



The Cultural Learning Alliance (CLA) has three specific calls to action in response to the interim report and ongoing work of the Curriculum and Assessment Review. These are set out alongside an Arts Capabilities Framework which makes clear why equitable access to an Arts-rich education matters; important reflections with regard to the Review; and thoughts on the related matters of the National Centre for Arts and Music Education and a new Enrichment Framework.

WHY A BROAD AND BALANCED ARTS EDUCATION MATTERS

As is set out in the [CLA Arts 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 **critical and creative thinking**. These in turn encompass seven evidenced capabilities that have personal benefits for the child – which lead to societal benefits.

BEING, BELONGING & BECOMING

- ❑ **Agency:** confidence, identity, autonomy → *independent working and active citizenship*
- ❑ **Wellbeing:** Flourishing, resilience, pleasure → *adaptability, mental health and emotional wellbeing benefits*

RELATING

- ❑ **Communication:** self-expression, listening skills, relationship building → *workplace skills, social cohesion*
- ❑ **Empathy:** compassion, understanding of difference/s, open-mindedness → *social bonding, civic engagement*
- ❑ **Collaboration:** co-operation, participation, connectedness → *workplace skills, working effectively with others*

CREATIVE & CRITICAL THINKING

- ❑ **Creativity:** imagination, curiosity, originality → *innovation, cultural consumer/maker*
- ❑ **Interpretation:** critical thinking, reflective judgement, meaning making → *countering disinformation*

CORE ASKS

Because of these evidenced benefits, we must lose the existing hierarchy of subjects across accountability, curriculum and inspection and put Expressive Arts subjects back at the centre of school life in order to make Arts education accessible to all. We require a new social contract for education in order to meet the needs of all children and young people, and to grow the future workforce (see CLA [Blueprint for an Arts-rich education](#)). We urgently require:

- **Clear purposes for a broad and balanced, future-facing curriculum with equal curriculum areas**, including the Expressive Arts, mapped onto new curriculum purposes
- **Reform to accountability measures:** removal of the EBacc; Progress 8 to include Arts subjects; and changes to student assessment in line with [Rethinking Assessment](#)
- **Mandatory and strengthened Arts provision** within the curriculum, based on a [minimum weekly Arts entitlement to Expressive Arts subjects](#)

Beyond the scope of the Curriculum and Assessment Review we require a focus on **workforce development opportunities for Arts subjects** to support Arts ITT recruitment, Arts training for primary teachers and Arts CPD – this is essential in order to strengthen Arts provision in schools.

REFLECTIONS ON ENRICHMENT AND ON 'KNOWLEDGE-RICH'

1. Enrichment: The interim Curriculum and Assessment Review report tells us “*Whilst outside the scope of this Review, it should be noted that breadth may also be provided by enrichment activities beyond the curriculum, such as through musical and dramatic performances and sports.*” We would be concerned about valuing Expressive Arts subjects in terms of “enrichment” beyond the classroom if they are not already firmly anchored within the curriculum and accountability structures in schools. Whilst we know that Arts activities beyond the curriculum are extremely

valuable in supporting attainment and achievement, they should only ever be seen as additional and not as a substitute for curriculum Arts delivery. There is a significant equity point here: core access must be through in-school provision or too many children and young people will be excluded for a range of reasons and barriers affecting their availability outside of school hours – including cost, travel difficulties, and family or caring commitments.

2. Knowledge-rich ‘plus’: We know that the Review Panel wants to see a curriculum that is knowledge-rich, and we welcome an emphasis on knowledge, on the basis that there is also a balance across skills and experiences. Good Arts teaching should encourage art making, questioning, debate, experimentation, risk-taking, presentation, review and critical reflection as well as knowledge acquisition and artistry. The interim report already tells us that parents are keen to see more emphasis on applied knowledge. We know that ‘knowledge-rich’ can be battleground for polarised debates in the public and political discourse around education, particularly following a Govian emphasis on this since 2010.

Expressive Arts subjects lead to different types of knowledge and different ways of knowing. Knowledge, skills and experiences are interdependent, and a balance across all three is vital for Expressive Arts subjects and pedagogies:

- **Knowledge:** Learning about and through different art forms, styles, artists, and cultures; appreciation of heritage and the perspectives and cultural practices of others
- **Skills:** Developing artistic skills, techniques, processes and habits of mind over time, through regular experiences and the discipline of regular and persistent practice
- **Experiences:** Gaining formative Arts experiences and encounters in and out of school.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO ARTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN

The [CLA 2025 Report Card](#) makes clear the link between the poverty of an area and pupils in that area not studying the Expressive Arts in school. Expressive Arts take up is lowest in regions and local authorities with the highest level of free school meals and highest levels of deprivation: the North East, the North West and the West Midlands. We refer to this clear socioeconomic disparity in young people’s access as an ‘Arts entitlement gap’. Where a child grows up, and their family’s socioeconomic status, are currently significant social determinants in whether or not they will and can pursue Expressive Arts options from the age of 14.

All children, regardless of background and location, should have in-school access to a high-quality Arts education: we need to close this Arts entitlement gap. We want to see barriers to existing Arts opportunities removed, and more opportunities created, so that all children and young people can benefit from the interconnected personal and societal capabilities developed through studying Arts subjects, as set out in the emerging [CLA Arts Capabilities Framework](#).

RELATED ISSUES: NATIONAL CENTRE AND ENRICHMENT FRAMEWORK

We want to see the new National Centre for Arts and Music Education succeed and thrive and be of value to schools and cultural organisations. We would question whether the National Centre needs the word music in its title. The separation of the two can be traced back to when previous secretaries of state declared Music to be “the greatest of art forms” in their foreword to The Importance of Music: A National Plan for Music Education in 2011. It is seen by many non-Music colleagues in the sector as artificial and possibly divisive to separate Music from Art & Design, Dance, Drama and other art forms. Despite one of the Centre’s key roles being that of a fund-holder for the Music Hubs, we do not see the need for a separation – Music is patently an art form.

CLA’s view is that the sector now needs to come together around the new ambition for a **National Centre for Arts Education** and support the DfE as it works to develop the plans for it. The Centre will only succeed if it is a collective endeavour built on foundation stones of ambition, leadership, equity, experience and expertise – on behalf of all children and young people. Over the summer CLA is running a roadshow of in-person and online consensus workshops to define the principles, the purposes and practical considerations for the Centre and will share these with DfE in July. These will address vision, mission and ambition, as well CPD needs, and brokerage needs. They will also consider Enrichment needs in light of the development of a new **Enrichment Framework**.