenders a love of language and self-expression, while bringing to life the Shakespeare study requirement in the curriculum. The final is held in the Sam Wanamaker Theatre at Shakespeare's Globe, offering students the unique chance to perform on a London stage.

#### IN NUMBERS

**1,060**

students approximately,  
from 198 schools

**56%**

from state schools

**108**

inter-school heats

#### IN NUMBERS

**1,980**

students approximately,  
from 90 schools

**65%**

from state schools

**31**

inter-school heats



## Schools' Mace (Years 7-13)

The Mace, the oldest and largest debating competition for schools in England, challenges participants to consider contemporary issues from a variety of viewpoints, fostering critical thinking and empathy as well as speaking and listening skills.

### IN NUMBERS

1,190

students approximately,  
from 340 schools

54%

from state schools

109

inter-school heats

## Volunteering

Our competitions could not run without our members and volunteers who give so generously of their time to help organise and judge them, and to give feedback to the teams. We are hugely grateful to all of them.

### IN NUMBERS

1,000+

hours of time volunteered



I feel like the ESU has set us up for life. Even if victory doesn't come, the friendships made along the way are a benefit like nothing else

Mace 2024 participant





The best week of my life. It was so incredible to talk to so many people from so many places, learning new things and unlearning old beliefs. There were many people from countries that my country does not have a great relationship with. Now they're some of my closest friends

IPSC 2024 participant

## International Public Speaking Competition (Ages 16-20)

The culmination of public speaking competitions organised by our international ESUs and partners around the world, the IPSC brings together young people from across the globe for a week of cultural exchange and public speaking coaching and heats.

### IN NUMBERS

**111,205**

participants world-wide

**39**

national & regional finalists  
in London for a week

**6**

grand finalists

### IN NUMBERS

**1,890**

students approximately

**21**

schools  
and organisations  
involved

## Discover your Voice

Our fun, interactive workshops have been developed specifically for KS2 to KS4. With clear links to the national curriculum spoken language requirements, they boost knowledge and confidence in the ESU's four key oracy skillsets: expression & delivery; reasoning & evidence; organisation & prioritisation and listening & response.

# RESEARCH & EXCHANGES

## Secondary School Exchange (Post-Year 13)

The ESU's Secondary School Exchange offers British students the opportunity to spend a gap year at an American high school at the end of Year 13. With the freedom to study what they choose, to travel, and to make friends from across the world, this is often, quite literally, a life-changing experience.



## Action Research

Twenty-three schools took part in our Oracy Action Research project this year, testing and developing strategies that work for their students in live classroom scenarios. A conference shared research techniques and methodology, and the resulting reports covered topics including the impact of debating on speechwriting, and how to create a more positive culture around questions.

## Professional scholarships

This year we awarded six professional scholarships, enabling two teachers, a post-doctoral scientist and a musician to travel or study in the US to broaden their perspectives on the world and their topics of study. Two art students also received art history scholarships.

### IN NUMBERS

**6** UK scholars  
studied in the US  
**66%**  
from state schools  
**10**  
US scholars  
studied in the UK



## AWARDS

### Oracy Culture Award

Our Oracy Culture Award is the only national award celebrating those schools placing oracy at the heart of their curriculum. This year's entrants provided impressive evidence of the difference oracy can make, from students gaining confidence and agency; to how it can benefit those with English as an Additional Language (EAL). The winners were Featherstone High School in Southall and Perry Wood Primary and Nursery School in Worcester.



### ESU-Rutland Teacher Award

This new award, sponsored by the Rutland Foundation, specifically recognises the transformational contribution of teachers in empowering young people through public speaking and debating. Joanna Young of Jack Hunt School, Peterborough, was the worthy winner, chosen for the wide range of oracy work she has instigated; the supportive, cross-year culture she is fostering; and outreach to local primary schools. She wins £500 and a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) session for her school.



# SUPPORT OUR WORK

## BECOME A MEMBER

By becoming a member, you'll become part of a community that values the power of friendship, language and communication. Most importantly, you'll be helping us to continue and expand our vital charitable work. Membership starts from just £20/year. For more information, please email [membership@esu.org](mailto:membership@esu.org) or call **020 7529 1587**.



## VOLUNTEER

Many of our members support our competitions by acting as volunteer judges. This is an incredibly rewarding experience, allowing you to see first-hand the impact of the work we do. Please contact [volunteering@esu.org](mailto:volunteering@esu.org) if you would like to get involved.

## DONATE

The English-Speaking Union is an educational charity that relies on the generosity of individuals, charitable foundations and companies to help ensure our programmes continue to be accessible to those who need them most. If you would like to donate, please visit [esu.org/donate](http://esu.org/donate) or contact [fundraising@esu.org](mailto:fundraising@esu.org).



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