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Fed response to New Schools Network report, The Two Cultures: Do schools have to choose between the EBacc and the arts?

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In response to the new report on arts in schools from the New Schools Network charity, Harriet Finney, deputy chief executive and policy director of the Creative Industries Federation, said today:

“The message that a creative education is a good education is one in which we passionately believe. Strong support across government departments for arts subjects in schools is to be welcomed.

“In addition to acknowledging the value of arts subjects in themselves, it is good to see a direct line drawn between the provision of arts in schools and developing a workforce for the future of the economy. The government’s new industrial strategy will make it even more important that we understand the mix of creative and technical subjects needed for a successful and prosperous Britain in the 21st century.

“One subject currently not included in the Department for Education’s list of arts subjects and therefore missing from the New Schools Network report - and debate - is design and technology (D&T). We regret this omission because we think D&T offers young people the chance to learn the creative and technical skills that we know from the government’s own official list are in short supply in areas such as visual effects and animation. D&T has seen a significant fall in take-up at GCSE.

“It is absolutely clear, as is highlighted in this new report, that many of the best schools already recognise the value of creative subjects. Improving messaging to all schools about the benefits of arts subjects at GCSE is vital. It would be a great step forward if no school could be deemed “outstanding” by Ofsted without offering a good creative education.

“Furthermore, we must make it easier for all schools - including the most challenged, working with the most deprived pupils - to offer creative subjects. This means, among other things, addressing the fall in the number of teachers and taught hours dedicated to the arts.

“No decision has yet been taken on the government’s consultation on the proposal to make the EBacc the primary assessment measure for 90 per cent of pupils. Given the recognition in this report of the behavioural and cognitive benefits of studying the arts and the need for a creative workforce for the economy, we ask for the adoption of alternative measures such as Progress and Attainment 8 as a better way of encouraging and evaluating a well-rounded education.”

For further information, please contact [Louise Jury](#), director of communications and strategy, or [Jack Powell](#), policy and communications manager, on 020 3771 0350

NOTES TO EDITORS:

For queries on the NSN report, The Two Cultures, with an introduction by Matt Hancock, Digital and Culture Minister, and Nick Gibb, Schools Minister, please contact Amy Leonard on amy.leonard@denfordassociations.com

Other background information:

- The government and NSN definition of arts subjects is art and design, dance, drama, expressive and performing arts, media and music.
- Industry analysis suggests young people sat 44,000 fewer GCSEs in creative subjects in 2016 compared with 2015. D&T attracted 19,000 fewer exam entries. There was a 50 per cent fall in D&T GCSE entries between 2003 and 2014. You can read more from the Design and Technology Association <https://www.data.org.uk/campaign/what-are-the-issues/>
- As academies and free schools do not have to follow the curriculum, it is possible to be judged “outstanding” by Ofsted without offering any arts subjects.

- The EBacc accounts for seven or eight GCSEs. In 2015, more than a quarter of students in academies (28 per cent) took seven GCSEs or fewer. If such students have to take the EBacc in future, there would be no space for other subjects, even if these subjects were offered. Students with a high level of deprivation take on average 7.9 GCSEs, with 38 per cent taking seven or fewer. <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/307016-uptake-of-gcse-subjects-2015.pdf>
- The Tier 2 Shortage Occupation List of jobs where there are skills shortages so serious that the government will permit work permits includes 17 in the creative sector such as positions in visual effects and animation.
- We note that many arts organisations already work with schools and are keen to do so. But the latest figures from DCMS show a 14.4 per cent decrease in the number of school visits to the major museums and galleries since 2014/15.

Please also see the Federation's last paper on creative education, [Social Mobility and the Skills Gap](#), published in October 2016.