

## UKLA statements of principle on curriculum change

Given the multitude of proposed curriculum changes at all key stages from early years/foundation stage to post-16, we felt it was important to set out some of the statements of principle that UKLA feels are central to our ongoing discussions. The statements are listed below along with some suggested readings which offer detail about the ideas underpinning them.

The idea of a list of statements of principle arose from discussions between several associations at a meeting of the Common English Forum. The statements below draw very closely on a similar set produced by the English and Media Centre which you can access at:

<http://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/>

They also relate to the Common English Forum response to the DfE consultation on reforming key stage 4 qualifications:

<http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/english-association/news-and-events/news-1/reforming-key-stage-4-qualifications>

UKLA sees these statements of principle as forming a working document which will, no doubt, change and develop with time. You may wish to use it as a starting point for your own discussions. We hope you find it helpful.

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1. We believe that learning in English should be based on principles of progression within the subject, from early years to post-16, taught through holistic, responsive pedagogy.

Bearne, E. (1998) *Making progress in English* London: Routledge

2. Many of the educational assumptions upon which the most recent KS2 national curriculum proposals are based are highly contentious and unproven. The stubbornly narrow emphasis on phonics, based on the idea that decoding comes first, followed by pleasure and reading for meaning, flies in the face of research, teachers', parents' and children's experience, and common sense.

[Dombey, H. et al \(2010\) \*Teaching reading: What the evidence says\* Leicester: UKLA](#)

3. Language study is a vitally important aspect of learning in English. Grammar is just one strand of language study and therefore needs to be taught and assessed in context, for its own intrinsic interest and for its contribution to communication *and* the making of meaning, not as a list of 'facts'.

Myhill, D., Jones, S., Lines, H. & Watson, A. (2012) Re-thinking grammar: the impact of embedded grammar teaching on students' writing and students' metalinguistic understanding. *Research Papers in Education* 27 (2) 139-166

4. Speaking and listening need to be highly valued, as a means of: learning through analysis, reflection and exploratory talk; enhancing creativity and cultural understanding through drama; developing important skills for study, work and social life. Speaking and listening need to be fully integrated into the English curriculum and its assessment.

[Mercer, N. & Littleton, K. \(2007\) \*Dialogue and the development of children's thinking: A sociocultural approach\* London: Routledge](#)

Neelands, J. (ed) (2004) *Beginning drama 11-14*. London: David Fulton

5. Reading, enjoying and engaging critically with a wide range of literary and non-literary texts must remain a central feature of the English curriculum and its assessment. From before they are able to read independently through to literature study at post-16, all young people should learn to read so that it becomes a lifelong pleasure and skill. They should be entitled to read within different genres and from different periods. However over-prescription is not the way to achieve this. Teachers need to be able to exercise their professional judgement within a broad framework, to respond to the enthusiasms and interests of their own students.

Cremin, T., Mottram, M., Collins, F. & Powell, S. (2008) *Building communities of readers* Leicester: UKLA

[Lockwood, M. \(2009\) \*Promoting reading for pleasure in the primary school\* London: Sage](#)

Cliff Hodges, G. (2010) Reasons for reading: Why literature matters, *Literacy* 44 (2) 1-9

6. Writing a wide range of texts for different purposes, audiences and pleasures must remain a central feature of the English curriculum and its assessment.

Barrs, M. & Cork, V. (2001) *The reader in the writer* London: CLPE

[Cremin, T. & Myhill, D. \(2011\) \*Writing voices\* London: Routledge](#)

7. The curriculum must take into account the wide variety of forms of communication now universally valued as essential tools for the 21st Century, including digital, online and moving image media. The skills to read and write in these forms, and to evaluate them critically as sources of information, education, values and pleasure should be an entitlement of every child. Unless this entitlement is explicitly addressed, we risk raising a generation of children unable to participate fully in democratic life, and in the employment market.

[Bearne, E. & Wolstencroft, H. \(2007\) \*Visual approaches to teaching writing: Multimodal literacy 5-11\* London: London: Paul Chapman Publishing](#)

[Bhojwani, Lord & Wilkes \(2009\) \*I know what to write now! - Engaging boys \(and girls\) through a multimodal approach\* Leicester: UKLA](#)

8. Extended writing, research, independent study skills and spoken language fluency are highly prized by universities and employers. In order to be assessed fully and fairly – at all ages – students need different opportunities to demonstrate their achievements in all these areas, including teacher assessment, coursework and examinations.
9. The current EBacc, with its association with school accountability and league tables, puts into serious jeopardy many vital elements of student learning, such as the creative arts, design, music and possibly even literature. A curriculum which only values traditional academic subjects is likely to disengage and exclude large swathes of students. The EBacc not only marginalises creative subjects but also religious education, social sciences and a whole range of vocational subjects, which are highly motivating and relevant for some groups of students. Any reform should be properly piloted and evaluated before being rolled out nationally and the informed views of expert groups, subject associations and professionals should not only be elicited but also taken seriously.
10. Changing the curriculum at KS1, KS2, KS3, KS4 and KS5, all in the space of just two or three years, places an impossible burden on schools, forcing teachers to concentrate on change rather than on the quality of teaching. Any leader of a private company will tell you that change needs to be carefully managed and sequenced.