EVIDENCING THE VALUE OF ARTS SUBJECTS: A CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK

A SHARED FRAMEWORK FOR THE EXPRESSIVE ARTS IN EDUCATION

'Education in the arts – music, drama, dance, design, visual arts … and more – can greatly expand students' capacities to master complex skills and can support social and emotional learning across the curriculum. It can enhance our human abilities to access the experience of others, whether through empathy or the reading of non-verbal clues … The arts also help us learn to say, show, and feel what needs to be said, shown, and felt, helping to advance the horizons of knowing, being, and communicating in and beyond the arts.[i]

The purpose of this Framework is to build a shared language and understanding of the personal and social benefits that Expressive Arts subjects and experiences bring to children and young people.

Underpinning principles: The Arts have intrinsic value in and of themselves. They can be many things: they are an expression of what it is to be human and are valuable for learning about the world and the people around us. They are about learning new skills, developing craft, and honing talent; they are a vital and enriching part of life. Given their value, there should be an entitlement to Expressive Arts subjects within the schooling system for all children and young people.

EXPRESSIVE ARTS SUBJECTS

Expressive Arts subjects and experiences play an important role in developing personal, social and creative wellbeing. They teach us who we are now, and who we might become. Education in the Arts is a means of developing self-confidence, critical and creative thinking, focus, motivation, and the ability to communicate and cooperate effectively.

We use Expressive Arts as the collective term for Arts subjects in schools. Our definition includes Art & Design, Dance, Drama, Music, Film and Digital Media. (This Framework can also apply to creative writing within English Language.) All Expressive Arts subjects and disciplines have their own distinct benefits and qualities and their own kind of pedagogy and cognitive and aesthetic benefits. This Capabilities Framework does not address the specificity of individual subjects and art forms but addresses Expressive Arts subjects collectively. It draws on evidence which is sometimes subject-specific and sometimes broader in scope.

Curriculum: We recognise that any curriculum that includes Expressive Arts subjects will have its own set of learning objectives and outcomes, but there are specific qualities of Arts learning that can be both expressed and assessed. The kinds of learning, artistry and knowledge explored in Expressive Arts subjects offer opportunities for different types of learning (making, researching, interpreting, experimenting etc.) which are relevant for future careers – Arts and non-Arts – and for independent pursuits. They depend on/demand active engagement: when children and young people take part, and are actively exploring Expressive Arts subjects, then a series of capabilities are developed through this participation. They offer different types of knowledge and different ways of knowing: a balance and interdependence across knowledge, skills and experiences 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

A CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK FOR EXPRESSIVE ARTS SUBJECTS

The 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 capabilities that have personal benefits for the child – which lead to societal benefits.

The evidence: All of these capabilities and their benefits have been drawn from a combination of an examination of robust national and international evidence and deep professional expertise.

How it can be used: It can be used in a variety of ways by schools and cultural organisations to support case making; programme development and planning; and review and evaluation.

What form will it take: This Framework will be digitised and linked to the aggregated findings from our CLA Rapid Evidence Reviews across Art & Design, Dance, Drama and Music – as well as to other national and international research and evidence – to creative an interactive tool through which users can access the key findings from a wide body of evidence across each of the seven capabilities.

A CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK FOR EXPRESSIVE ARTS SUBJECTS

CAPABILITIES	PERSONAL BENEFITS *including but not limited to:*	SOCIETAL BENEFITS *including but not limited to:*
BEING, BECOMING & BELONGING		
AGENCY	**Autonomy:** responsibility; self-determination; independence; self-organisation; efficacy; self-motivation; self-discipline; self-management **Confidence:** self-belief; empowerment; initiative; being stretched to do and achieve and to expand horizons **Identity:** self-awareness (and in relation to others); purpose; voice; shaping values and ethics; authenticity	**Workplace:** independent working; initiative; engagement; respect; purpose and motivation; confidence to speak up; reliability; decision-making; awareness of own values; trustworthiness; leadership **Wider society:** active citizenship – participation in community and political and cultural life; belonging – identity as part of a wider community
WELLBEING	**Flourishing:** personal achievement; feeling understood, valued, recognised, included; growth mindset; ability to trust; optimism; self-reflection; emotional wellbeing **Pleasure:** enjoyment; happiness, joy and delight; fun; fulfilment; relaxation; inspiration; excitement; play; aesthetic appreciation; connection with awe and wonder; passion; sharing and celebrating **Resilience:** adaptability; self-regulation; developing persistence and perseverance; coping mechanisms; courage; self-reliance; self-care (and care for others, and more widely)	**Workplace:** self-management; adaptability; emotional intelligence; positivity; reflection; understanding of self in relation to others; supportive and caring workplaces; positive morale **Wider society:** belonging in school and the community; purpose; mental health and wellbeing; broader health benefits of cultural participation; ability to navigate difference, difficulty and the unknown; ability to make a contribution; improved social relations; a more co-operative and cohesive society
RELATING		
COMMUNICATION	**Listening:** active listening to others; responsiveness **Relationship building:** communicating for the purpose of interacting with others; ability to present and understand own (and different) views and perspectives; ability to influence, persuade and inspire **Self-expression:** oracy; developing language; non-verbal communication; artistic expression; storytelling; authenticity; openness; articulacy	**Workplace:** Interpersonal skills; improved understanding; ability to communicate in different environments, contexts and situations; openness to different ideas; ability to communicate complex ideas and feelings on behalf of self and others **Wider society:** Improved social relations; social and community cohesion; connectivity; strong networks; strengthened social bonds
EMPATHY	**Compassion:** sensitivity to the feelings, characteristics and circumstances of others **Open-mindedness:** understanding of the viewpoints of others **Understanding and appreciation of difference(s):** understanding of the circumstances and characteristics of others	**Workplace:** Relating to others; respect; compassion and consideration for others; care of others; consideration of the state of mind and wellbeing of others; sensitivity to impact on others **Wider society:** Respect and compassion for others (individuals and groups); inclusion; countering hate; social bonding; civic engagement; social and community cohesion
COLLABORATION	**Connection:** partnership; sharing and testing ideas; sharing and negotiating values **Co-operation:** teamwork; relationship building; working with others **Participation:** active engagement	**Workplace:** The ability to work well in and with teams; leadership; negotiation skills; reciprocity and respect **Wider society:** Social cohesion; reciprocity; thriving communities; thoughtful engagement in democracy

CREATIVE & CRITICAL THINKING		
CREATIVITY	**Curiosity:** problem-solving; ingenuity; experimentation; ideation; risk-taking; agility; inquisitiveness; tinkering; playfulness; research **Imagination:** creative thinking; divergent thinking; invention; vision **Originality:** innovation; novelty; testing and trialling; refinement; rigour; determination; dedication; making the new; pushing beyond self-expectations	**Workplace:** Creative and innovative problem-solving; drive to think and push beyond what is already there and to see and present alternatives; capacity for change; ability to bring ideas together; ability to see multiple perspectives; ability to identify and explore problems and to design solutions **Wider society:** Cultural makers; cultural innovators; cultural entrepreneurs; creative activists; cultural influencers; cultural audiences
INTERPRETATION	**Critical thinking:** decoding information; analytical thinking; ability to build knowledge and expertise in weighing up different ideas and their value; deliberation; refinement **Meaning making:** ability to shape and express ideas and develop understanding of others and the world **Reflective judgement:** considering and questioning; recognising quality; discernment; informed judgement	**Workplace:** Reflective critical thinkers; informed decision-making **Wider society:** Critical media literacy; ability to challenge disinformation and discern and identify facts; informed Arts audiences

Draft developed by the Cultural Learning Alliance Evidence & Value Narrative Working Group (October 2023 – May 2025)

CULTURAL LEARNING ALLIANCE

[i] UNESCO (2021). Futures of Education; a new social contract. *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education*. Chapter 4