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The global classroom

*John Tait, Deputy Headteacher,
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It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the impact digital technology is having on today's educational landscape. In little more than a decade, the internet has changed the world that we once knew. The way we shop, travel, learn and interact with others has all been transformed by the web.

For better or worse, the internet has made the world smaller. It has created an online world without borders that is now accessible to us all. Individuals and organisations can overcome geographical, cultural and logistical barriers, which is proving to be significantly more time and cost effective. Time and distance are now no longer obstacles.

Web video conferencing has become almost routine in today's world of global business and it is just beginning to break through into education. With very little hi-tech equipment required, only the help of a simple Skype account, classrooms are fast becoming exciting global learning environments.

What are the advantages of a global classroom?

Getting our students to connect and collaborate with other students across the world is becoming more and more important. In an ever increasingly digital world where businesses and organisations trade globally, it is vital that we develop our students as global citizens who can compete in the workplace. Not only that, but Skype offers a simple and creative way to make your subject really come alive. It all comes down to having a limitless imagination. No longer do physical barriers exist. The questions you should be asking now are *What if?* and *Why not?*

What if you could connect your class to an Olympic athlete to ask what it feels like to compete in the Olympics?

What if you could speak to students in a school in Florida about their personal experiences of living through hurricanes?

When you start to connect with real people, you can tap into real feelings. Books, websites and videos don't even come close to providing you with authentic learning experiences like this. Then, when you've got real feelings from real people, I believe you start to create deep and memorable learning – a far cry from students learning out of text books.

So, how does it work?

There are four main ways to use Skype in the classroom:

1. The easiest way to get your classroom connected to the world is to join the thousands of teachers who are already signed up to Skype's education site – www.education.skype.net. Here you can submit a request to connect with a class in a defined country, age group, or for a specific project/syllabus topic. Alternatively, if you're looking for inspiration, you can browse the thousands of requests already posted and connect with a classroom that interests you. Once you've contacted the teacher and talked it over, you simply swap Skype ID's and hook up at the agreed time with your classes – it couldn't be easier!
2. If you're not sure where to start with an international collaboration, why not take advantage of the new craze that is sweeping the Skype education community – a Mystery Skype! Here you take part ►►

in an international guessing game between two classes where your students use carefully crafted questioning to identify the location of the other school!

3. Thirdly, you can browse the site for an expert guest speaker. What could be more inspiring than having a world-class speaker talk to your students and extend the level of expertise that you can provide. There are lots of organisations and individuals on the site who are willing to speak to your students.
4. Lastly, the education team at Skype have teamed up with many partner organisations to take you on the ultimate field trip from the comfort of your classroom. No more risk assessments, cover requests and financial barriers to compete with! You can explore the world direct from your classroom!

How has it worked for me?

Since using Skype in my own classroom it has transformed the learning experiences of my students. We have been able to remove the traditional physical barriers and begin to collaborate on a global scale like we've never done before.

The two biggest projects I have given my students the opportunity to take part in have both been in physical education – a subject area that you would not normally associate with a live classroom-to-classroom video collaboration. For both these projects I connected my classroom at my previous school in County Durham with a classroom at Merton Intermediate School in Wisconsin, USA.

For our first project we conducted an international 'dance off' where we had groups of dancers on each side of the Atlantic dancing for each other live on Skype. Once each group had danced, the students scored and judged the technical aspects of the dance via their mobile phones on a free internet poll we set up. This enabled the students to see their results and feedback instantly. Due to the success of this project, we decided to extend the classroom partnership and try something even more adventurous. So, for our second project we created a real global classroom with students from Wisconsin teaching my students how to 'Jump Rope' live via the Skype link – a truly global learning experience with the students and student teachers being over 3,500 miles apart!

At my current school, Acklam Grange School in Middlesbrough, our humanities faculty has used



Skype regularly in geography lessons to create amazing and authentic learning experiences for the students by connecting with schools in Kansas, America to learn about climate and extreme weather conditions such as tornados. The engagement from the students has been incredible as they have learned first-hand from their peers in America what it is like to live in an area regularly affected by tornados. We have also been lucky to have a very special guest speaker speak to our PE students via Skype this year. Judy Murray Skyped in to talk about preparation in sport and how her Wimbledon-winning son prepares before his big games.

Outside of my school, and as a result of carrying the Olympic Torch at the London 2012 Olympic Games, I wanted to share my story and the Olympic message with children all over the world. After touring the local Cubs, Scouts and Brownies with the torch, I took to Skype to connect with classrooms across the globe. 40 Skypes later and after speaking to children in 17 different states in America as well as schools in Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan and France, I have been lucky enough to inspire children across the world.

Why not?

So, why not give it a go? You owe it to your students to try and make their learning experiences as fun and diverse as possible. Just imagine the possibilities of connecting your class to another class on the other side of the world, or an expert who can help teach an exciting part of your syllabus. If there's one thing that using Skype has taught me, it's that bringing learning to life and making it authentic really does deepen the understanding of your students. And, not only do they begin to understand it more, they also remember it because it was fun.

When you think of it like that, what are you waiting for? Get your classroom connected to the world!



EBacc for all?

The findings from SSAT's national survey of school leaders

Bill Watkin, Director, SSAT

Following the announcement by Nick Gibb, minister of state for school reform, on 11 June, that the government was committed to honouring its manifesto pledge to require pupils to study the EBacc, SSAT launched a survey for school leaders.

The intention was to build a rapid and representative picture of the positions being adopted by school leaders and their responses to the requirement for this academic EBacc curriculum for all.

On 16 June, the secretary of state for education confirmed that this requirement will apply to all students, except those with special educational needs, in all maintained schools, though there is a willingness to explore the particular circumstances of UTCs and studio schools which may qualify for an exemption. Ofsted will be unable to award its highest ratings to schools that refuse to teach the EBacc to all pupils.

Schools will choose, therefore, to teach the EBacc to all, or to accept that they cannot be judged to be 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

Some schools will already be 'outstanding' and their leaders may have to forego that status – which may have implications for their existing work as NLEs and teaching schools.

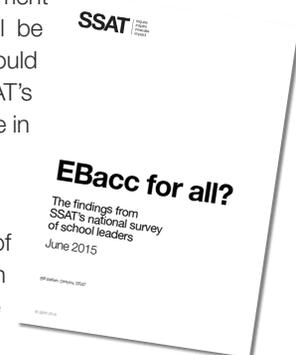
Some schools will be on the journey to 'outstanding', but will perhaps have to accept that there is a ceiling of 'good', beyond which they cannot pass, unless they redesign their curriculum to make all EBacc subjects a requirement.

The plan is that all pupils who start secondary school in September 2015, and who will start Y10 in 2018, will be required to be entered for GCSE exams in the full EBacc suite. There is to be a period of consultation, but the government will focus on *how* this initiative will be implemented, rather than on *if* it should be implemented. It is hoped that SSAT's survey and its findings will be of value in the consultation exercise.

A spectrum of views

Clearly there is a widespread of opinion and it is valuable to draw on as many different views as possible if we are to understand the thinking among school leaders about how this might impact on their schools and students.

- » The government are positioning the debate very much in its agenda to raise aspirations and achievement among more vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. Some schools are doing the same.
- » A number of arts organisations have expressed the view that a focus on the EBacc will pose a threat to non-EBacc subjects.
- » Some schools, of course, are worried about curriculum time (the impact on non-EBacc subjects), option choices (the choices available to students according to their aptitudes and abilities), staff recruitment (the skills required of the staff and the importance of recruiting according to the new curriculum requirements) and/or a one-size-fits-all curriculum (the notions of pathways and personalisation may need some reworking).



How did we get to this point?

When the last government announced the proposed new accountability measures for secondary schools, many felt that the move from 5+A*-CEM to Progress 8 was a good thing. Less focus on the C/D borderline; more emphasis on progress rather than raw attainment; greater attention paid to eight subjects, not just five. This all made sense.

Yes, the EBacc measure would still be reported in the performance tables but would not be a determining factor in the floor standards.

Schools were encouraged to enter more students for EBacc subjects; to do otherwise, we were told, would be to do the young people a disservice because their chances of getting into the best universities and of securing the best jobs would suffer if they did not qualify in the more rigorous and aspirational disciplines.

However, the EBacc was not compulsory. There was a broad understanding that it was not suitable for all students. Years of personalisation and flexible curriculum pathways had shown us that a critical tool in engaging learners was an accessible, appropriate and individualised (as far as possible) curriculum.

And it seemed that the government agreed:

'We expect some schools to offer EBacc subjects to many more pupils as a result of these accountability reforms.'

Update on Progress 8 measure and reforms to secondary school accountability framework, DfE, January 2014

Many more pupils, but not all.

And earlier this year, there seemed to be an understanding that curriculum and qualifications were not best served by a one-size-fits-all approach. Not everyone can or should go to a university. Many universities, including Russell Group universities, have stated that they do not have a preference for the EBacc. Not everyone can or should pursue academic studies. Society and the economy need school leavers and graduates with a wide range of qualifications, training, experience and skills.

And there was a commonly expressed view that if all pupils were to be pushed along a single (EBacc) curriculum pathway, the consequent risk would be heightened disaffection and disengagement among less academic learners.

But schools were told that they only had to enter students for EBacc subjects 'where appropriate':

'Schools should continue to focus on which qualifications are most suitable for individual pupils, as the grades pupils achieve will help them reach their goals for the next stage of their education or training.'

Progress 8 measure in 2016 and 2017, Guide for maintained secondary schools, academies and free schools, DfE, March 2015

Furthermore, Progress 8, we were told, did not demand all EBacc subjects. The EBacc category could be filled with three sciences and no humanities or languages at all. Essentially, at least one, if not two, of the EBacc disciplines were optional as far as the school's Progress 8 performance measure was concerned.

What is more, the government told us that it might even be advantageous to more vulnerable, less able, learners, to follow fewer subjects. If you impose the study of French on an SEN EAL student, he may conscientiously spend so much time trying to master the necessary skills and content for his French GCSE that his other studies suffer.

'It can be of more benefit to less-able students to strive for 'good' grades (and hence score more points) in fewer subjects, with the emphasis on doing well in English and mathematics, than to take more subjects but achieve lower grades overall.'

Factsheet: Progress 8 measure 2014 and 2015, DfE, February 2014

A manifesto promise

'We will require secondary school pupils to take GCSEs in English, maths, science, a language and history or geography, with Ofsted unable to award its highest ratings to schools that refuse to teach these core subjects.'

Conservative Manifesto, 2015

The case for the EBacc being a requirement for all

Those who express support for this requirement say that:

1. If it is aspirational and right for my child, should it not be right for all young people? How will we

close the attainment gap if we do not have equal expectations of young people from all points of the social spectrum? A child's background is not an excuse for lower achievement. Nor does social disadvantage equate to low achievement potential, of course.

2. The EBacc is a lever for social mobility and it must not be the preserve of the more advantaged sections of society. Socio-economic disadvantage is not the same thing as low ability at all, and this aspirational suite of qualifications is not only as important to less privileged young people, it is actually more important to them. These are the young people who desperately need the keys to open doorways to a successful adult and working life.
3. Recent research carried out by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, an independent body which monitors whether youngsters from poorer backgrounds have the same opportunities in the workplace, tells us that employers at elite companies are 'systematically excluding' candidates if they are not middle or upper class. It was found that 70% of 'elite' job offers went to graduates educated at selective state or fee-paying schools.

THE SURVEY FINDINGS

Respondents

In the first three days of the survey, 1500 responses were received. The total number received when the survey closed was 1664. The responding schools were almost all community schools and academies (91.5%). Eighty-eight per cent of responses came from 'good' (58.7%) or 'outstanding' (29.3%) schools. Responding schools catered for a predominantly more able student grouping with only 34.4% described as below average. Just over 1% of respondents already offer the EBacc to all, while in almost 40% of schools the full EBacc is followed by more than one pupil in two. This represents with a high degree of accuracy the national picture, in terms of both pupil ability distribution and Ofsted judgement.

The headline finding

Only 17% of respondents said that they would make the EBacc compulsory if that were a requirement for an 'outstanding' judgement from Ofsted, while 42% were certain that they would not. As would be expected, a nuanced and varied picture lay behind this headline finding. Through an analysis of the

responses to 16 multiple-choice questions and four opportunities to expand on their answers in greater detail, the following major themes emerged.

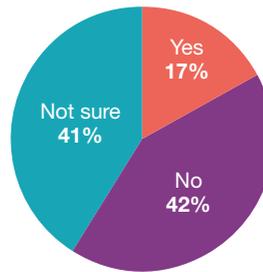


Fig 1. If an Ofsted 'outstanding' judgement required EBacc for all, will you make the EBacc compulsory?

The appropriateness of one path for all

Sixty-nine per cent of respondents would refuse to teach the EBacc for all, even if that meant a ceiling of Ofsted 'good' for their schools. Of the respondents from 'outstanding' schools, 47% would refuse to teach the EBacc for all, even if it meant losing their 'outstanding' status, while a further 33% remain undecided. Only 1 in 5 respondents from 'outstanding' schools said that they would make the EBacc compulsory for all.

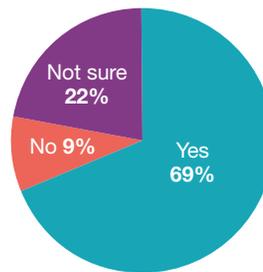


Fig 2. Would you consider 'refusing to teach' EBacc for all even if that meant accepting a ceiling of Ofsted 'good'?

Respondents offering their reasons for this quite startling set of results were often in favour, in theory, of the academically rigorous curriculum that the EBacc sets out and regularly stated that they thought it should be available to all:

'The EBacc should be available for all students to study but should not be compulsory.'

'I agree with much of what the government says and 100% believe in rigour and an academic curriculum but...'

'I believe it should be available to all to study if they wish. I do not believe it should be compulsory.'

'EBacc should be available to all but the student should have the option to follow their interests.'

However, there were no respondents who thought that it was the right path for all of their students:

‘...but to make full EBacc compulsory will damage self-esteem and overall outcomes for some students. It will add to anxiety that the current accountability structure has already magnified – mental health of teenagers is already a significant issue for schools.’

‘I shall continue to encourage all students who will benefit from doing the EBacc to take that route but it is certainly not for all.’

‘I would have little problem with a mandated core academic study for the 60 or so per cent of pupils likely to succeed in it. I only foresee misery and failure for the “forgotten” half of children under this measure.’

‘I think there is a social justice case for NOT forcing all students to do EBacc. In our current model, where all students can meet Progress and Attainment 8 but not all do EBacc, we can maximise progression route opportunities for all.’

Subject choice

Strongly linked to the idea of appropriate curriculum pathways for individual students is the issue of subject choice.

Only 9% of respondents said that their school would not have to make cuts to other subjects in the curriculum in order to accommodate the EBacc for all.

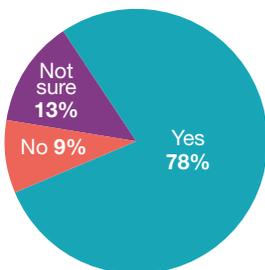


Fig 3. Would you need to cut certain subjects or reduce their curriculum time in order to teach EBacc for all?

The most commonly cited subjects under threat among the 78% of respondents who were certain of the need for cuts to non-EBacc subjects in their schools were technologies, arts, PE, RE. The reason for this appears to be that the addition of MFL and history/geography to the compulsory core reduces the amount of teaching periods available for optional subjects in the course of a normal school week.

‘Other subjects would inevitably be squeezed by EBacc for all as fewer students would opt for technology, music, art and business studies.’

‘...this would mean we reduce subjects that have an enormous impact on the school in terms of culture, breadth of curriculum and engagement.’

‘This goes against the broad and balanced curriculum entitlement statement in the national curriculum.’

Furthermore, 70% of respondents said that their school would have to reduce their vocational offer and a further 14% are not certain of the future of vocational learning at this stage. This inevitable reduction in the vocational offer and the lack of any place for an equal value vocational route within secondary education was referred to often in the written responses to the survey:

‘In countries where a traditional academic suite of qualifications is built into an expected core offer (e.g. Abitur study in Germany, Bac in France) these sit alongside a strong provision for approximately half to 60% of students who are more vocationally motivated from age 14 or so. This vocational learning model is completely absent from the department’s thinking, to the detriment of these proposals.’

‘For a society that needs creativity and people with technical skills, this is an unintelligent step.’

‘...Much better to have the expectation that ‘most’ students will follow the EBacc, with up to 20% having a more vocational curriculum better suited to their needs and which enables them to “achieve” something.’

Shifting the focus from the needs of individual students

There was a feeling that, just in the way that the EBacc did not cater to the needs of those students who would benefit from a gold-standard vocational route, it did not chime with the recent drives to personalise education to match the diverse needs of every student as far as possible.



'EBacc for all does not sit well with the importance of dealing with students as individual human beings.'

'Students are all individuals with no two students having the exact same skill set, and the curriculum should reflect this. In society we need people with a diverse skill set, surely therefore, our curriculum should guide them to a pathway best suited for their individual needs, leading to a country with experts in a range of fields.'

'I believe in the principle of getting the best for everyone but this must take into account the individual child. It is ironic that the government on one hand talks about individualism and personalisation yet they are trying to shape society through a de-personalised curriculum. In today's society this will simply not work and indeed is not beneficial.'

There was a strong sense that MFL would be particularly problematic for some students. Although EAL students can count a GCSE in their mother language in the EBacc measure, assuming their language will be represented in the GCSE lists, not all schools will be set up for this:

'How can a boy recently arrived in the country be expected to take French or German GCSE when he already speaks Lithuanian or Latvian and is learning English as a foreign language?'

'Our school historically made it a requirement for all pupils to take an MFL option at KS4 and we breathed a huge sigh of relief when it was removed from the compulsory GCSE option blocking system. Parents were delighted, pupils felt empowered, and staff relieved.'

Only 12% of respondents felt that the EBacc for all would benefit students. 80% felt there would be no benefit, with a further 8% unsure.

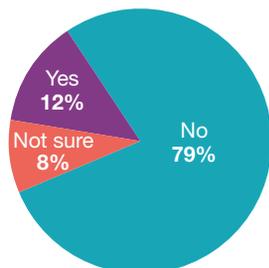


Fig 4. Do you believe that any of your students would benefit from a policy of EBacc for all?

Conversely, 94% of respondents felt that students would be disadvantaged by a compulsory EBacc curriculum, with a further 2% still unsure. The overwhelming view was that the EBacc requirement would benefit the more able but disadvantage the less able:

'Another example of how schools with above average intake will be able to take it in their stride and their students succeed even further, whereas schools with lower ability intakes in challenging circumstances will have another measure they will find hard to meet and therefore the EBacc for all will be another stick with which to beat us.'

'Appropriate for some but would make the less able switch off from secondary education – creating discipline problems that do not exist at present.'

'These changes are actually about introducing a greater divide and putting education further out of reach for many middle ability and less able children – regardless of their class!'

A retrograde step running counter to the professionalisation of teaching

It seemed that many respondents felt that, in shifting the focus from the needs of individual students, it is a policy that preferences centralised control over nuanced decision-making by professional educationalists.

'We should be able to choose a curriculum that best suits the students in our school.'

'School leaders are best placed to decide on the most appropriate, personalised pathways for their students, looking at the context of their school. A one-size-fits-all approach to schools, and to the curriculum within schools, is inappropriate and unhelpful.'

'Please allow educationalists to decide what is best for our students: we are teachers because we care about our students and for no other statistical reason. We would never allow our students to follow an inappropriate curriculum.'

Staffing difficulties

Compounding these conceptual challenges and disagreements was a worry that there would be real, practical staffing difficulties in implementing the

policy. Eighty-three per cent of respondents said that their schools would have to change their staffing, with 45% anticipating significant changes required.

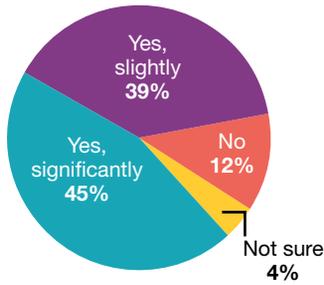


Fig 5. Would compulsory EBacc require to you to change the composition/skillset of your staff?

‘This would be a disaster. Where will the teachers come from when training and recruitment are in such disarray?’

‘It will further increase the shortage of teachers in some subject areas and will also dramatically impact upon budgets as a different staff body would be required.’

‘With budget issues as well, how can schools afford the costs to make staff redundant in certain areas where they may have given 20+ years of great service to the students?’

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Some respondents felt that the policy would be beneficial for some pupils, especially middle and high attainers who might not otherwise have picked academic subjects. People commented that this group could include a significant proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, and that this would help to raise their aspirations for FE and HE. There was also a feeling that a curriculum pathway that preferences traditional, academic subjects over others should be available to all.

However, there is an overwhelming feeling that the EBacc curriculum is not appropriate for all. Pupils with lower prior attainment, those newly arrived to the country, and some with poor literacy, were cited as being ‘set up to fail’ if forced to study a language and a humanity at GCSE. Many practitioners worried that this could distract students from the core curriculum of English, maths and science and limit the opportunity for these students to undertake rigorous vocational and technical courses. Many teachers suggested that vocational courses provide strong routes into further education, and that some pupils would be disadvantaged by forcing them down a purely academic route.

Furthermore, there was a feeling that, as offering the full EBacc would require other subjects to be cut from the KS4 options, students who had aptitude and interest in the arts and other creative subjects would miss out. Similarly, students for whom a predominantly STEM curriculum was appropriate would be equally disadvantaged (by the need to study for both a humanity and a language). The resulting changes to the subjects taught under a compulsory EBacc are a worry for many school leaders who already find recruitment of ‘good’ teachers, across the curriculum, a struggle.

Many respondents chose to comment on the discrepancy between the UK drive for digital and technical skills and this perceived return to a traditional, academic curriculum. School leaders are worried that the EBacc does not allow for sufficient personalisation in the curriculum, or value their professional judgement of what is best for their students. The overriding message in the responses is that while take-up of the EBacc should be available for all and encouraged for the most able learners, whatever their background, it is not appropriate for all, and will lead to an unhelpful and regressive narrowing of the curriculum.

The following recommendations are offered:

1. As many pupils as possible, on the basis of aptitude, interest, opportunity and ability, should be encouraged to study the EBacc subjects. But schools should be empowered to deploy their professional judgement in deciding the nature of their own curriculum requirements and pathways.
2. Schools should not be penalised for allowing pupils to follow curriculum pathways other than the EBacc. A school can be ‘outstanding’ without all pupils studying a particular selection of subjects.
3. Take up of the EBacc should be encouraged, but phased in over time, in order that schools can work towards a staff body that has the necessary skills and in order that schools have sufficient time to recruit suitable teachers.
4. In its efforts to drive the rigour agenda, the government needs also to communicate the value of vocational education, the arts and the technologies.
5. UTCs and studio schools merit particular consideration. The EBacc curriculum for all is at odds with their vision.

SSAT will be submitting a response to the government consultation on EBacc for all using the findings of this survey.



Careers provision: how to mend a fragmented system

*Dr Deirdre Hughes OBE, Associate Fellow
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Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* divides the public purposes of education into two parts: that which can be acquired through daily experience ‘without any attention of government’ and that for which ‘some attention of government is necessary’ (Smith, 1937, p734).¹

This article considers the degree of attention needed by central and local government with local agencies to mend a fragmented careers support system for young people across England. It focuses on the UK productivity challenge to assist in making sense of the careers landscape, since jobs, skills and growth are inextricably linked to the well-being of individuals, communities and our economy. SSAT is exploring solutions that can bring about urgent improvements in careers provision for young people throughout England.

Meeting the UK productivity challenge

Education has a social and a moral purpose. What we learn in our early education contributes to how we conduct ourselves as adults. Schools, colleges and universities have an important role to play in helping their students learn more about roles and responsibilities, and how these relate to the world of work. Our economy has been growing since the start of 2013 and looks set to continue.

But the recession was deeper and longer than ever before, and for various reasons productivity was set back greatly and has yet to recover. Productivity is falling behind where it would have been if it had kept its pre-recession trend (CBI, 2015).² What has productivity got to do with careers provision? While

job creation trends are impressive, real wages fell in the recession and have declined and stagnated at least until the end of 2014, when we have seen some growth with inflation so low. The UK is ‘below western European average levels of temporary and involuntary part-time work’ (UKCES, 2015).³ Signals to young people (and parents) about the added value of learning and work are becoming more blurred.

For example, weighing up the cost benefits of higher education can be difficult for some young people even though ‘in difficult conditions graduates continue to experience better outcomes than non-graduates in both lifetime earnings and employability (JUK, 2014).⁴ Many young people have concerns about the added-value returns for their investments in learning and work, job quality, zero hour contracts and future salaries.

With 1 in 5 vacancies in the UK difficult to fill because of a lack of the right skills in the labour market, the importance of developing the skilled and experienced workforce of tomorrow cannot be overstated. In current (and future) labour markets individuals will continue to experience new patterns of work, with changing expectations affecting the way we do things and how we behave. This has enormous implications for schools and colleges and their curriculum design and delivery in helping students to look ahead and prepare themselves for a very different world.

How do you solve the problem of mending a fragmented careers system?

Before considering how to mend a fragmented careers system, is it right to assume the current system is not working properly? The evidence is compelling: over the last two years a plethora of published reports from



employer, education, trade union and careers sector bodies (as well as the Education Select Committee findings⁵ and the National Careers Council's heat map of careers provision across England and two reports commissioned by Government⁶) reaffirm the urgent need for improved careers provision for young people across England.

There are growing concerns about young people's lack of awareness in making good connections between their educational experiences and the realities of labour markets. Many young people remain caught in a catch-22 situation, finding it 'difficult to get work without experience and difficult to obtain experience without work' (UKCES, 2015).⁷ A comparison of the career aspirations of 11,000 teenagers, against the projected distribution of the 13.5 million new and replacement jobs predicted to emerge in our economy over the next decade, has shown the two have nothing in common (Mann et al., 2013).⁸ In some geographical areas, for example London, the proportion of young people in apprenticeships and jobs with training stands at half the England average in 2014 and has fallen over the last 12 months (IoE, 2014).⁹ Across England, the latest figures show 178,100 16 to 18-year-olds failed to complete post-16 qualifications they started in 2012/13, and are at risk of becoming not in employment, education or training (NEET).¹⁰

Analysis for the Local Government Association by the Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion indicates the cost to the public purse of this wasted education and skills provision is £814 million – 12% of all government spending on post-16 education and skills (op. cit.). The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee (December 2014) has raised concerns that 100,000 plus young people (aged 16-18) are off the radar... too many young people simply disappear from all relevant public systems.¹¹ The Fabian Society (December 2014) puts the estimate higher: 'We have lost track of over 150,000 young people nationally, including over 50,000 NEETs.'¹² This is a serious problem as research shows unemployment in youth can scar prospects throughout working life, not just at the time.

Young men are a third less likely than young girls to apply to higher education, and the relationship between participation in higher education and disadvantage is such that the more disadvantaged young men are, the less likely they are to apply to higher education (UCU, 2014).¹³ Variations in gender balance in different subjects also persist (HoL, 2015).¹⁴ Overall, there is universal agreement that a culture change in careers provision is necessary, but the actual mechanisms for achieving this have become less clear. ➔

Making sense of the current careers landscape in England

In 2011, significant changes to the delivery of careers support for young people were ushered in. The introduction of the Education Act (2011)¹⁵, followed by a dismantling of the Connexions service in England (2012)¹⁶, and local authorities no longer having responsibility for providing a universal careers guidance offer (but they retain responsibility for providing targeted support for vulnerable young people) have led to a new era in England's careers landscape.

Over a three-year period, the process to rebuild and re-engineer careers provision for young people has been slow, with false starts and a recent 'new dawn'. Developments include:

Firstly, an all-age National Careers Service, launched in April 2012¹⁷, became a predominantly adult careers service, with online rather than face-to-face (unless in exceptional circumstances) careers support aimed at young people. This self-help and brief-assisted service became the new careers offer for young people and schools. Since April 2012, the overall budget provided by government departments has remained broadly static (circa £106m).

Secondly, in September 2012, schools – after four decades of having available a publicly-funded service – were given a statutory duty to secure access for their pupils to 'independent and impartial careers guidance', with no dedicated government funding to commission such services. Despite this, some schools have risen to this challenge, putting in place careers, enterprise and employability support for their students, while others continue to struggle to achieve this. Ofsted, in its sample survey, found that only a fifth of the 60 schools it surveyed were giving the right careers information to pupils (Ofsted, 2013).¹⁸

Thirdly, a neo-liberal approach to careers provision was adopted, whereby government stimulated the market in careers providers resulting in a crowded, confused and complex landscape, with a multiplicity of disjointed careers provision. There is an assumption from government that market-based goods and services ensure greater responsiveness to consumer choice and offer better and/or more innovative services for lower prices. However, very little research has been conducted into the effects of market principles applied in career provision (Meijers, 2001)¹⁹ and the cost benefits to governments and individuals (ELGPN, 2012).²⁰

Fourthly, the Chancellor's Autumn Statement announcement (October, 2014) was well received; a £20m investment for careers advice and support for young people (para. 2.227).²¹

Fifthly, in early December 2014, the secretary of state for education announced plans for a new independent careers and enterprise company in England.²² This moved beyond recommendations proposed by the National Careers Council's report to government (2014). The company will 'ensure employers are supporting young people with decision-making and career development at every stage of school life'.²³

The new careers and enterprise company's work will be aimed at schools, to transform the provision of careers education and advice for young people and inspire them about the opportunities offered by the world of work. This will focus on young people aged 12 to 18 and will 'help to broker relationships between employers on one hand and schools and colleges on the other' (Department for Education, op. cit.). The new company will be employer-led and independent of government, with governance and advisory board arrangements established in March 2015.²⁴ The National Careers Service will form part of the advisory arrangements and will have a formal 'Memorandum of Understanding' with the new company (it currently has a 5% allocated budget from the Skills Funding Agency for 'brokerage services' to schools and colleges). The extent to which employers within the new careers and enterprise company may lead the way in setting out new careers policies and practices has yet to be determined.

A recent report by Warwick University IER, on behalf of the Department for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS), sets out findings from a study focused on understanding the link between employers, schools and the National Careers Service (BIS, 2014).²⁵ While many employers are doing great work with schools, colleges and universities need to step up and offer young people more work experiences and opportunities. This is a major challenge given findings from a survey of just over 300 employers which highlights over 50% did not engage, and had no plans to engage in working links with schools because they saw no real benefits to their business and there are too many restrictions to navigate (BIS op. cit.). This may also help explain the Government and Skills Funding Agency's focus on the need to strengthen 'brokerage arrangements' between schools and employers.

Establishing a new company takes time and could potentially be a complicated process. There will be a need to establish clear protocols, mechanisms for agreeing the balance of investment funding for careers and enterprise activities, and a transparent process of distribution.

In a very crowded landscape the new company must be clear on the actual problem it is trying to solve. This may be to:

- » set up brokerage arrangements between schools and employers (something the National Careers Service has in its delivery remit from 1 October 2014 onwards with small-scale funding; Business in the Community (BiTC) also has a remit in this regard)
- » target 'cold spots' where careers provision is weak, working closely with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and other local agencies
- » quality assure and invest in scalable and sustainable careers and enterprise initiatives that help build capacity in schools and colleges
- » strengthen working links with the careers profession
- » evaluate careers and enterprise policies that have been proven to work well and disseminate good and interesting practices.

The extent to which Lord Young's enterprise agenda²⁶ becomes the dominant theme is something to be reconciled. Concrete agreements will need to be reached and improved careers information, advice and guidance for students needs to be achieved. This is truly a new era for careers work in England and this 'experiment' needs to work. Given these key components are in place (alongside other related developments such as the DWP Youth Guarantee)²⁷ it seems timely to take stock and situate not just problems and challenges but also to identify solutions that will improve the careers offer to young people.

We should ask ourselves whether or not the attention given by government to date is sufficient to mend a fragmented system (are we pointing in the right direction)? Should cities simply get on with it and create/shape their own careers offer for young people? This is the current direction of travel in London.

Alternatively, should more schools cluster with a local college to find their own ways of maximising their limited and shared careers resources? Some evidence is emerging that LEPs and City Deals are starting to step up to find their own local solutions.



To what extent can a largely unregulated careers provider market in England deliver in the public interest? Lessons from the Netherlands, who have adopted a similar approach, show marketisation of career guidance leads to an impoverished supply of services, both in the quantitative as well as in the qualitative sense (Hughes & Meijers, 2014).²⁸ This can also reduce innovation and significantly narrow the 'careers offer' to young people.

How do you catch this 'careers cloud' and pin it down?

Who you know and where you live have a big impact on the opportunities available to young people. It is time to do something more for all young people, parents and teachers. Our education landscape requires young people to make early subject choice decisions (some from 13 years old upwards) and the raising of the participation age from 16 to 18 years old by 2015 signals further challenges for this current generation of school pupils, parents and teachers. A fragmented and incoherent national system will only lead to more individuals 'falling between the cracks', not knowing where best to go for careers support within and beyond their formal schooling.

Careers provision is a public as well as a private good. It is time to 'pin this cloud down' into a coherent 'careers offer' for all young people. If we want to keep more young people switched on to learning; encourage them not to close down opportunities too early; broaden horizons and challenge inaccurate assumptions; and create relevant experiences and exposure to the world of work, including techniques for career adaptability and resilience, then more needs to be done. The historical evolution of a careers service and profession constantly uprooted by successive governments now requires a more stabilised education and careers system. Finding a way to reduce fractures rather than create new ones is paramount.



Reflecting on the journey so far, there are at least six ways to catch this ‘careers cloud’ that has floated, hovered and fragmented in recent years.

1. Take steps to ensure the £20m allocated by government to the new independent careers and enterprise company reaches into schools, colleges and the National Careers Service to support capacity building in leadership and delivery teams.
2. Ensure ‘independent’ and ‘impartial’ careers guidance is available for all students by providing schools and colleges with free and/or subsidised access to independent and impartial qualified careers development professionals, i.e. career coaches, advisers, mentors.
3. Streamline the plethora of careers products and services that have flooded the schools system and strengthen quality assurance mechanisms to reduce both wasted time and money on underdeveloped systems.
4. Recognise young people will experience different careers support at different stages with different levels of intensity. In this regard, support the development of a local ‘careers offer for young people’ but situate and communicate this within a coherent national framework for young people, parents and teachers.
5. Embed labour market intelligence and information more fully in schools and colleges using reliable open source data such as ‘LMI for All’ and support the development of apps for pedagogical purposes within and outside the classroom.
6. Agree a series of controlled trials, working with national and local providers, to support young people’s learning and work destinations, including evidence of the impact and added-value of local careers provision.

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Insights from the Educational Outcomes Celebration and Networking evenings

*Caroline Barlow, Head of Innovation &
Alex Galvin, Head of Curriculum, SSAT*

In May, SSAT held six regional events all over the country and met over 300 of our members. Certificates were presented to schools that had achieved an Educational Outcomes Award, and together we explored current issues and priorities around curriculum.

We asked a series of questions to help shape these discussions, which proved to be a valuable opportunity for attendees to benchmark their experiences and share effective ideas.

From these conversations, we have collated schools' 'top concerns' and some sample strategies from the list of those shared. This article is abridged from the full write-up, available to members at www.sssatuk.co.uk/theexchange.

WHAT YOU TOLD US ABOUT KS4

Key questions we asked:

1. What changes have been made to options structures to accommodate Progress 8/ Attainment 8/EBacc? Are there any groups of students that consequently have a different offer than they might have done previously?
2. Are you 'offering' EBacc to all pupils; do they have a choice?
3. Has the balance of academic/vocational offer changed? What changes have you made to ensure qualifications 'count' or has your offer remained unchanged?
4. What changes have been made to your curriculum model in the light of changes to

specs: Fat Maths; greater focus on SPAG? What's gone in order to make room?

5. How far have budget constraints influenced your decision-making around curriculum?
6. What is the impact on your SEND students likely to be in the light of greater rigour and more challenge? What strategies have you found effective so far?
7. What impact have these changes had on your staffing model? What impact are you experiencing in recruitment?

You told us you are most concerned about:

- » how curriculum is being narrowed by Progress 8 and budgetary restraints
- » how policy changes will affect different groups of students
- » how to balance performance measures with managing the needs of students
- » recruitment and increasing pressures on current staff
- » funding is a major concern.

Sample strategies

Curriculum structure

Some schools were exploring or had already got versions of a three-year KS4.

- » Option phase 1 in year 8 to choose six options. Option phase 2 in year 9 reduces these six to four. Languages compulsory for all until the end of year 9.
- » Early entry technology in year 10. Early entry for some subjects in year 9 and 10 to enable extra time for other subjects.

- » five-year programme approach to GCSE, no changes to KS3 but extra maths and English in years 9-11.

Additional support and intervention

- » Keep up not catch up! For example, an hour a week called 'managing learning' allows for cycles of the core subjects; others start phonics, numeracy and offer extra literacy in year 7, taking students out of MFL.

Keeping breadth in the curriculum

- » Examples included two hours of enrichment/creative activities in the curriculum (cooking, languages, first aid); carousels of a creative curriculum to create breadth.

Supporting achievement in core subjects

- » Additional maths and English time was being found by reducing the number of options and time spent on art, DT and ICT.
- » Some schools were increasing or overstaffing in English, maths and science, going as far as reducing breaks to enable more staff contact time and create more short lessons for English and maths.

Progress 8/Attainment 8

- » The use of 4 Matrix or other models for Progress 8/Attainment 8 modelling is informing target setting and tracking.

Recruitment and staff well-being

- » You believed in developing staff in-school. This could mean using very good teachers across the curriculum, not just their subject. Schools felt strongly about the power of making staff feel supported: Friday breakfasts; fewer briefings; getting behaviour right so staff can enjoy the job; healthcare plans...

WHAT YOU TOLD US ABOUT KS3

Key questions we asked:

1. What links do you have with KS2; have you changed how you work on curriculum continuity, data transfer and transition in the light of curriculum reform?
2. What changes have been made to the delivery and SoW at KS3 to reflect what pupils have learned in the new KS2 and to prepare for KS4/5 knowledge skills and understanding?



3. Levels or no levels?
4. Have you adjusted the time given to maths and English at KS3? How, and at what cost?
5. To what extent has the delivery of SPAG been developed at KS3 to prepare for KS4/5? Has it been in all subjects?
6. Have you considered end-of-year exams and memory retention skills development for KS3 as part of the preparation for KS4/5? How?

You told us you are most concerned about:

- » assessment and life beyond levels
- » preparation for new GCSEs
- » transition
- » literacy development
- » increased emphasis on maths and English
- » the KS3 curriculum.

Sample strategies

Assessment without levels

- » There were examples of primary and secondary working together to devise a scale. There were also examples of collaborative approaches to developing a new KS3 assessment model; certainly many had adopted an assessment working party to ensure cross-curricular involvement.





Developing literacy skills

- » There was a clear understanding about the increased emphasis on SPAG. Many evidenced more time for literacy in form time. A number of schools spoke of separately marking and recording a SPAG mark on all internal assessments, spelling games and activities. This was often evidenced in work scrutiny and book samples.

Developing wider skills

- » Some viewed year 7 as prime for a focus on skills and attitudes for learning. Others had taken a step further and were starting thinking skills formally (OCR years 8-9). There were interesting views around overtly teaching memory skills; some viewed this as essential whereas others valued thinking skills above memory skills, arguing that if we teach for understanding, the retention follows.

Increased emphasis on English and maths

- » A large number of schools had increased time at KS3 for English and maths. Some started GCSE in Y9. Most felt they needed to support KS3 to help prepare the skills required further on due to increased content experienced at KS2 and expected at KS4. Some had introduced STEM as a way to increase time and provide relevance. However many also said adjustments in KS3 maths and English was at the cost of shrinkage in other areas, including MFL and the creative arts.

Preparation for tougher, linear exams

- » Some had increased the exam experience, including more mocks in KS4 and also more exams in KS3 at end of year (e.g. from end-of-year exams for Y7 to formal exams three times a year to prepare for KS4 in core subjects, moving to once a year in foundation). Others

changed the academic calendar for all students to include more regular and formal testing. The practical logistics of this were clearly questions to resolve.

KS2 TO 3 TRANSITION

It is clear is that there is increasing collaboration between primary and secondary, and soft federations are being created to formalise partnerships where chains and trusts do not exist. Shared moderation between KS2 and KS3 was evident and clearly helped to ensure consistency in different levels and systems. An example of a pupil passport included best pieces of work levelled for each subject.

What you told us about the wider curriculum

We asked key questions:

1. What does character mean at your school?
2. How can it be 'taught' or planned for? Can/should these aspects be assessed?
3. What issues are you experiencing around well-being and mental health? How do you manage/mitigate these?
4. What do you celebrate and reward? How?
5. To what extent do you map/plan for every student's 'cultural entitlement'?
6. What do 'British values' look like in your school? SMSC?
7. How important is student leadership? For how many, in what contexts?
8. How are your students prepared for employability and the world beyond school? To what extent are wider stakeholders partners in the process?
9. What provision do you have in place for CEIAG?

You told us you were most concerned about:

- » The mental well-being of your students (parents/ staff).
- » Exam pressure is a key factor with many schools expressing concern for the mental health of students who will sit exams every year in all subjects. Some felt this especially for girls.
- » Safeguarding an increasingly complex area.
- » Re-sits in year 7 - not a good idea.
- » You are not convinced a focus on British values is helpful.
- » It isn't clear how provision for student well-being or British values will be judged.
- » You believe that it is vital to look at the entirety of your students' experiences and that student leadership is key.
- » It is difficult to keep up to date on careers guidance.
- » In parental perceptions of 'good careers', cultural issues are sometimes a barrier.

Sample strategies

Students' personal development

- » Duke of Edinburgh, ASDAN and outward bound experiences are designed to build emotional resilience. Humanutopia do workshops on self-esteem, developing a programme including resilience. Many felt it is important to provide opportunities that are not the 'norm'.

Supporting vulnerable students (and parents)

- » To support mental health, schools are pooling resources with other schools. Citizenship programmes are signposting the way; there is use of non-teaching support staff, outside agencies, PSHE, growth mindset, and strong mentoring. To support well-being, schools are bringing in direct services through CAMHS, in-school counselling, outside experts, local charities, recruiting their own counsellors, and using the HeadStart Project.

Supporting the engagement of all students

- » Use pupil premium funding to ensure that, by a certain age, certain experiences have been had by all students (e.g. a residential, or foreign trip). Overtly track student attendance at assemblies and trips. Establish a clear cultural entitlement.

Approaches to Information, advice and guidance

- » A careers development plan to bring careers awareness lower down the school. Develop

a sixth form team to have expert knowledge and share with KS3 and 4. Employ support staff three days a week for careers, advice and guidance. Make links to universities and organise work experience; offer employability BTEC with local employer (does not count in performance tables).

SMSC and PSHE

- » Have named people in each department responsible for developing subject responses to SMSC. Map your ethos across the curriculum; have explicit attributes overtly developed throughout themes. Many felt that teachers do this automatically but not in an obvious or planned way. Others were delivering through collapsed days. However some schools are cutting PSHE because of curriculum pressures and instead delivering in tutor time, etc. The view was expressed: is it really right to have 'resilience' lessons?

Developing student leadership

- » Leadership development provided from year 7; all sixth formers having a leadership role; mini leadership teams in KS3 and KS4, mini student SLG, behaviour panels, student councils; students as learning/subject ambassadors, sports leaders, observers, interpreters, mentors, peer tutors, tutor group reps, tour guides, interviewers; student-led extra-curricular activities, for example lunchtime clubs or sports clubs. Make non-academic awards: student passport, school visits, leading assemblies, mentoring others, charity work. Broader enrichment activities encourage and develop leadership potential.

Safeguarding

- » Targeted PSHE programmes; prevention training for staff and governors; staff Inset on tackling extremism and radicalisation.

We are very grateful to all our members who participated so openly and honestly with these national conversations.

If you feel you have areas of practice that have proven impact and would benefit others as a case study, or if you would appreciate further collaboration to improve aspects of this work in your school we are waiting to hear from you – please contact us on info@ssatuk.co.uk.



Teacher development programme at Capital City Academy

*Laura Ellener, Deputy Headteacher,
Capital City Academy*

Peter Tang, our assistant principal and lead for CPD, says 'The quality of learning will not exceed the quality of teaching'. At Capital we believe in investing in all of our teachers, and by working in collaboration with others we can achieve excellence in all of our classrooms.

Effective CPD is not about going on a course for a day, but rather about developing consistent and effective strategies for raising attainment. We aim to deliver as much of our CPD as possible ourselves, as this helps the person delivering to develop their knowledge and skills, and ensures that there is no 'knowledge-implementation' gap that is often a feature of external CPD provision. We provide a termly CPD offer to all staff, so that everyone knows the opportunities that are available.

Action research is an important feature of life at the academy, with successful projects running in conjunction with the Institute of Education. Staff have the chance to develop a particular area of expertise and work as researchers at Masters level in school. Recently we have collaborated with the University of Bristol and the Education Endowment Foundation on different projects, as we want to shape the latest educational research and to lead rather than be led.

We are lucky to have a hard working and vibrant group of beginning teachers for whom we provide weekly professional studies sessions. They are the school leaders of tomorrow and four have successfully applied to be part of Teaching Leaders from September. All teachers have the opportunity to lead staff development through our fortnightly Friday

morning Insets, which are focused CPD opportunities for teachers to demonstrate a particular area of expertise. They are always well attended.

We recognise improvement comes as the result of sustained practice and reflection and that all leaders have a responsibility as leaders of learning. All staff self-evaluate their practice and create a personal development plan which is revisited throughout the year.

Perhaps the most powerful lever for transforming our classrooms after curriculum redesign has been the introduction of our coaching model. A mere hint of 'Lemov' and 'Teach Like a Champion' (TLaC) can cause some teachers to run to the hills, with talk of teaching by numbers and a formulaic approach to pedagogy. Kareen White, our director of teaching and learning, might even admit to being in this camp only 12 months ago. Now leading coaching at Capital, Kareen and her team of coaches can regularly be heard talking of 'show-call', 'do-now' or 'everybody writes'. Although we may not have been early adopters of the no grading of lessons bandwagon, Capital is now a fully signed-up member, believing that the best use of observation is to increase the impact of teaching on learning. Using the TLaC techniques has enabled us to be more precise in our coaching steps and areas for development.

Our coaching is based upon the 'Leverage Leadership' model developed by the Uncommon Schools Organisation (an American Charter management organisation). It provides a focused observation/feedback model based on a weekly fifteen-minute observation and a thirty-minute feedback session. Coaches create and share action steps to provide concise, powerful ways to improve student outcomes.



Observations do not judge teachers but seek to find the most effective ways to improve learning. It is our belief that successful coaching unlocks the potential of teachers in order to maximise their performance and the learning of students. It recognises that teachers are learners and provides time for teachers to talk about teaching and to learn from one another.

Feedback from those being coached would seem to suggest that it is having an impact:

‘Coaching has been very beneficial to my teaching as I have had more time to reflect on my teaching practice, and I have the input of a colleague from outside my department. Setting attainable targets with actions steps has allowed me to succeed.’

‘My coach has been exceptional and I have gained so much in a short time. Coaching time is a very positive experience for me and my coach has set action steps which have enhanced my teaching in the areas of using IT as a teaching tool and in making my lessons more interactive.’

‘It has been helpful to receive support and action steps from a colleague outside my department and it allows for the development of alternative ideas. I feel that this has aided my progress in my role.’

We are currently coaching more than 30 teachers at Capital City Academy and have trained more than 30 teachers to be coaches. Kareen White, has been leading the initiative and led an open training session in January 2015. Many of the coaching steps are drawn from *Teach Like a Champion* and Kareen and

I met Doug Lemov, its author, at a two-day training session he led in London last autumn.

One element Kareen has always championed is that of the videoed lesson and the power this can give to the coaching discussion. We have invested in STAR cameras so that all teachers can reflect on their own classroom practice. Watching and listening to your own teaching style, individually or in pairs for the brave, can make for awkward viewing. You are your own biggest critic, but the gains from self-reflection are immense. Technology has allowed staff to reflect on their own and others’ teaching, using this to deconstruct practice and gather our own bank of training clips.

In their training, Capital teachers and guests learnt how to observe for coaching, give feedback, model (a key part of the philosophy) and practice teaching strategies, as well as hear from some of our coaches and those they coach. They said:

‘I am looking forward to getting started with leverage coaching and can honestly say that it was one of the best training days I’ve attended since becoming a Teach First Ambassador.’

‘It was great to see fellow Teach Firsters being developed with the skills required to become effective middle leaders.’

Key readings

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Links

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- The Sutton Trust, *Developing Teachers, Improving professional development for teachers* (2015). www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/developing-teachers

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SSAT National Conference 2015: Quality & Equity

*Tom Middlehurst,
National Conference Director, SSAT*

This year we are pleased to announce that all SSAT member secondary schools have one place at the National Conference included in your membership.

The conference will combine inspirational speakers and thought-leading academics with over 50 school-led workshops from outstanding and innovative school leaders. Above all, the conference is your annual opportunity to network with other SSAT members, seek support from one another, and find new areas for collaboration and cooperation. We look forward to welcoming all of our members to Manchester on 3-4 December to explore the theme of 'Quality & Equity'.

Delegates will choose one of three strands to focus on for each day of the conference: all of which promote quality and equity in our system:

CLOSING THE GAPS

Identifying and closing the gaps between different groups of students

We are all aware of the need to close the achievement gap between the most disadvantaged young people and their peers, which continues to be a national priority at every stage of schooling. But where are the other gaps in your school? This strand will explore interesting ways of systematically identifying, tracking and monitoring the gaps between different groups of students for different outcomes, as well as innovative interventions that have been used to successfully close these gaps. Different groups of students will include pupil premium, SEND, white working-class, most-able, EAL, LGBT, middle attainers, and many others.

RAISING THE BAR

Continually improving a range of educational outcomes for all students

If we are to prepare our students for successful and fulfilling lives, we need to support them to get excellent outcomes at the critical stages of the school system: at KS2, KS4 and KS5. In part, this strand will look at how school leaders are helping students make the grade, and also preparing for the new assessment and accountability framework in the coming years. However, a student's grades alone are a poor simulacrum for the whole child: if we are serious about social mobility then we need to deliver a range of outcomes. This strand will explore how schools are systematically developing students' character traits, non-cognitive skills, and resilience.

LEADING LEARNING

Putting learning at the heart of school leadership

How do you ensure that, as a leader, every decision you make is focused on the needs of your learners? This strand will look at the strategic leadership of learning across a school or a group of schools, covering curriculum design, whole-school pedagogy, assessment after levels, and student voice. Leading learning will also consider teachers as ongoing learners, looking at innovative approaches to CPD and teacher research.

Turn over to see details of the confirmed speakers so far at the conference. ►►

National Conference 2015: Quality & Equity

3-4 December, Manchester Central

Raising the bar while closing the gaps.

Speakers confirmed so far

Ani Magill is known as a headteacher who challenges and inspires in equal measure. Not only does Ani secure outstanding outcomes for her students, she is also committed to developing her staff, 'producing' four headteachers in as many years and playing a system-driving role as an NLE.

Speaking in: whole conference plenary

Professor Barry Carpenter OBE is renowned for his expertise on complex needs. He will bring both theoretical understanding of the most vulnerable students in your school, and ideas for interventions and provisions.

Speaking in: morning seminars

Professor Becky Francis was invited because of her work on social identities and educational performance. Becky's work has explored a range of identities including gender, white working class and other ethnicities, and their impact on student outcomes, to find opportunities for making genuine and lasting social mobility a reality.

Speaking in: Closing the Gaps strand

Bill Watkin will set the conference themes of quality and equity against the national policy and school improvement agenda. Bill's interpretation of policy will make sure you leave well-informed and prepared.

Speaking in: whole conference plenary

Could you present a school workshop?

We are looking for school leaders with innovative practice in each of the three strands. If you think you have something exciting to share with other members, we'd love you to apply to present a workshop. Please visit ssatuk.co.uk/NC15 to download an application form.

Applications close Tuesday 21 July.

Dave Harris is well-known for his work on leadership dialogues, and will explore how school leaders can build a common understanding and shared vocabulary around teaching and learning.

Speaking in: morning seminars

Professor Guy Claxton expressed an interest in working with SSAT members to continue his lifetime's work of identifying what really matters in our schools – that students get brilliant results and are also equipped with the skills and character traits that are needed to lead successful lives in the future.

Speaking in: whole conference plenary

Professor James Arthur is director of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham. Character is something we know is rightly a key consideration for schools. James is an international authority on character development and its link to morality.

Speaking in: Raising the Bar strand

Joan Deslandes is a headteacher who has successfully closed the gaps in challenging settings. She leads her school to be at the forefront of developments in teaching and learning, using its language specialism, Confucius classroom status and Leading Edge partnership to help students contribute to the wider life of the school and the local and international community. Joan has twice been named by the London Evening Standard as one of the 1000 most influential Londoners for her work in education.

Speaking in: whole conference plenary

Sir John Dunford OBE helped inform our thinking about the National Conference themes through his work as National Pupil Premium Champion and his contribution to our 2014 Annual Lecture. Sir John speaks passionately about how social mobility relies on closing the gap between the most disadvantaged students and their peers while simultaneously raising the quality of the education system as a whole.

Speaking in: whole conference plenary

Dr Lisa Lande is executive director of the Teacher Voice and Aspirations International Center. She has dedicated her professional endeavours to advocating for teachers and students around the globe. It is her aspiration that every classroom in every school is one that she would want her own three children to learn in.

Speaking in: morning seminars

Ross Morrison McGill was the perfect choice to speak on leading learning, having been a dynamic force in promoting lifelong learning for both students and staff in the schools he has worked with. Ross is the most followed teacher on Twitter and was named as one of the five hundred most influential people in the UK in 2015 by Debrett's.

Speaking in: Leading Learning strand

Dr Russ Quaglia is an internationally renowned expert on aspirations and achievement, whose work is well known in the US and is becoming increasingly cited in England. The three principles of the Quaglia Framework offer a practical way to guide the development of educational experiences: self-worth, engagement, and purpose.

Speaking in: whole conference plenary

Ruth Hunt is the chief executive of Stonewall, the charity that puts the case for equality for LGBT people on the mainstream agenda. A 2012 survey indicated that over half of LGBT young people have experienced discrimination or abuse while at school, and as an official Stonewall training partner, SSAT is committed to helping end homo, bi and transphobic (HBT) bullying in schools.

Speaking in: Closing the Gaps strand.

Shona MacLeod is senior research manager at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). Her specific interest in social exclusion and disadvantaged groups has informed her work with a wide range of young people including those at risk of becoming NEET. Shona has recently led NFER's project with the DfE on the most effective use of the pupil premium, and will be sharing her findings at the conference.

Speaking in: morning seminars

Stephen Tierney brings to the National Conference his experience as an executive headteacher, an SSAT leadership programme trainer, and chair of the innovative Vision 2040 group whose vision for the next 25 years is founded on the principles of quality, equity and agency – goals which have inspired the theme of this year's National Conference.

Speaking in: whole conference plenary

Book your free place now!

Every headteacher in a secondary member school has a free place* at this year's conference.

The standard delegate rate has been capped at £300 to help you and your staff access every strand of the SSAT network's flagship annual conference.

Once you've booked your place at the conference, you will be sent a prompt in the autumn term to make your workshop selections. Make sure you make your selection quickly to avoid disappointment!

*One free place is available to secondary schools paying the full annual secondary membership fee.

Sue Williamson is chief executive of SSAT and looks forward to welcoming you to the conference. Quality and equity are values that have always underpinned Sue's work in school improvement, both in her time as headteacher and at SSAT.

Professor Tanya Byron is a chartered clinical psychologist, returning to the SSAT National Conference by popular demand. Always entertaining, Tanya brings a fresh perspective on young people's psychological well-being and how we can help our students cope with the demands of high-stakes testing and entry into the competitive global jobs market.

Speaking in: whole conference plenary

Professor Tim Oates CBE will be speaking about progress and attainment, providing essential challenge to help school leaders make sure they are always striving for better. Tim will draw on examples of outstanding practice from England and the best international systems to give practical recommendations.

Speaking in: Raising the Bar strand

Tom Sherrington is a headteacher well-known for putting the needs of his students before the perceived dictates of policy. Writing as @headguruteacher, Tom is a fierce advocate for doing right by young people. Tom reminds us that, as Stephen Covey says, 'the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing'.

Speaking in: Leading Learning strand