

THE CASE FOR  
**THE ARTS**  
IN SCHOOLS

ARTS EDUCATION  
RAPID EVIDENCE REVIEWS

## ARTS EDUCATION RAPID EVIDENCE REVIEWS

# THE CASE FOR THE ARTS IN SCHOOLS

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In 2025 the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and the Cultural Learning Alliance (CLA) co-commissioned three Rapid Evidence Reviews (RERs) in Dance, Music and Drama. Three of the Reviews were published in May 2026. A recent existing Rapid Evidence Review of Art, Craft and Design (published in 2022) will be updated during 2026. A Rapid Evidence Review is a research method designed to quickly gather, analyse, and summarise existing research on a given topic.

The four RERs collectively provide a substantial evidence base:

- 463 studies (2000-2021 – to be updated 2026)
- 70 studies (2004-2024)
- 351 studies (2004-2024)
- 291 studies (2004-2024)

They represent a total of spanning different methodologies, contexts, age groups, and geographical locations, though primarily focused on English-language research from the US and UK. The RERs take the view that multiple evidence sources and the use of narrative review deepen understandings and offer useful evidence and interpretations (Greenhalgh et al., 2018).<sup>i</sup>

The Reviews are an RSC/CLA co-commission. They have been developed in a collaboration between the CLA and the Royal Shakespeare Company through the RSC's role as an Independent Research Organisation, and with the support of the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership (which brings together eight leading universities across the Midlands). The work has been overseen by Professor Pat Thomson, CLA's Senior Evidence Associate.

The Reviews support the CLA [Arts Education Capabilities Framework](#) and also outline a future research agenda.

There are plans to create an Arts Education Evidence Hub (see pages 12-13) following consultation work as part of an RSC/CLA feasibility study funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies. It is hoped that the Evidence Hub will provide a long-term home for the Rapid Evidence Reviews and will take forward the agenda for future Arts education research.

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## A. SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF THE RAPID EVIDENCE REVIEWS

The Rapid Evidence Reviews in Art, Craft & Design, Dance, Drama and Music education show that each discipline is a powerful support for holistic development, touching every aspect of a child's/young person's growth. The four expressive art forms develop social learning and build connections between young people through the collaborations inherent in music-making, dance, art making, and performance. The expressive Arts are languages that transcend cultural and linguistic differences, breaking down social barriers and creating inclusive environments where young people from diverse heritages and contexts find common ground and mutual understanding. In summary:

- Each expressive Arts discipline offers distinct **domain-specific knowledges and technical skills**.
- All four disciplines deliver **substantial cognitive benefits** that are relatively consistent across art forms.
- **Agency and personal development** were the most significant benefits across all four reviews.
- **Identity formation** (being and becoming) benefits from the approaches offered through the pedagogies of the different art forms.
- The four art forms offer distinctive yet complementary pathways for **empowerment and active citizenship**.
- **Health and wellbeing** benefits span both physical and mental dimensions across all four disciplines.
- All four expressive Arts disciplines offer **alternative pathways to success and engagement** for children who may not benefit from other academic subjects.
- The research reviews consistently demonstrate that the **benefits of Art, Craft and Design, Dance, Drama and Music education extend far beyond the development of artistic practices, though intrinsic benefits are crucial**.

## B. OVERVIEW OF THE FOUR RAPID EVIDENCE REVIEWS READ TOGETHER

Each expressive Arts discipline offers distinct, valuable **domain-specific knowledges and technical skills**. Students develop deep understandings of the histories, genres, media, dispositions and interpretations in each discipline. They develop discipline-based practices and ways of knowing. For example, drawing develops observation practices and provides tools for visualising thoughts and ideas. Music education builds auditory discrimination and rhythmic understandings. Dance develops spatial awareness and embodied understandings. Drama develops performance knowledges and skills, understanding of theatrical conventions and dramatic texts, and facility with oral communication. These domain-specific knowledges and skills are important learning outcomes that contribute to children's overall educational development and cultural literacies.

All four disciplines deliver **substantial cognitive benefits** that are relatively consistent across art forms. They enhance concentration, memory, problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking by engaging multiple cognitive processes simultaneously in complementary ways. Dance integrates rhythm, spatial relationships, physical coordination, and creative expression. Music education demands integration of auditory processing, fine motor skills, mathematical understanding of rhythm and pattern, and creative interpretation. Art, Craft and Design develops visual-spatial skills, aesthetic awareness, technical proficiency, and conceptual thinking. Drama combines imaginative thinking, textual interpretation, emotional awareness, and embodied cognition. Research suggests that this multi-faceted cognitive engagement appears to strengthen thinking and executive functions in ways that may support other areas of learning, with evidence suggesting potential benefits across literacy, numeracy, and broader academic achievement.

**Agency and personal development** were the most significant benefits across all four Reviews. The Art, Craft and Design RER has agency as the most researched benefit, suggesting that the subject area provides unique opportunities for self-expression and creativity. Similarly, the Dance, Music, and Drama Reviews all document substantial evidence of participation which helps young people develop resilience, self-discipline, and a stronger sense of identity. Children/young people develop confidence and self-belief through building new skills and understandings, performing for others, and seeing their creative ideas come to fruition. Whether through visual expression, musical performance, choreographed/improvised movement, or dramatic character exploration, all four art forms support young people in developing emotional-, bodily- and self-awareness that contribute to healthy identity formation.

**Identity formation** (being and becoming) benefits from the approaches offered through the pedagogies of different art forms. Visual arts provide opportunities for reflective, contemplative exploration of internal experiences and cultural narratives. Music offers both individual skill development and collective identity formation through ensemble experiences. Dance integrates physical embodiment with creative expression, allowing young people to literally inhabit and explore their developing identities. Drama adds dimensions of perspective-taking and character exploration, enabling young people to try on different identities and explore alternative viewpoints. The cumulative effect is young people with richer, more nuanced understandings of themselves and their place in the world. All four art forms uniquely connect children with their cultural heritages while simultaneously opening them to new cultural experiences, serving as bridges between past and present, local and global, fostering both cultural identity and intercultural understanding.

The four art forms offer distinctive yet complementary pathways for **empowerment and active citizenship**. Research across all four disciplines documents their capacity to support personal, social, civic and political empowerment. Through visual arts, young people explore cultural narratives and social issues. Through Dance, they develop embodied understanding of community and collective expression. Through Music, they experience the power of unified voice and cultural identity. Through Drama, they explore power dynamics and questions of justice within safe fictional frameworks. Each art form provides young people with different tools for examining their place in society, questioning perspectives, and developing the critical consciousness necessary for active citizenship and democratic participation.

**Health and wellbeing** benefits span both physical and mental dimensions across all four disciplines. All four art forms are powerful tools for emotional regulation and wellbeing, providing children with healthy outlets for expressing and processing complex feelings. The Reviews consistently document improvements in self-esteem, reductions in anxiety, and overall enhanced emotional wellbeing among participants. Dance contributes most directly to physical fitness, coordination, and body awareness, while Music and visual arts education support fine and gross motor development through instrument playing, drawing, sculpting, and crafting activities. Drama's embodied practices also contribute to physical expression and spatial awareness. All four disciplines offer structured opportunities for emotional exploration within supportive contexts.

All four expressive Arts disciplines offer **alternative pathways to success and engagement** for children who may not benefit from other academic subjects. These art forms celebrate diversity and difference, thus supporting inclusion for diverse groups of learners, including those with disabilities, English language learners, and children from stigmatised communities. The Reviews show the unique capacity of all four art forms to provide accessible learning opportunities while acknowledging that realising this inclusive potential requires skilful teaching, adequate resources, and thoughtful pedagogical approaches. The active, participatory nature of all four art forms creates learning experiences that are inherently motivating, tapping into young people's creativity, curiosity, imagination, enthusiasm for critical interpretations and desire for self-expression.

The research Reviews consistently demonstrate that **the benefits of Art, Craft and Design, Dance, Music, and Drama education extend far beyond the development of artistic practices, though these intrinsic benefits are crucial**. These subjects contribute to the development of well-rounded, confident, creative individuals who are better equipped to navigate and impact on an increasingly complex world. They offer unique combinations of cognitive challenge, physical activity, emotional expression and social interaction that are not easily replicated by other educational approaches. The convergent evidence across all four Reviews makes the case that expressive Arts education is not a luxury or add-on to children's education: it is complementary to other subjects and a fundamental component of a well-rounded educational experience that supports human flourishing in its fullest sense.

## C. ANALYSIS OF THE REVIEWS AS AN EVIDENCE BASE FOR THE CLA ARTS EDUCATION CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK

### THE CLA CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK

The value of the knowledge, skills and experiences that children and young people acquire through expressive Arts subjects can be understood through three pillars representing the broad kinds of capabilities that expressive Arts subjects and experiences provide: being, becoming and belonging; relating; and cognition and creative thinking. These in turn encompass seven capabilities that have personal benefits for the child or young person – which lead to societal benefits and pro-social behaviours.

#### 1. BEING, BECOMING AND BELONGING

- **Agency** (autonomy, confidence, identity)
- **Wellbeing** (flourishing, pleasure, resilience)

#### 2. RELATING

- **Collaboration** (connection, co-operation, participation)
- **Communication** (listening, relationship building, self-expression)
- **Empathy** (compassion, open-mindedness, understanding difference/s)

#### 3. COGNITION AND CREATIVE THINKING

- **Creativity** (curiosity, imagination, originality)
- **Interpretation** (critical thinking, meaning making, reflective judgement)

### HOW THE RAPID EVIDENCE REVIEWS SUPPORT THE SEVEN CAPABILITIES

The four RERs provide convergent evidence across different art forms that directly supports each capability:

#### AGENCY

Agency is one of the most extensively documented benefits across all four Reviews. The Music RER found that 34% of reviewed papers addressed student agency, making it the most-researched benefit in UK studies (tied with cognition). The Art, Craft and Design RER identified 89 papers on agency, this extensive documentation showed subject-specific opportunities for self-expression and creativity not available elsewhere in the curriculum. The Drama RER reported 123 studies under the agency sub-theme, making 'Being and Becoming' the most commonly cited benefit category overall with 219 studies. Drama research particularly emphasised emotional and behavioural regulation, empathy development, identity exploration, and confidence-building through performance and role-work.

#### WELLBEING

All four RERs document substantial health and wellbeing benefits spanning both physical and mental dimensions. They consistently show improvements in self-esteem, reductions in anxiety, and enhanced emotional wellbeing. Dance particularly

contributes to physical fitness and coordination, while Drama education demonstrates strong impacts on emotional regulation and behavioural management, especially in early years and specialist education contexts. The Drama RER noted particular benefits for vulnerable groups, including children with autism, in foster care, and from vulnerable social backgrounds. All four art forms serve as powerful tools for emotional regulation and stress management, providing children with healthy outlets for expressing and processing complex feelings.

### **COLLABORATION, COMMUNICATION AND EMPATHY**

The RERs demonstrate that all four art forms powerfully foster social connections and break down barriers. Music education develops social skills through ensemble experiences, with researchers noting how collaborative music-making creates immediate community among participants. The Art, Craft and Design review documents how visual arts support inclusive environments and communication across cultural and linguistic differences. Dance education builds social connectivity through synchronised movement and shared physical experiences. Drama's embodied and role-based nature proves especially effective for developing empathy and understanding diverse perspectives, with 30 studies documenting theory of mind development.

### **CREATIVITY**

All four Reviews suggest that expressive Arts develop creative problem-solving, imagination, and analytical thinking skills that are valuable across all areas of learning and life. Visual arts education provides opportunities for experimentation, risk-taking, and iterative refinement of ideas. Music fosters improvisational thinking and creative interpretation. Dance offers embodied exploration of movement possibilities and creative problem-solving through choreography. Drama combines improvisational generation of ideas with collaborative creative development.

### **COGNITION AND INTERPRETATION**

The RERs show remarkably consistent cognitive benefits across all art forms – enhanced concentration, memory, problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking. Each discipline engages multiple cognitive processes simultaneously in complementary ways. Dance integrates rhythm, spatial relationships, physical coordination, and creative expression. Music education demands integration of auditory processing, fine motor skills, mathematical understanding of rhythm and pattern, and creative interpretation. Art, Craft, and Design education develops visual-spatial skills, aesthetic awareness, technical proficiency, and conceptual thinking. Drama education requires critical thinking through interpretation of texts, analysis of character and situation, and the meta-cognitive awareness required to navigate moving in and out of role.

### **In Summary**

The four RERs provide the empirical foundation that validates each of the seven capabilities claimed in the Arts Education Capabilities Framework. These benefits are supported by extensive research evidence across multiple creative disciplines, each offering unique strengths while contributing to a comprehensive framework for holistic education and personal development.

## **D. AN AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH IN EXPRESSIVE ARTS EDUCATION**

The four Rapid Evidence Reviews (RERs) collectively suggest that the field is at a critical evidence juncture. While the evidence base demonstrates significant benefits across Art, Craft and Design, Dance, Music, and Drama education, the research has fundamental methodological challenges that limit its capacity to inform policy and practice effectively. Addressing these gaps requires not merely incremental improvements but a substantial reimagining of how the value of creative education is researched.

### **The Methodological Imperative**

One urgent priority facing expressive Arts education research is the need for methodological diversification and rigour. The Art, Craft and Design Review shows a stark absence of randomised controlled trials, cohort studies and experimental designs in UK research, with very few meta-analyses or case-control studies. The Music Review echoes these concerns, highlighting the absence of systematic reviews, cross-sectional surveys, and action research in the UK during the studied period. Drama education research shows a heavy weighting toward small-scale studies, with case studies, qualitative studies and reflective practitioner work making up almost a third of the corpus, perhaps unsurprising given the field's disciplinary emphasis on capturing the embodied, holistic and dynamic nature of Drama learning experiences, but problematic when seeking to influence policy. Dance research faces similar challenges, with studies frequently having what might be seen as self-selection bias, inadequate control groups, and evaluations conducted by teachers aware of the experimental conditions – methodological weaknesses that undermine the credibility of positive findings, particularly for policy purposes.

These methodological gaps may stem from multiple sources. The Art, Craft and Design Review suggests that researchers may actively reject certain methodologies on philosophical grounds, lack access to funding for large-scale studies, or need to acquire the necessary expertise. Drama scholars have noted the potential tension between the field's legacy as an artistic and pedagogic practice and newer, more narrowly focused instrumental framings of Drama. Regardless of the cause, the consequence is clear: the evidence base struggles to meet the standards increasingly demanded by policymakers. Indeed, the Education Endowment Foundation's systematic review of Arts education research (2016) concluded that while tentative evidence suggested potential beneficial effects, no studies with high levels of supporting evidence were found because of serious weaknesses in design – a sobering finding that highlights in part how much Arts education research remains invisible to systematic review processes.

The call for more randomised controlled trials and large-scale investigations must be balanced, however, with recognition that expressive Arts education involves complex, multifaceted outcomes that resist simple quantification. The Dance Review advocates for methodological innovation that captures the full richness of creative learning, including mixed methods designs that combine quantitative rigour with qualitative depth. Music education researchers note the need for research going beyond anecdotal evidence to provide robust documentation of cognitive benefits. Drama education has seen some exemplary models emerge which demonstrate that an evidence base can be built around an external intervention in ways both responsive to programme nuances and pragmatic about policymaker needs. More creative approaches to data production, such as film, Arts-based methods, and participatory research that involves artists, practitioners, and young people as co-designers, could

also provide more nuanced understandings of outcomes – such as creativities, aesthetic appreciation and personal development – that conventional measures struggle to capture.

### **The Longitudinal Challenge**

Perhaps the most consequential research gap concerns the temporal dimension of learning. Claims about cognitive transfer, lifelong benefits, and sustained personal development pervade the literature across all four art forms, yet these claims rest on thin longitudinal evidence. Without tracking participants both within and across years, it remains impossible to determine whether reported benefits persist and deepen over time or fade when interventions end. The Art, Craft and Design Review notes that future research investigating longer-term developments in how learners approach artistic creation might show that sustained engagement cultivates habits of mind and dispositions affecting problem-solving behaviour; such powerful transfer may emerge gradually rather than immediately. Music researchers emphasise that without tracking participants over months and years, it remains impossible to determine whether reported benefits persist and deepen or fade when interventions end. Dance studies note similar concerns, with calls for research examining impact across different age groups rather than focusing on narrow age ranges without considering developmental differences. Drama education would also learn from longitudinal work examining whether benefits documented in discrete interventions translate into sustained changes in students' creative thinking, civic engagement, or academic approaches.

Longitudinal research would be particularly valuable for understanding developmental trajectories across different age groups. Many existing studies focus on narrow age ranges without considering how benefits might vary across childhood and adolescence and different population groups. Such research could illuminate optimal timing for different types of creative interventions and demonstrate how early experiences in one art form might influence later learning in other domains.

### **The Transferability Question**

The question of whether skills and benefits from expressive Arts education transfer to other domains is perhaps the most politically charged research priority. The Art, Craft and Design Review identifies transferability as the second most investigated benefit yet concludes there is insufficient evidence of transfer. The Review poses a provocative question: is there an urgent need for the research community to decide whether to continue researching transferability at all, given its prominence in curriculum arguments? Music education research shows similar patterns, with transferability concerns prominent among researchers even as Music remains intrinsically valuable. Drama education research appears to have a methodological divide, with more quantitative studies taking instrumental intervention framings, while qualitative studies focus on holistic theatrical projects – a split that raises concerns about evidence shifting away from Drama's creative legacy.

The transferability question needs serious consideration. If the field continues to pursue transfer research, it must do so with greater theoretical sophistication. Theory-building studies and theory-driven experiments could elaborate the precise mechanisms through which transfer might occur, specify under what conditions it happens, and acknowledge that transfer may manifest differently across art forms, school contexts, and population groups. However, the critical insight that social class and family educational levels often prove more significant than any school programme in determining educational attainment should moderate simplistic claims about expressive Arts education as an engine of academic achievement.

Yet abandoning transfer research entirely would be premature. The Dance Review calls for more studies examining relationships between Dance and creative thinking, as well as effects on cognitive development and academic achievement. The Art, Craft and Design Review calls for theory-building studies and theory-driven experiments which document and explain the precise mechanisms through which transfer might occur. The Music Review identifies similar needs. But the question must be asked, transfer to what? Perhaps we do not need more research showing that Arts education improves mathematics scores but research that documents and illuminates the distinctive knowledges and skills that expressive Arts education itself cultivates: modes of seeing, imagining, inventing, knowing and thinking that may prove essential for addressing complex contemporary challenges.

### **Comparative and Cross-Curricular Research**

All four Reviews discuss the paucity of comparative research examining differences between art forms, genres, and pedagogical approaches. The Art, Craft and Design Review notes few attempts at comparing data between Arts specialisms, while the Dance Review calls for research into cross-curricular programmes and their impact across different age groups. This gap is significant given policy interest in STEAM education and Arts integration approaches. Without comparative research, it is difficult to understand which approaches work best for different populations and educational goals, or how the unique contributions of each art form might complement one another in integrated programming. For example, Music education would benefit from comparative studies examining whether particular pedagogical approaches produce different outcomes for different populations. Drama education research examining differences between process Drama, Theatre in Education, and classroom Drama pedagogy could illuminate which approaches are a 'fit' for specific learning goals.

Research comparing outcomes across different art forms could illuminate whether particular benefits cluster with specific disciplines, as suggested by research showing visual arts often deployed for trauma work, music for mental health, drama for social learning, and dance for physical health, or whether benefits depend more on pedagogical approach than artistic medium. Understanding these patterns would enable more strategic programming and could challenge assumptions about the interchangeability of different art forms in educational settings.

### **Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice**

While all four Reviews document benefits for diverse populations, significant gaps remain in understanding how expressive Arts education can be made genuinely inclusive and equitable. The Art, Craft and Design Review calls for more research on participatory and democratic classroom practice, student leadership, curriculum development, and school reform. It suggests investigating how students make choices and the consequences of those choices for academic attainment and social justice. The Dance Review highlights gaps in culturally tailored programmes and emphasises that true accessibility requires representation from the communities being served.

Research in this domain must move beyond demonstrating that Arts education can support marginalised students to examine how programmes can challenge rather than reproduce systemic inequalities. Several Art, Craft and Design studies critique: how admission processes for courses exhibit institutionalised class and ethnic bias; how Arts education can perpetuate elitist cultural capital; and how gentrification threatens access. Similar dynamics likely operate across other art forms. Research exploring the tensions between inclusion rhetoric and exclusionary practice would be

particularly valuable. Music education research examining socially inclusive practices with refugee students found positive impacts on wellbeing, sense of belonging, and engagement with learning, but more work is needed understanding how pedagogical approaches create opportunities for excluded students to thrive. Dance researchers call for more investigation into how Dance education can address systemic inequalities and support children from marginalised communities. Drama education's 21 studies addressing inclusion demonstrate the field's attention to this area, yet researchers caution that facilitating inclusive spaces for Drama requires effective educational routines, teacher competence and experience, and ongoing efforts by skilled teachers to navigate moments of discomfort and disconnection.

Research into the participation of young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Arts education appears across all four Reviews, though it is not their dominant focus. Collectively, the Reviews suggest that Arts education holds considerable potential for SEND students, particularly around non-verbal expression, social integration, and belonging, but that realising this potential requires deliberate pedagogical adaptation, specialist knowledge, and institutional commitment that is not always present. The evidence base for impact is also limited. In all four disciplines, the SEND-focused literature tends toward small-scale, context-specific studies, which limits the generalisability of findings.

Overall, studies examining specific populations deserve expansion: for example, children with disabilities and special educational needs; students from minoritised ethnic and racial backgrounds; young people in care or experiencing homelessness; those in pupil referral units; and students whose first language differs from the medium of instruction. While existing Arts education research demonstrates benefits for these groups, much remains small-scale, and questions about sustainability, scalability, and institutional change require investigation.

### **Teacher Education and Professional Development**

All four RERs identify substantial gaps in understanding how to prepare and support the teaching of high-quality creative and expressive Arts education. The Dance Review notes that effective teaching doesn't always require professionally trained dancers, yet insufficient research examines how to support teachers who feel unprepared. Similar challenges face generalist primary teachers expected to teach Music or Drama with minimal training. The Art, Craft and Design Review notes ongoing concerns about teachers lacking confidence and capability. Further and more rigorous research into effective continuing professional development models, successful partnerships between schools and Arts organisations, and sustainable approaches to building teacher confidence and capability could significantly impact educational quality.

Such research should investigate not only initial teacher education but also ongoing professional development, the role of Arts specialists versus generalist teachers, and how to support teachers working in schools with limited resources. Understanding what constitutes effective pedagogy across different art forms and contexts, and how to disseminate this knowledge, remains an urgent priority.

### **Assessment and Evaluation**

Developing appropriate methods for assessing learning in expressive Arts education is both a practical necessity and a conceptual challenge. The Dance Review particularly emphasises the need for assessment methods capturing both quantitative and qualitative changes in student learning. Music education faces similar challenges in documenting benefits beyond easily measurable technical skills. Art, Craft and Design assessment must balance between measuring discrete competencies and

evaluating holistic creative development. Drama education assessment needs to capture both dramatic skills and broader outcomes such as empathy, collaboration, and critical thinking. Traditional assessment approaches often fail to capture the full range of creative outcomes, yet without robust assessment frameworks, it becomes difficult to demonstrate programme effectiveness or track student progress.

Research in this domain must balance multiple tensions: between standardisation and contextual specificity; between measuring discrete skills and holistic development; and between summative judgements and formative support for learning. Arts-based assessment approaches, portfolio methods, and performance-based evaluation all warrant further investigation, particularly regarding their reliability, validity, and feasibility for classroom use.

### **Policy-Relevant Research**

Finally, all four Reviews emphasise the need for research explicitly designed to inform policy decisions and support advocacy. This requires attending to the forms of evidence that policymakers find persuasive, while maintaining intellectual integrity about what research can and cannot demonstrate. The current policy landscape is characterised by dramatic declines in expressive Arts education participation, reduced teacher numbers, and a narrowing curriculum (although the Curriculum and Assessment Review recommendations are likely to now create a more fertile landscape for Arts education): this demands research that speaks powerfully to decision-makers – for the present and the future – about why expressive Arts education matters.

Such research must navigate carefully between advocacy and empiricism. It should document not only benefits but also implementation challenges, resource requirements, and conditions necessary for success. It should examine system-level questions about curriculum design, funding models, and accountability frameworks that shape what happens in schools. And it should attend to the alarming finding that socioeconomic status and geographic location increasingly determine whether children can access expressive Arts education. This is a social justice issue requiring urgent research attention.

### **Moving Forward**

These research gaps represent not merely academic challenges but practical barriers to ensuring all children access high-quality expressive Arts education. Addressing them requires sustained investment in research infrastructure, methodological innovation, and collaborative approaches bringing together researchers, educators, policymakers, and young people. It demands humility about what we know and don't know, intellectual honesty about the complexity of expressive Arts learning, and commitment to research that serves children to flourish. The stakes are high. In an era demanding creativity, critical thinking, and human connection, expressive Arts education offers irreplaceable opportunities for developing these capabilities, but only if we can build the evidence base to protect and expand access to these vital educational experiences.

## E. PLANS FOR AN ARTS EDUCATION EVIDENCE HUB

The RSC and CLA have continued to refine plans for an Arts Education Evidence Hub, following feasibility study funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies in 2024. The feasibility identified five purposes and ten principles for the Evidence Hub – set out below – and consortium funding for the Hub is currently being explored, as is its potential relationship with the new National Centre for Arts and Music Education.

<b>5 PURPOSES</b>
<b>1. Aggregating</b> research* – analysing, distilling and validating existing and new findings from local, regional, national and international academic and non-academic sources, and accelerating their application for policy and practice
<b>2. Authoring</b> – creating coherent summaries and collective value narratives from aggregated research findings to enable the sector to use and learn from relevant research
<b>3. Scaffolding advocacy</b> for the value of this work – by evidencing (and challenging) its value, supporting better understanding of the benefits of an Arts-rich education so that an informed sector can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ demonstrate need and effectiveness</li><li>○ grow recognition to ensure the positioning and status of the Arts within a broad and balanced education, influencing policy and practice</li><li>○ identify gaps to support commissioning and shaping of new research</li></ul>
<b>4. Supporting practice development and improvement</b> through shared understanding about what works and what hasn't worked – enabling the sector to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ learn, to improve, and to plan, ultimately improving outcomes for children and young people</li><li>○ develop pedagogy</li></ul>
<b>5. Building a community</b> of research and practice – creating an informed community of practice, strengthening the sector's ability to learn from and with each other, and creating community coherence through shared learning and understanding about the latest research

\* From the Year 2000

## 10 PRINCIPLES

1.	<b>Accessible:</b> we will create clear, practical, user-friendly, and inspiring content
2.	<b>Collegiate:</b> community-building and collaborative – we will take a collegiate approach in building shared principles, priorities and content
3.	<b>Cost-effective:</b> we will build a sensible, sustainable and cost-effective financial model
4.	<b>Democratic:</b> we will have a focus on the democratisation of research and evidence, building an open access platform to demystify evidence processes and formats
5.	<b>Diverse and inclusive:</b> we will build a diverse evidence base, with variations in scale and approaches, and a focus on breadth and diverse methodologies
6.	<b>High-quality and high-profile:</b> we will focus on building expert approaches to aggregating high-quality evidence, and on raising the profile of this work
7.	<b>Transparent:</b> we will be open and transparent about our processes and moderation
8.	<b>Progressive and innovative:</b> we will collect and shape new research, and present evidence in creative, multi-modal ways, harnessing the use of A.I. for data gathering and tagging
9.	<b>Representative:</b> we will be representative of communities, and the lived experience of young people and practitioners and a range of creative practice
10.	<b>Reliable and trusted:</b> we will be a credible collective source of information: permanent and consistent, up-to-date, impartial and balanced

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<sup>i</sup> Greenhalgh, T., Thorne, S., & Maltzerud, K. (2018). Time to challenge the spurious hierarchy of systematic over narrative reviews? *Eur J Clin*, 48 (DOI: 10.1111/eci.12931).

