



**THE
WELL
TEACHER**



WEBINAR

The Teacher Voice During COVID-19

Webinar Handout

OCTOBER 2020



WEBINAR: THE TEACHER VOICE DURING COVID-19

Presented by humanworks and the Surrey Voice Clinic



Wade Repta, author of *The Well Teacher* and Vice President of humanworks consulting group inc., and Sherri Zelazny, Registered Speech-Language Pathologist and Clinical Director of the Surrey Voice Clinic, hosted a webinar on **The Teacher Voice During COVID-19**, for BCTF members.

Voice dysfunction is a growing concern for teachers. Due to COVID-19 and the demands associated with wearing masks, there are more questions than ever. Topics covered in this webinar include:

- The structure and function of our vocal instrument
- Vocal hygiene
- Vocal health in the classroom (including voice use with masks and using masks with voice amplification systems)
- Identifying voice disorders
- The ergonomics of voice
- Accommodation and voice dysfunction

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TIPS FOR VOCAL HEALTH AND IMPROVING COMMUNICATION WITH A MASK

Surrey Voice Clinic

Dynamic Vocal Health Across the Lifespan

Teachers are professional voice users. Voice care should always be a top priority for teachers, especially now with the added burden of speaking through a mask. Here are some steps and recommendations for maintaining your voice and vocal health.

Keeping your instrument healthy

1. Healthy body, healthy voice.
 - a. Stay well hydrated.
 - b. Sleep well.
 - c. Exercise – even a daily 10-minute walk will help.
 - Take a stretch break during the school day with the kids. A good stretch will help everyone.
 - d. Develop good strategies to manage stress:
 - Awareness
 - Breathing relaxation
 - Positive mantras such as “I am a good teacher.” “I am taking the right steps to manage risk.” “I make a difference in these kids’ lives.”
 - Mindfulness
 - Support from family, friends, counselor, BCTF Health and Wellness
 - e. Do not work through illness or laryngitis.
2. Know about reflux. Manage reflux events and symptoms.
3. Do not suck on menthol cough or throat lozenges during the day. Menthol is not meant to be used long-term. Menthol is an irritant and can contribute to laryngeal irritation and coughing.
4. If you feel throat dryness or irritation, sucking on any hard candy or having some fruit will help your natural hydration system provide hydration to your throat and vocal folds.
5. Add a vocal warm-up and cool-down. You are a vocal athlete! Performing lip trills is a good quick way to warm-up and cool-down your vocal folds. Sing a song with lip trills on your way to school and on your way home.
6. Know signs and symptoms of a voice disorder. Hoarseness, vocal effort, and vocal fatigue are not normal. Voice exercises and strategies can eliminate repeated patterns and chronic hoarseness and vocal fatigue.
7. Do not ignore early signs of voice changes.
8. Seek an evaluation by an Otolaryngologist (ENT) or qualified Speech-Language Pathologist if you experience voice changes for more than two weeks unrelated to an illness.



TIPS FOR VOCAL HEALTH AND IMPROVING COMMUNICATION WITH A MASK

Improving your general environment

1. Move away from or eliminate background noise (fans, typing, hallway noise, outdoor noise, etc.)
2. Use more text to supplement verbal communication.
3. Do not compete with other talkers.
4. Use amplification in the classroom.

Recommendations to help improve communication with a mask

1. Make sure your mask fits well. You should be able to speak and yawn without displacing the mask from your mouth or nose.
2. Maintain eye contact with your communication partner.
3. Slow your rate of speech. Do not emphasize with loudness.
4. Pause between sentences.
5. Exaggerate speech, over-articulate. Use clear crisp speech. Speak as if you were leaving a voicemail message.

6. Use more gestures.
7. Ask and encourage clarifying questions when needed.
8. Use healthy voice and speaking technique – try not to push your voice from your throat.
9. Use pursed lip breathing (pretend you are slowly sucking in a piece of spaghetti) to help relax your larynx during breathing when inhaling.
10. Use lip trills to relax and reset your voice – (with physical distancing!).
11. Consider a mask with maximum space in front of mouth.
 - Singer's mask
<https://www.broadwayreliefproject.com/singersmask>
 - Mask brackets
https://www.amazon.ca/s?k=face+mask+brackets&i=tools&ref=nb_sb_noss_1
12. Make sure your amplification system is working well and gets charged as needed.



SURREY VOICE CLINIC - REFERENCES

References/Resources:

https://emoryvoicecenter.blogspot.com/2020/05/can-i-communicate-effectivelywith.html?fbclid=IwAR2Z-IjnIKXWIVvMk3Vx5rkXHBQEw2k_iWcCmgsGIPkplvH_ZoHdg0CXdE Accessed 25 August 2020

<https://www.asha.org/public/Communicating-Effectively-While-Wearing-Masks-and-Physical-Distancing/> Accessed August 15, 2020

<https://healthtalk.unhealthcare.org/4-tips-for-communicating-while-wearing-a-mask/> Accessed August 15, 2020

<https://leader.pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/masks-pose-barriers-for-people-with-hearing-loss-heres-a-novel-solution/full/> Accessed August 15, 2020

Wearing a mask with hearing aids: <https://www.boystownhospital.org/knowledge-center/wearing-hearing-aids-with-face-mask> Accessed August 15, 2020

@voicemedicineaustralia FB post Accessed August 8, 2020

<https://www.mindful.org/>

https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-athletes-way/201905/longer-exhalations-are-easy-way-hack-your-vagusnerve?amp&__twitter_impression=true



THE WELL TEACHER - CHAPTER FIVE: THE TEACHER VOICE

Teachers experience voice challenges due to:

Heavy voice use
Limited recovery time

Exposure to illness

The need to raise vocal volume

Exposure to environmental irritants

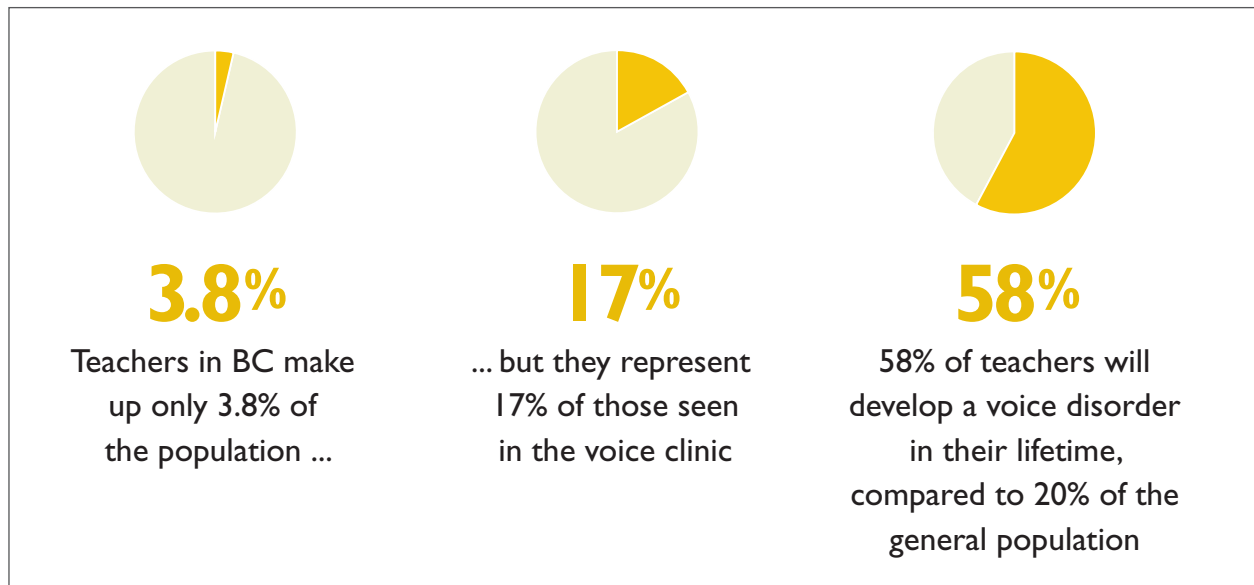
Poor acoustics

Lack of training

Background noise

Distance - gym and playground

Covid changes - mask use, distancing, new roles



From Linda Rammage, Pacific Voice Clinic, 2014

The Ergonomics of voice

- Maintain relaxed, upright, neutral postures whenever possible. Avoid working with your neck flexed towards your chest, and your back hunched into a rolled forward posture.
- Keep your work close to you so you can sit/stand upright, with open airway.
- Take vocal breaks during the day- plan your daily schedule in a way that provides for your vocal needs as well as the needs of your students.



VOICE AMPLIFICATION

The two best providers, in our opinion, are *Front Row* and *Redcat*. *Front Row* has the *ToGo* and *Juno*. *Redcat* has *Access*.

Front Row ToGo comes with a headset mic, but a lapel mic can be substituted.

Juno comes with a pendant style mic.

Access comes with a pendant style mic.

All have mostly pros - the only cons would be individual specifics (ie. you find headset mics uncomfortable).



ToGo



Juno



Access





VOICE AMPLIFICATION

Portable Voice Amplification Systems

These systems have not traditionally been on our recommendation list, but with COVID-19 things have changed, and more teachers require portable options that can be used in multiple locations, or with smaller groups of students.

Consider the *VoiceBuddy*

https://www.specialneedscomputers.ca/index.php?l=product_detail&p=2079

or *Chattervox*

[https://www.specialneedscomputers.ca/index.php?l=search_list&s\[title\]=Y&s\[short_desc\]=Y&s\[full_desc\]=Y&s\[sku\]=Y&s\[match\]=all&s\[cid\]=0&s\[search\]=chattervox](https://www.specialneedscomputers.ca/index.php?l=search_list&s[title]=Y&s[short_desc]=Y&s[full_desc]=Y&s[sku]=Y&s[match]=all&s[cid]=0&s[search]=chattervox).

These links are provided as a guide - we haven't had any personal experience with this provider. You will need to do your homework, or ask for assistance from your Health and Safety team.





ACCOMMODATION FOR VOICE

Accommodation for Voice

The process of managing voice amplification and voice related accommodation is different in each district. Chat with your LP as a start, or go through the BCTF Health and Wellness Program for assistance. Your Health and Safety Officer may be a resource as well.

- Accommodation is based on medical requirements. There is a fine line here, but if you are looking for voice related accommodation speak with your doctor so they are aware of your challenges and can direct you accordingly. You don't need to have a medical condition to request voice amplification, but the district's duty to accommodate your request is different if there is a medical component.
- Voice amplification and requests for altering mic set up based on mask use.
- Cart for amp mobility depending on role.
- Acoustic paneling can help teachers with ongoing voice conditions.
- Depending on severity, there may be a need to consider changing classrooms, or even assignments.
- Bare, concrete walls are not conducive to quality sound in your classroom. Use corkboards, plants, curtains, carpets/ rugs (post COVID-19), paper on the walls, etc. to act as baffling and control reverberation through your space.



RESOURCES

Surrey Voice Clinic

<https://www.surreyvoiceclinic.com/>

The Well Teacher

Chapters on voice, general wellness, physical wellness, and chemical sensitivities, among others.

<https://www.humanworkspress.com/>

BCTF Health and Wellness Program

Referral form online

<https://bctf.ca/wellness/>

Find a Speech Language Pathologist - Speech and Hearing BC

<https://speechandhearingbc.ca/find-a-private-professional/>

Voice Exercises - Straw Technique

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xYDvwvmBIM&t=140s&ab_channel=NCVS456

Sample Voice Exercise Program - See the following page

Voice Exercises provided by Sherri Zelazny appear in *The Well Teacher*, page 184



THE WELL TEACHER - CHAPTER FIVE: THE TEACHER VOICE

VOICE EXERCISES

Specific voice exercises should be directed by a professional. The following is a list of some of the different warm-up, cool-down, and relaxation exercises you may be given by a speech language pathologist.

MINDFULNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breathing Observation Awareness Listening Walking
STRETCHING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stretch arms to ceiling—feel rib expansion Clasp hands in front—stretch arms forward Clasp hands in back—straight arms, gently lift Drop chin to chest, pencil on head, draw small circles
FULL BREATH BREATHING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In through the nose, out through the mouth In through the nose, out with prolonged sigh
MASSAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chewing Tongue stretching Tongue tip to teeth Small face/big face
SEMI-OCCLUDED VOCAL TRACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humming Lip/tongue trill Straw
SPEECH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tongue twisters Nursery rhyme in another language Poem Alliterations Familiar phrase with different emotions

SOME ALLITERATIONS TO TRY:

- Busy as a bee
- Give up the ghost
- Dead as a doornail
- Home sweet home
- Living the life
- Make a mountain out of a molehill
- Method to the madness
- Neck and neck
- Not on your nelly
- Pleased as punch
- Out of order
- Right as rain
- Round robin

EMOTIONS FOR FAMILIAR PHRASE PRACTICE (E.G., “I NEED A PENCIL”)

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| • Angry | • Perky |
| • Annoyed | • Depressed |
| • Joyful | • Maniacal |
| • Sleepy | • Surprised |
| • Jealous | • Mischievous |
| • Flirtatious | • Whiny |
| • Cheerful | • Other |

Source: Sherri K. Zelazny, RSLP, CCC-SLP