

The  
Economist

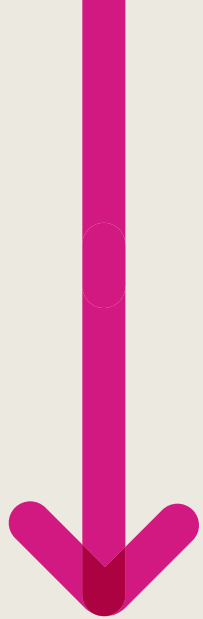
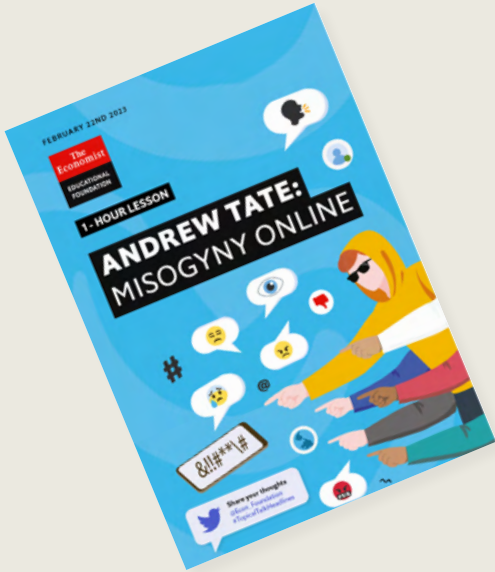
EDUCATIONAL  
FOUNDATION

# Impact report

2022-23



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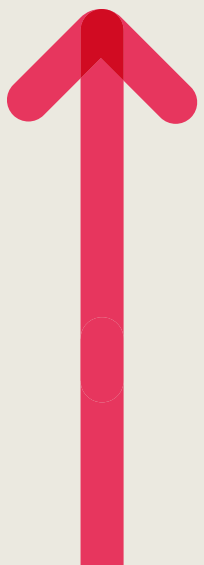
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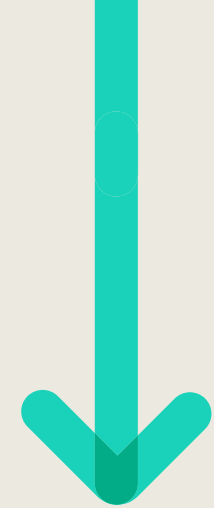
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# Welcome

In the past few years we've grown our reach and impact dramatically. Since 2020, we've expanded from working in a smattering of schools in the United Kingdom to reaching over **133,000 children across the world**. Of those, nearly **38,000 took part regularly** for at least part of the 2022-23 school year.

We have no plans to slow down. All young people should have opportunities to learn to think critically and creatively, listen openly and speak confidently about the news. So we'll keep pushing forward towards our ambitious goals for 2026:

- Reach over **1 million young people**
- Support children with the greatest need for Topical Talk: it's free to any teacher and our goal is for **over 50% of participating teachers to be working with the most disadvantaged students**
- **10,000 young people** regularly joining high-quality discussions about the news

**Topical Talk is worthy of growth because it works:** children make significant measurable progress in skills that support them to succeed at school, in future work and as citizens in a complex and uncertain world. If they participate regularly over several months, our impact report this year shows

**children can make up to seven times the progress of their peers in essential thinking and communication skills.**

We use the Skills Builder Universal Framework to measure students' progress, and we're continually working to collect more data and support teachers to confidently assess the difference our programme is making. While understanding our impact ever-more thoroughly is an ongoing process, we're thrilled to see clear evidence year after year that Topical Talk makes a meaningful difference to skills that can change children's life outcomes.





We know that the greatest impact comes from joining high-quality discussions about the news on a regular basis. So as we grow, our priority is to increase the number of children from underserved backgrounds participating in Topical Talk *regularly*. In today's schools, finding the space for this can be a real challenge. So we offer teachers the support they need, from world-class resources to training that develops their expertise to facilitate classroom discussions about thorny topical issues.

This year we took big strides forward, including piloting our new Topical Talk Festival, which gives teachers a manageable way to have regular Topical Talk discussions and offers students a global platform for their views on world affairs. We established our first "Topical Talk Excellence Hubs" in communities in the United Kingdom and United States where we're working collaboratively with inspiring teachers to maximise the impact of Topical Talk.

We also prioritised learning more from and with our teachers and students, spending even more time in schools, conducting more in-depth interviews and more extensively surveying teachers, to keep building our understanding of what they need from us. Along with the incredible and growing community of volunteers, partners and supporters that make Topical Talk possible, this learning will enable us to continue deepening our impact as we reach many more children in the years to come.



**Emily Evans**  
CEO, The Economist Educational Foundation

A stylized, handwritten signature of Emily Evans in white ink.

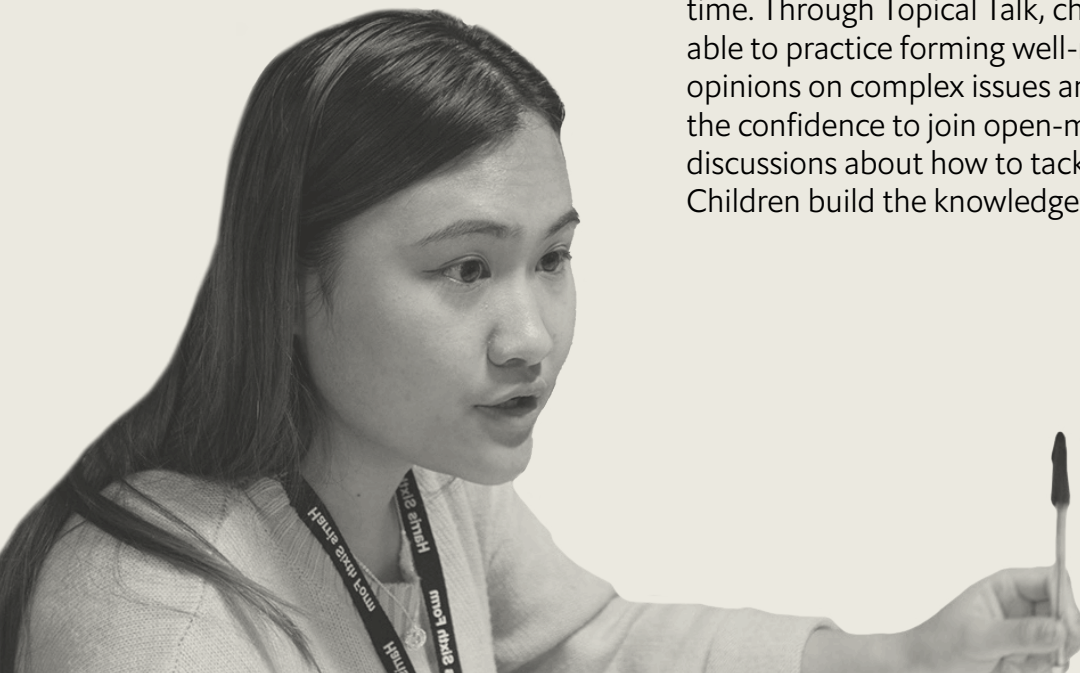


# The case for discussion about the news in schools

“

I use Topical Talk to promote self confidence and critical thinking in 21st century learners.

Teacher, United States



Young people, are not developing the essential skills and knowledge to succeed individually and as global citizens\*. The world faces complex social and environmental challenges, yet few education systems are prioritising the skills and knowledge needed to address these.

Our innovative programme, Topical Talk, builds knowledge about the news and develops four essential skills: speaking, listening, problem-solving and creativity.

Building these skills leads to better academic, employment and wellbeing outcomes†. What makes Topical Talk unique is that we enable children to develop these skills through discussions about the news and to apply these skills to the biggest global challenges of our time. Through Topical Talk, children are able to practice forming well-reasoned opinions on complex issues and build the confidence to join open-minded discussions about how to tackle them. Children build the knowledge required

to understand what is going on in the world; how news events play into wider concepts and themes; and how information is presented to us - all crucial for thriving in the modern world.

Children from underserved backgrounds have fewer opportunities to develop this vital knowledge and skillset, and our purpose is to address that gap.

\*[skillsbuilder.org/insights](https://skillsbuilder.org/insights), [literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/fake-news-and-critical-literacy-final-report](https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/fake-news-and-critical-literacy-final-report)

†[skillsbuilder.org/insights](https://skillsbuilder.org/insights)

“

[Topical Talk] is the perfect way to discuss the news in class: using well-informed material on tough topics, students develop their ability to build logical arguments for and against points of view.

Teacher,  
United Kingdom



# Topical Talk explained

Topical Talk programmes enable 10- to 16-year olds to join high-quality discussions about the news. These classroom and online discussions empower children all around the world with the knowledge and skills they need for the future.



## Topical Talk Headlines

Resources for teachers to facilitate accessible discussions about the news in their classrooms.

We publish a new resource weekly on a global news story, and our resource library is freely available to all.



## Topical Talk Special Editions

Resources for six hours of in-depth discussions about a big global issue, over multiple weeks.



## Topical Talk Festival

The world's biggest news festival for children. Over ten weeks, children have weekly classroom lessons and join international discussions online with each other and global experts.

They take part in live events and competitions, and build towards publishing their opinions in writing, audio journalism and film for the chance to win awards.



## Teacher support and development

We train teachers to facilitate high-quality discussions about the news with confidence, and support them to implement these discussions as a regular practice at school.

Our teacher development follows a community-led, bespoke approach.



# Reach



# Reach

This year, **5,331 teachers** engaged with Topical Talk

Topical Talk reached **133,000 children** worldwide

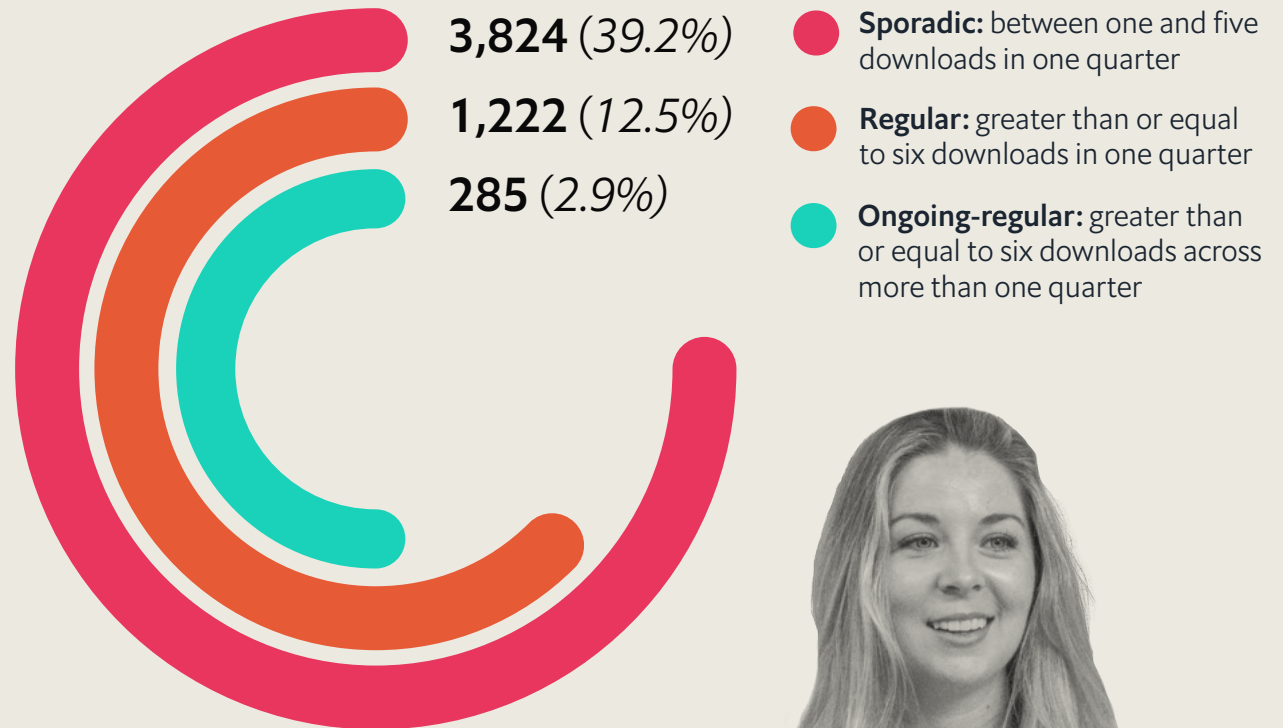
We're proud to reach so many teachers and children globally, but we know that **regular engagement** is essential to have a meaningful impact. It's regular Topical Talk users who make accelerated progress in essential skills.

This is why we monitor how often teachers are engaging with Topical Talk.



## How engaged are Topical Talk teachers?

How often teachers download Topical Talk resources\*



Total: 5,331



\*based on Topical Talk account data 2022-23



Top five Topical  
Talk countries by %  
of teachers

01.  
United Kingdom

64%

02.  
United States

6%

03.  
France

2.5%

04.  
Canada

2.4%

05.  
Spain

1.2%

06.  
Other

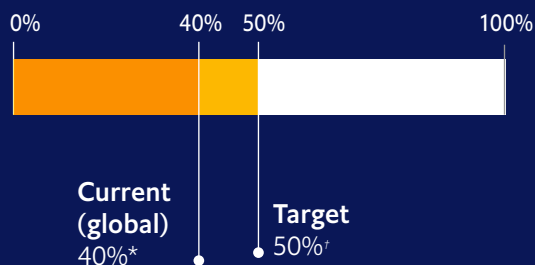
23.9%



# Progress towards our 2026 reach goals\*



% of teachers working with a high number of underserved children



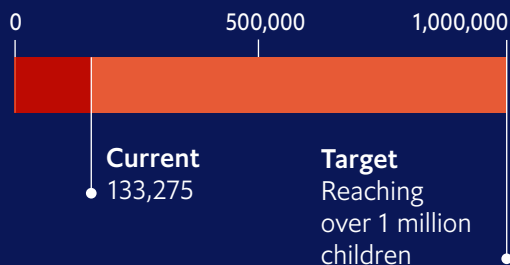
†We have met the 50% threshold in the United Kingdom and the United States.



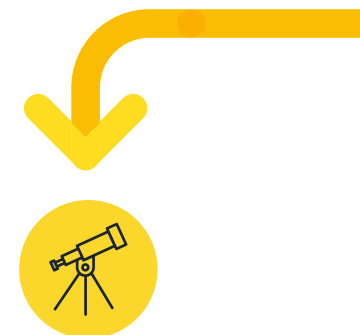
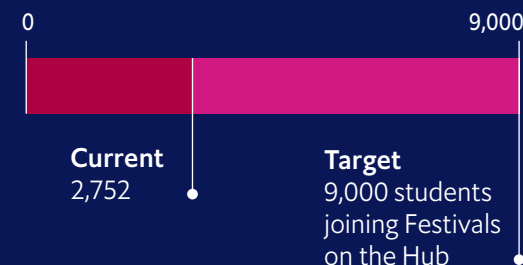
Children having regular news discussions



Children reached by Topical Talk resources



Children taking part in Topical Talk Festival



## Next year

We aim to double our account holders and increase the percentage of ongoing-regular users to 5% of Topical Talk account holders. We'll also focus on driving up our target for reaching underserved children through targeted marketing campaigns and strategic educational partnerships.

\*To access Topical Talk, teachers set up a Topical Talk online account. This allows us to collect data on the content that teachers are using and how regularly they are engaging. Our annual reporting data is from July 2022 – June 2023

# Topical Talk Headlines



This year  
we created

50

## Headline resources

It takes two weeks to produce a one-hour Topical Talk Headline. These resources go through a rigorous editorial process in line with that of *The Economist* newspaper.

## Headline creation process



Trained teachers research engaging topics in the news



They draft the lesson, which includes teacher instructions and resources, with the help of expert journalists



Fact-checkers review all information



Senior editors at *The Economist* review and give feedback



Designers create a bespoke design for the resource



Senior editors give a final sign-off



### Next year

We're focusing on building more "metacognition" opportunities into lessons, where children can reflect on their skills development.



# Headlines in action

To bring our teaching resources to life, we give students opportunities to have discussions in inspiring professional settings, or we amplify their opinions to a wider audience.

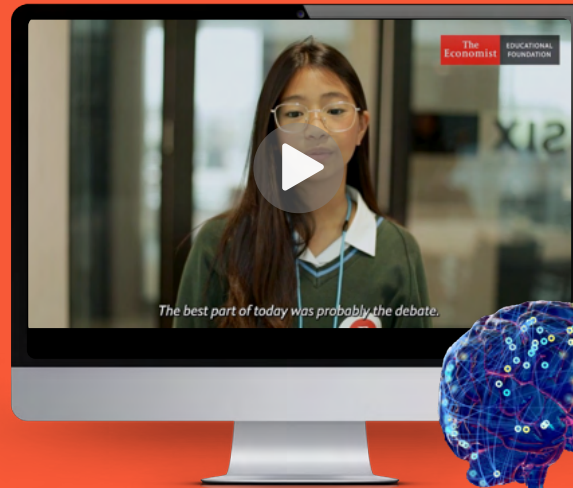
## Running in-person workshops

In July 2023, The Economist Educational Foundation and PA Consulting hosted La Sainte Union Catholic School, United Kingdom, at PA Consulting offices. Students learnt about AI from experts and debated whether it should be paused.

This workshop complimented a series of teaching resources on STEM topics, supported by PA Consulting, which enabled children to discuss exciting ways that science, technology, engineering and maths shape the world.



Watch the video here



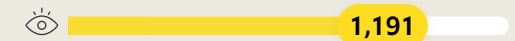
“

They are excellently produced, thought-provoking resources that lead young people to critique a wide range of contemporary, important events and ideas.

Teacher,  
United Kingdom

## Most popular topics by downloads

Andrew Tate: misogyny online



The global food crisis



Social media - are schools doing enough?



Plastics and the planet



Rishi Sunak: should maths be compulsory?



Total downloads:

**61,195**

Explore our [resource library](#) to find more topics!



## Giving young voices a platform

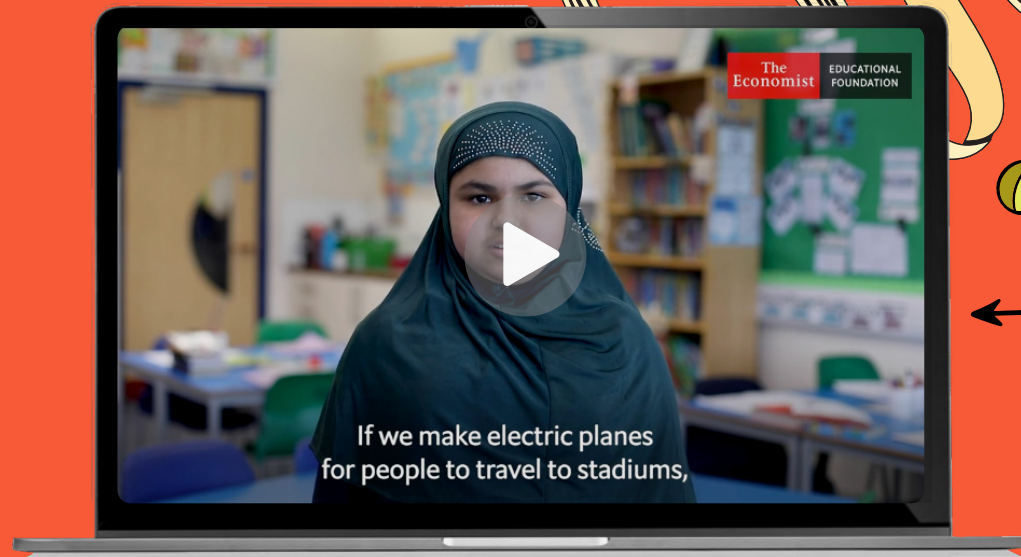
In February 2023, The Economist Educational Foundation visited Lyons Hall Primary School in Braintree, United Kingdom. Students discussed how sports and sustainability collide and generated ideas about how to make their favourite sports better for the planet.

This Topical Talk discussion was given a platform on an Economist website with an influential global audience of business leaders. This project was sponsored by Infosys.

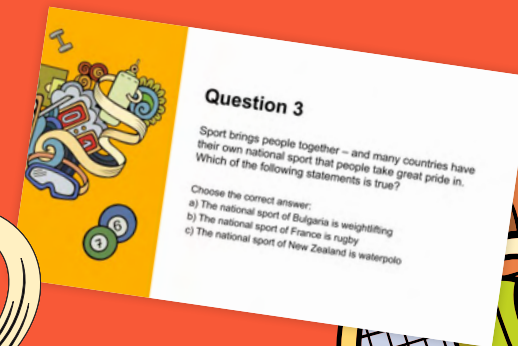
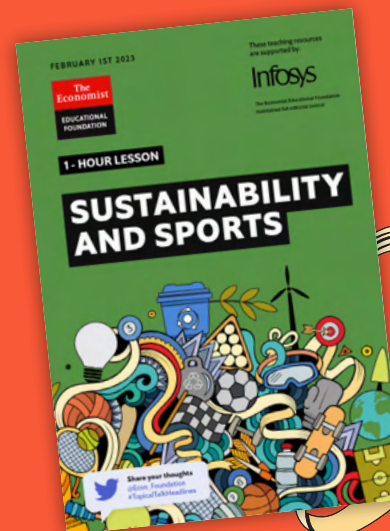
“

I love the mixture of group discussion, interactive activities, videos, and posters. The lessons are always varied and engaging.

Teacher, Romania



Watch the video here



# Topical Talk Special Editions





# Topical Talk Special Editions

For teachers who want to explore a news story in more detail, we provide deep-dive packages of resources on a specific topic. Each package has six hours' worth of lesson material.

Special Editions take up  
**12 weeks** to develop

This year our Special Editions reached  
**over 25,000 children**



## Numeracy in the News: data decisions

From fickle facts to data decisions, this Special Edition investigated why numbers in the news are important and how numeracy can be used to make sense of the world.

Created with support from data experts at *The Economist*, the lessons helped 10- to 16-year-olds explore examples in the news, hear from data journalists and interrogate the reliability of data.

“

The [Numeracy in the News] resources where relevant to lots of areas of learning. The stimulating materials increased students' knowledge and understanding of the world as well as their skills for communication and participation in the world around them in a meaningful and enjoyable way. They really felt that they could all have success.

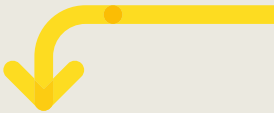
Teacher, United Kingdom



## War reporting: is it beneficial?

In 2022, war replaced disease as the topic people got the most news about. But what challenges do journalists face? What's the best way to report about wars? And why is it sometimes difficult for news consumers to find reliable information?

This fully-resourced set of lessons took students on a journey to explore war reporting and the role of journalists during wartime, with contributions from war reporters across several media organisations.



## Next year

We're introducing competitions linked to our teaching resources, giving giving children the chance to win prizes based on their written, audio or video submissions.





# Topical Talk Festival



# Topical Talk Festival

This year, we piloted a new programme, Topical Talk Festivals.

Topical Talk Festivals offer school children the opportunity to connect with peers across the world, engage with leading professionals and topic experts and gain recognition for their school on a global stage.

We ran two pilot festivals which were exclusively available to state-funded schools or schools with a high proportion of underserved students.



Read the Festival Hub Highlights magazine

## What happens during a Topical Talk Festival?



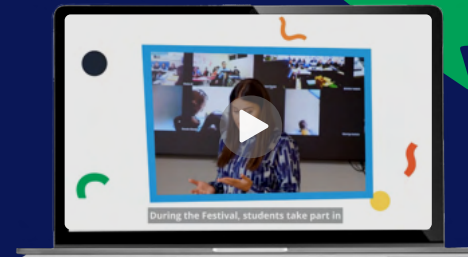
Teachers facilitate discussions in the classroom about global news issues



Students join online discussions with peers from around the world to continue developing their viewpoints on these topics



They hear from topic experts and volunteers from corporate organisations help them hone their skills



Watch the video here



At the end of a Festival students can submit Standpoints, their final say the topics they've covered



Festival Awards are given to the most impressive students and classes



Want to hear more?

[Find our more about Festivals](#)

# Topical Talk Festival

**18** countries took part

**23,000+** comments from children

**161** classes participated

**2,752** students engaged

**165** corporate volunteers and topic experts supported discussions



“

It was special because I could interact with other students and the topic specialists helped us to build knowledge.

● Student, Nigeria

“

I have learnt how to generate new ideas and solutions in collaboration with others for different problems.

● Student, Uganda

“

Everyone in my class loves the discussions and listening to the opinions of others.

● Student, United Kingdom

“

I've learnt that there is always a community that will help you change or evolve the way you think without being disrespectful.

● Student, United States

“

I am filled with excitement and joy when discussing the Festival topics on an online platform with my friends at school.

● Student, United Kingdom

“

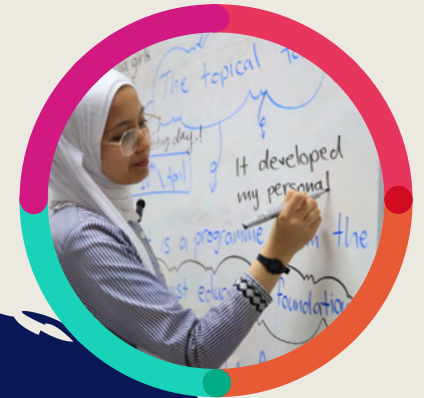
The best thing about the Topical Talk Festival is that the questions make you think about the topics for a long time and help you to open your mind.

● Student, Romania

“

I learnt how to present my opinion respectfully to others in such a way that will engage them in discussion, even if we think differently.

● Student, Pakistan



“

I am now more confident to talk about topics that can be sensitive. The lesson plans are done for me so I can concentrate on quality interactions with my pupils instead of searching for the right information to teach.

● Teacher, Nigeria

“

I enjoyed watching my pupils find their own voice and be able to express their views. Even the quietest pupils joined the online discussions and were able to contribute with valuable comments.

● Teacher, United Kingdom



“

It made me think about how to approach the news in a way that was more intelligible to students and also in a way which was relatable for them. For example, how the protests in Iran were connected to gender inequality and why they should care about this issue.

● Teacher, Romania

“

The festival made me and my students think about problems differently. Their critical thinking developed and their problem-solving skills were polished through the online discussions. Students enjoyed the different perspectives brought by peers from all around the world. They felt confident to share their expertise.

● Teacher, Pakistan

“

The way the students were asking questions to the experts was great to see. It was valuable to see spotlighted comments of students from different schools and I was taken aback at the way children look at issues and share their views.

● Teacher, India

“

It's gotten me more excited to keep my students updated on current and real life events. Most of my students only know about local or regional situations. But Topical Talk has broadened their mindsets and they now see that different people around the world face similar issues.

● Teacher, United States



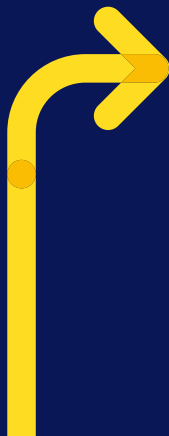


We want Topical Talk Festivals to drive regular engagement with our resources. It was promising to see that teachers who engage with a Festival are more likely to use Topical Talk regularly.

**39%** of teachers who took part in a Festival were regular users. This compares with 14% of teachers who didn't take part in a Festival.

**93%** of teachers reported an increase in their motivation having participated in a Festival.

**90%** of children reported an increase in their enjoyment of school because of Festivals.



#### Next year

We're doubling the size of Topical Talk Festival.

# Case study

**Bomas School, Nigeria**  
**Part of the British Council partnership**  
**Teacher: Bosede Obende**

*Edited by TEEF for clarity*

“  
Topical Talk has been  
so exciting and a time  
of great learning for us  
and our children!



● Bomas School, Nigeria

## Why we took part in Topical Talk Festival

As a school, we look out for ways where we can engage our children globally. The Festival has helped us with that, especially by providing news children can engage with. It's also helped us see how to push our students' knowledge forward and how to expose them to global issues as well as local issues.

Our main goal taking part in the Festival has been to get our students to a place where they are globally-minded. The Festival worked well as we already work with the Sustainable Development Goals which are covered by the lessons. The Festival has given us more ideas as teachers for covering these goals and it's helped us to understand the steps to help our children have deeper understanding.

## Who the Festival works for

When we start picking the children for Topical Talk, we actually start picking some from our grade 3 (aged 9+), because we believe that we need to bring in these discussions early. We started with students from the lower grades. Now, the lower grades initially were not able to bring their points together, but as we walk through it using the resources, it got better and better for them. They began to understand it. It's a gradual process where we are building experience over time.

## The impact of the Festival

The Festival is especially impactful when we talk about writing. When we talk about bringing our points together, it's really helped now for younger children to discuss and then form their opinions to write. The Festival has

made a difference to how developed our children's answers are. Initially, when I'd ask children to write an answer, they'd go straight to the point without elaborating. Maybe a one-line answer. Now, through discussions in Topical Talk, they were able to write, say, 400 words for their Standpoints. They are able to draw out their thinking. My students were also keen on the audio Standpoint opportunity and producing them has helped with their speaking skills.

For some of our children they don't have exposure to the news, especially not things happening now. Topical Talk means they are actually able to hear about it.

The children were particularly interested in the "Strikes" lesson because at the moment, this is something they have seen in Nigeria, it's close to home. There are also topics, like the Metaverse, that feel far away from them but the lesson allowed them to build understanding. And so, for me, the Festival really broadened knowledge and experiences. It has also improved critical-thinking and problem-solving skills because when they come up with ideas, they are interrogating them more and asking themselves "will this work, what do I need to think about?" They're learning daily that these skills are needed for daily living and it's something they will keep on applying.

Topical Talk has tremendously impacted the school, the teachers and the students. They're all learning and we are learning together.



# Teacher support and development



# Teacher support and development

“

Topical Talk has helped me to restructure my questions in the classroom to promote better discussions and critical thinking.

Teacher, Nigeria



Meaningful, lasting impact through Topical Talk comes from in-depth, regular discussions about the news. But in today's schools, finding the space for these can be a real challenge.

Although 76% of teachers feel more motivated in their teaching as a result of teaching Topical Talk lessons\*, they face pressures and challenges which can prevent them from achieving the meaningful impact they desire.

Our strategy is to give teachers the support and training they need for weekly Topical Talk sessions over at least a couple of months.

We direct our teacher support towards teachers who serve high levels of students from underserved backgrounds.

In order to target our support appropriately and develop place-based, bespoke collaboration with educators, we've established regional hub partnerships in educational communities in the United Kingdom and United States this year. You can read about these inaugural partnerships over the following pages.

\*Survey of 114 Topical Talk account holders, 2023

## Our support offer is...



### Targeted:

We identify teachers and education leaders who:

- Work with children who need Topical Talk most
- Have the passion and capacity to take on the challenge



### Motivating:

We motivate them to use our resources for regular discussions through:

- Inspiring communications including tips and webinars
- Training that develops them into experts at high-quality topical class discussions
- Opportunities for their students to receive prestigious awards and recognition



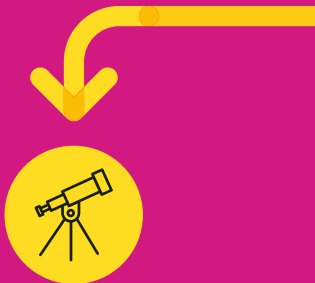
### Place-based and relationship- driven:

Wherever possible, we design and implement support in collaboration with our teachers, where they are. This enables us to:

- Meet their unique needs
- Support effective implementation through close relationships



**Long-term:** Embedding regular news discussions in schools as a lasting practice requires long-term support, so we make long-term commitments to the schools we work with closely.



## Next year

We're going to deepen our work in the communities we've built relationships with and launch new partnerships.



# United States partnership: Clayton County Public Schools



- 02 visits to Clayton County
- 10+ classrooms visited
- 05 hours of teacher training delivered
- 05 middle schools participated in the pilot

Clayton County Public Schools (CCPS) serve a high number of students from low-income households\*. The school district is particularly invested in providing innovative opportunities for their students to develop into highly-skilled global citizens.

Teachers from five CCPS middle schools piloted our Topical Talk programme between July 2022 and May 2023. They attended teacher training, ran Topical Talk Festival with over 20 classes and measured the impact of Topical Talk on their students.



“We loved it, absolutely loved it! Highlights included: the students being able to express their opinions; using facts to do so; and being more of a participatory citizen by knowing what’s going on around them. It made students feel that you can have a discourse and disagree and be respectful. You can speak and use facts to support your point of view. It’s helped them with making a more credible argument.”

Raquel Mason,  
Academic Coach,  
Pointe South  
Middle School,  
United States

“The Black Panther topic was a great opportunity to give my thoughts on the lack of representation in the media for minorities. It was enjoyable to hear everyone’s thoughts.”

Student, United States

\*[usnews.com/education/k12/georgia/districts/clayton-county-109770](https://usnews.com/education/k12/georgia/districts/clayton-county-109770)

“

Topical Talk's impact on Clayton County Public Schools has been nothing short of remarkable. We've unlocked new horizons of learning, igniting our students' minds and reinvigorating our educators' passions. In alignment with our Superintendent's vision, we're 'Building a better tomorrow, today'.

Vikki Glover, Coordinator of Advanced Learning and Gifted, Clayton County Public Schools, United States

## Partnership pathway

**01.**

### **Introduction session**

We trained teachers on Topical Talk techniques to gain support for the pilot

**02.**

### **School visits and training**

During a week-long visit to Clayton County, we visited classrooms, modelled lessons, met with the executive leadership team, interviewed teachers and students and delivered bespoke training to participating teachers

**03.**

### **Festivals**

CCPS students participated in both the 2022 and 2023 Festivals, winning global awards and joining thousands of students from around the world.

**04.**

### **Developing a three-year plan**

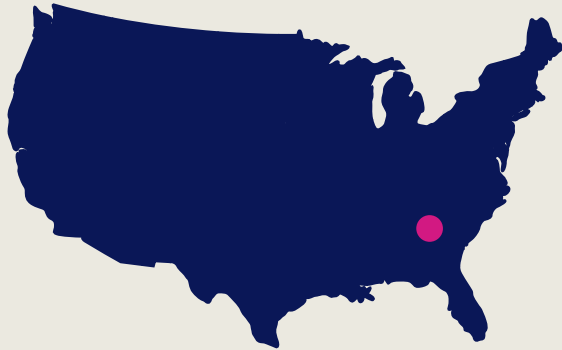
Following this pilot, we're developing a long-term plan to embed Topical Talk across the district



# Case study

**Adamson Middle School, United States**  
**Part of the Clayton County Public**  
**Schools partnership**  
**Teacher: Kelcey Wright**

*Edited by TEEF for clarity*



● Clayton County, United States

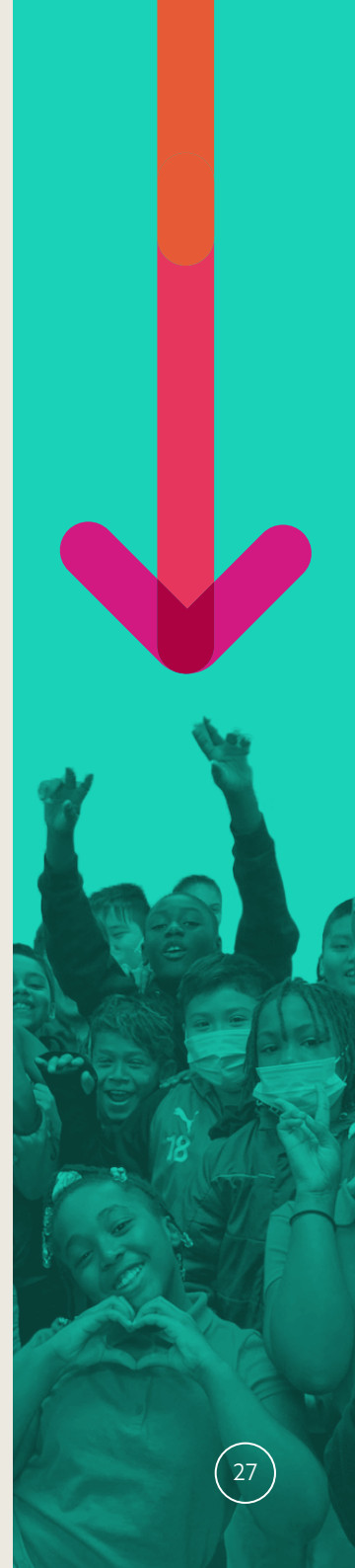
Topical Talk has been absolutely amazing. It has really given our students an opportunity to engage in academic discussion and discourse. They have been having very high levels of discussion within the classroom. Students are actually finding themselves interested in topics that they thought were not relevant to them. I love when I go into the classrooms to watch the students working on different topics with the teacher, it's like a different level of engagement. They are so engaged. They say: "Okay, Mr. Wright, don't say anything to us. We're trying to figure this out. We have to finish this task. We have summons." They responded so well to the challenge. And it is challenging. It involves rigour, it involves current events, and it involves civic engagement. So I think all of those things really have made the Festival what it is.

The student's favourite topic was about the protest in Iran, which surprised me. I thought that they were going to respond to the space topic, or maybe the Black Panther one because they might feel closer to those topics. But the one they got involved in was the one with the protest in Iran. It was very eye-opening for them and they were able to work through difficult conversations and decisions.

## Impact on teaching

Topical Talk has also had a positive effect on my teaching and the teaching of colleagues. I've noticed a stronger use of planned academic discussion with differentiation, including high-level questioning. Teachers are bringing a focus on high inquiry into their daily teachings. When I go around the classrooms, I can see that happening more. One teacher has even begun to model his lessons on Topical Talk now. He said: "Hey, I think I want all my lessons to be built in this manner". So he and I are going to sit down and try to see if we can play with some of his lessons for next semester and adapt them to bring in more questions, like in Topical Talk.

Most of our teachers running Topical Talk are also social studies teachers. So they have an extra lens to look through related to their content. They can help students make connections between Topical Talk topics and their subject content. So they're adding it to their regular everyday instruction as well.





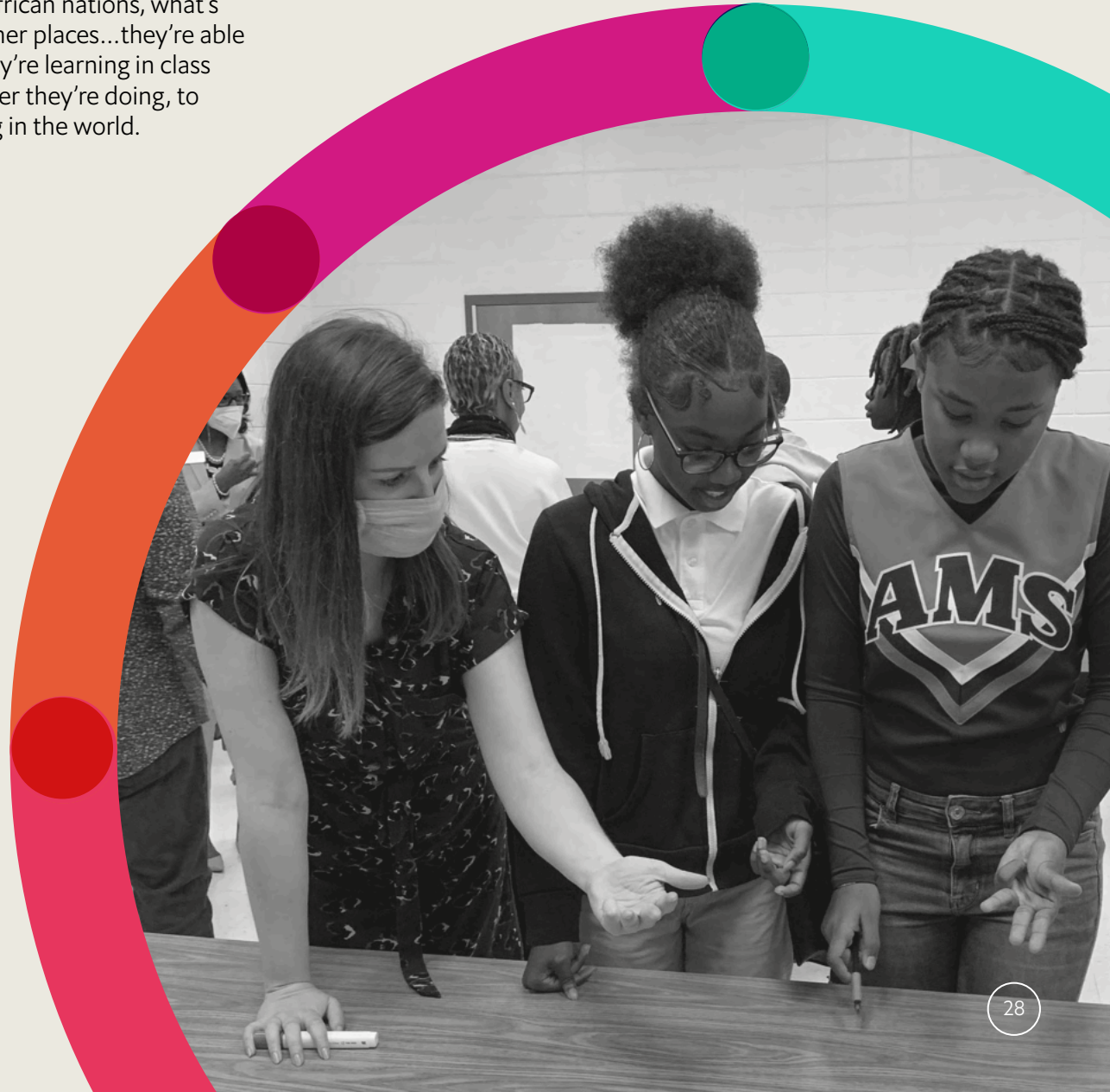
## Impact on students

Topical Talk has had a significant positive impact on the students' learning and even their learning expectation for themselves. They've realised they can do more than they thought they could because of the Festival. It's made kids who I know did not like school, who struggle to stay focused in school, re-engage during Topical Talk.

I could tell when Topical Talk was being run in classrooms because I'd see their demeanors change. They're happy, they're excited, they're energised. They're keen to share their opinions in the discussions. Topical Talk has really amplified the student voice in a way that has taken the students' learning to the next level. It's also opened their awareness to wanting to know what's happening around the world beyond just what's happening right here in Clayton County. I think their thoughts have been broadened to a bigger horizon for them to think globally instead of just locally. That's important.

Students' communication skills have definitely increased. They're paying more attention in class. They've got to a point where they want to talk. And if they have an opinion about something, I've noticed that they have learned to approach their opinion in a more diplomatic way where they can respectfully explain what they want to say and support their claims with evidence. So using all their skills, discussion skills and critical-thinking skills in order to prove their point, they're able to do that now.

Students are also being more creative in their problem-solving. They start to think outside the box. They're starting to draw on what they're learning about different contexts around the world. What's happening in Great Britain, what's happening in Europe, what's happening in African nations, what's happening in these other places...they're able to synthesise what they're learning in class and apply it to whatever they're doing, to whatever is happening in the world.



# United Kingdom partnership: Aspirations Academies Trust



- 11 visits to Aspirations Academies schools
- 09 teachers participated in a pilot
- 04 Leadership Programme teacher training workshops
- 13 classes took part in Topical Talk Festival
- 01 celebration event

Aspirations Academies work in some of the most deprived areas of the United Kingdom, where many young people are not provided with opportunities to develop essential skills or learn about the world beyond their immediate community experience. The Aspirations vision of education as something that should be future-focused and horizon-broadening is a natural fit with the The Economist Educational Foundation's mission and the pilot aligned itself against the trust's own skills framework.

We recruited nine teachers from across eight Aspirations Academies schools to participate in our pilot Topical Talk Teacher Leadership Programme. Teachers attended four sessions and ran an action-research project within their schools where they embedded and evaluated Topical Talk. 13 classes also took part in the Topical Talk Festival 2023.



● Aspiration Academies Trust, United Kingdom

“

[Topical Talk] has helped [students] to see connections between things. So when we've looked at topical stories, it's helped them to not see them in isolation. I think quite a lot of the time in the curriculum, it feels like you teach history and it doesn't link to something else, or you're teaching our RE and it doesn't link to something else. But Topical Talk [...] links all of those things together. And I think it's helped the children see those links.

Teacher,  
Bovington Academy,  
United Kingdom



“

I've found Topical Talk a really useful tool to easily get all the staff engaged with because it was so easy to follow. It has got the students getting up and speaking – even some of the ones that are a bit quiet to start with. They actually start speaking especially on the topics they're really interested in. They've also loved doing the Festival competition element online.

Teacher, United Kingdom



## Partnership pathway

01.

### Recruitment

We recruited teachers from across the Aspirations network to take part in the pilot training programme.

02.

### Training launch

We delivered dynamic in-person training to launch the programme and build teacher buy-in.

03.

### Online workshops

Teachers joined online workshops to build leadership skills and develop project planning and reporting techniques.

04.

### Festival

Hundreds of students across 13 classes took part in Topical Talk Festival 2023 where they engaged with global perspectives.

05.

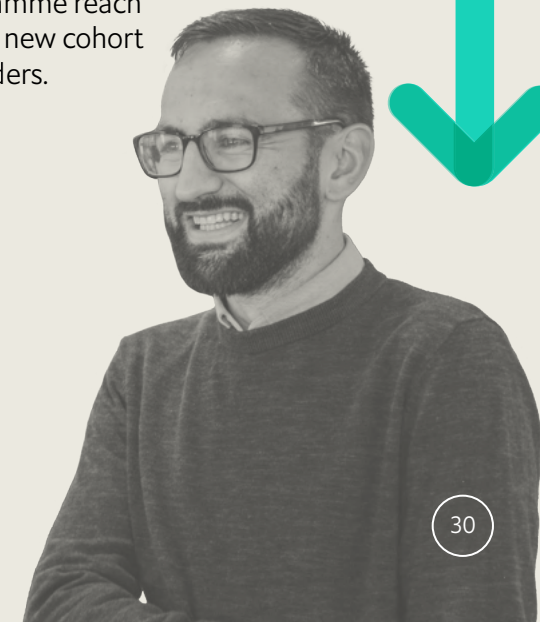
### Celebration event

In June, teachers came together to share their projects and present on the impact of Topical Talk in their classrooms.

06.

### Phase two

We now begin phase two of the partnership to deepen the impact of Topical Talk in the pilot schools and broaden the programme reach with a new cohort of leaders.



# Case study

**Rivers Academy West London,  
United Kingdom,  
Part of the Aspirations  
Academies partnership  
Teacher: Ella Marshall**

*Edited by TEEF for clarity*



● Rivers Academy West London, United Kingdom

## Building confidence in students

I've really noticed a difference in the students that don't tend to put up their hand in lessons and don't tend to ask questions. Topical Talk has sparked interest amongst these students. They've come forward in the debates and asked questions in lessons, which has been absolutely lovely to see, because that is so hard to do as a teacher, to be able to build that confidence up in them. It's the structure of the activities that has made them feel secure to engage.

They've built crucial knowledge before moving onto debates so they know what they're going to come to the discussion with. They've discussed it with their team or small group before bringing it to the class, so they're able to have that confidence to be able to speak in front of a class. A lot of the engagement has come through this confidence. Students are able to feel: "I know what I'm talking about; I've got a question for this; I know how to relate it to my life". And that's just been lovely to see.

## Using the Skills Builder Framework

When it comes to the Skills Builder Skills, I've found them good to use. Skills Builder is clear and in child-friendly language which my students understand. We are taking this learning to apply it to the Trust's skills framework.

Looking at specific skills and steps and showing the students, this is the skill that we're working on today, this is how you can use it outside of school and later in life, in careers and things like that has been very successful. It gives children more of a purpose and meaning

behind that learning. As a teacher, I really like being able to link how relevant a skill is in Topical Talk, in another lesson, to how you use it outside of school and then again in careers. That's a really powerful and really easy template to apply broadly.

## Skills and knowledge development

Listening has been drawn out as a skill so much. Every single teacher I've spoken to over the last couple of weeks has mentioned listening in particular, because it's actually a really complex skill to not just wait for someone to speak but actually listen and digest what they've said so that a discussion can flow and build upon each other's points rather than being like, as one teacher described it, a series of monologues. I teach a lot of the year seven and year eight classes, so I've been able to deliver Topical Talk lessons multiple times to different abilities and ages. For each activity you can see the different sets and the different abilities take on the task and take on the skills. With the higher sets, it's easier to look across the higher levels in the Skills Builder Framework. And then with the lower abilities, we can see development across the levels.

Higher sets may perhaps have a wider vocabulary or be able to articulate reasons better for whatever reason, but Topical Talk also worked really well in a mixed ability setting, because you had the modelling of the range of abilities. Or for lower sets by targeting lower steps on the Skills Builder Framework. Topical Talk has had a massive effect on students' knowledge and understanding of current affairs. We've been able to bring in knowledge from lessons like the world

“

[Students] have built crucial knowledge before moving onto debates so they know what they're going to come to the discussion with.



hunger resource, and build that into their understanding of healthy lifestyles. They were so fascinated by that broader knowledge. And they are able to use their knowledge and the facts in the next sequence of lessons. They can link that knowledge through the lessons, which has been really good.

### **Applying knowledge and skills outside of Topical Talk**

In terms of how students are using what they learn in Topical Talk lessons across the curriculum, they've been able to access and use real-life scenarios in discussions and apply the skills to other tasks. An example is that before Topical Talk, I might have taught a lesson on energy drinks, which would be focused on short-term effects and long-term effects. Students would only use what we covered in the lesson to form opinions. Whereas now they've had a chance to take part in Topical Talk discussions where they gain relevant knowledge from the news. In this case, following a Topical Talk lesson on gaming regulations, they brought their knowledge into the lesson and linked this to the discussion around regulations in food and drink. They used their knowledge and their speaking and listening skills to consider and ask questions around why corner shops are still selling drinks to children but why a store like Tesco is not. So, you can see how Topical Talk has opened up a lot of discussion.

If I just delivered that lesson without the Topical Talk discussions and approaches then we wouldn't have had that discussion.



# Impact





# Impact

Topical Talk builds knowledge about the news and develops four essential skills: speaking, listening, problem-solving and creativity.

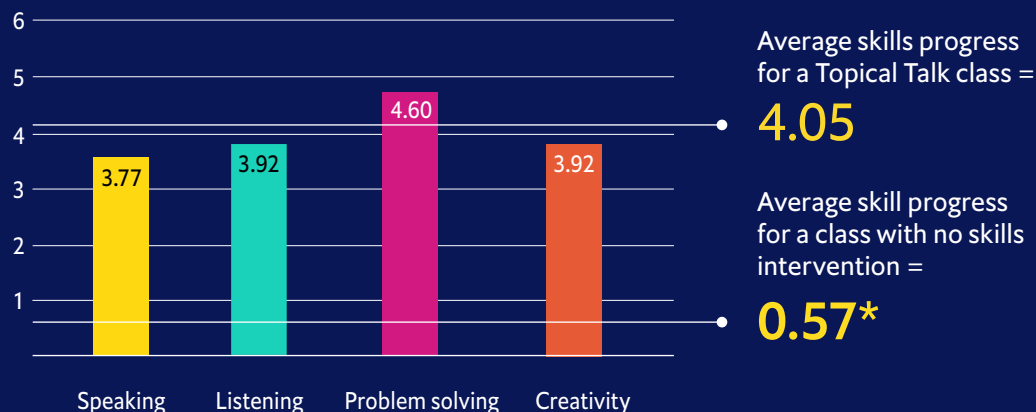
We use the Skills Builder Universal Framework to measure skills progress. We support teachers to assess their class prior to using Topical Talk and after using Topical Talk regularly for at least six weeks.



Skills Builder  
Universal  
Framework

Children who engage regularly with Topical Talk lessons **make up to 7x the progress of their peers** who have no skills interventions.

*Our skills data come exclusively from teachers serving high proportions of underserved children.*



Topical Talk lessons cover a broad range of topics in the news. By taking part in regular discussions, students are able to build knowledge of the global themes and contexts that inform and connect current affairs.

**94%**

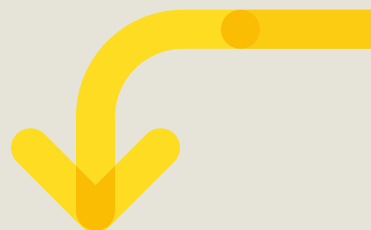
of teachers strongly agreed that Topical Talk increased students' knowledge of the news and the issues surrounding it.



“

The lesson activities underpin many areas of learning and spark pupils' interest to find out more. They connect the topics and debates to others they have covered.

Teacher, United States



**Next year**

We'll create tools and deliver training to support teachers to feel confident in their impact measurement of our programmes.

# Thank you

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