

Should Schools Be Teaching Public Speaking?

I recently had a discussion with a gentleman about his granddaughter. Although she was only seven, she had no difficulty speaking with any adult whom she came in contact with. Her grandfather said it was because of the regular public speaking practice she was given in her local homeschool group.

Her speaking ability, this gentleman went on to note, was a stark contrast to the young engineers he regularly trained. Many of them were unable to clearly and effectively communicate through their speech, and he had to send them to Toastmasters to remedy this deficiency.

This gentleman's story reminded me of a recent [article](#) in *The Guardian* which asked why more schools don't teach students public speaking.

The answers to that question are the usual: "There's not enough time," or "The teachers are ill-equipped in this area."

But while those answers may be legit, they should not eliminate instruction in public speaking. According to education consultant Martin Robinson, teaching public speaking not only helps students to speak in a fluent, clear manner, but it also enables them to better process their thoughts and develop rational arguments:

"It is important that young people develop educated opinions, that is, opinions that emerge after exploring and weighing up different sides of an argument."

According to *The Guardian*:

"Robinson believes an educated 18-year-old 'should be able to

respond to gentle interrogation and not worry when they get to the point of not knowing, relish it even because they can explore and find out more'."

It's interesting to reflect on Robinson's comments in light of our current culture. Is it possible that the multiple protests we see taking place on college campuses and in city streets are an outgrowth from the lack of public speaking instruction in schools? Have we taught students that they need to get out there and express themselves, but then failed to give them the tools with which to do it in a rational and civil way?

Image Credit: Brisbane City Council bit.ly/1ryPA8o