RSA

Giving Schools the Power to Create

Developing creative capacities in learners and teachers

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1. Introduction

"It is undeniable that the exercise of a creative power, that a free creative activity, is the true function of man. It is proved to be so by man's finding in it his true happiness." **Matthew Arnold, 1864**

In 2015, the US-based Roosevelt Institute commissioned the RSA to write a policy memo on how schools can best develop pupils' creative capacities. One of six papers to inform a major project on The Next American Economy, the paper was well received. The Institute described our memo as "not only rigorously and professionally composed, but thoroughly fascinating."[1]

During 2015, however, debates about creativity in schools appear to have gone backwards, especially in England. The publication of Ken Robinson's latest book on creative schools generated mixed responses.[2] More traditional opponents decried an excessively polemical approach and lack of research evidence. Others more sympathetic to the creativity agenda expressed a frustration about the lack of practical next steps offered to schools.

Meanwhile, the current hierarchy of valued outcomes remains remarkably similar across the world, tending to prioritise the academic over the vocational, knowledge recall over application, and problem-solving over problem-finding. Although some countries have attempted to raise creativity's status, they have generally lacked the stamina required to sustain interest or investment.

We are therefore publishing a summary of this paper to help bring both rigour and pragmatism to this debate, and support school leaders, teachers and governors to take action now, rather than wait for more hospitable policy climates.[3]

- On **pages 2-3** we provide a situational analysis, summarising the evidence and exploring the complications and key questions that need addressing.
- On **page 4** we offer a working definition of creativity and creative capacities.
- Our design principles on **page 5** aim to support schools in taking the next steps in their creative journeys.
- On **pages 6-7**, we use these principles to describe how the RSA's family of academies are aiming to give their pupils, teachers and communities the power to create.
- On **page 8** we describe how you or your school can get involved in the RSA's programmes.

1. To see the full report visit www.rooseveltinstitute.org/transforming-education-close-creativity-gap/.The memo had a very specific focus on schools. Issues out of scope included peer, parental and community effects, and how creative capacities develop from birth and throughout adulthood.
2. Robinson, K. and Aronica, K. (2015) *Creative Schools: Revolutionizing Education from the Ground Up*. London: Allen Lane
3. We have made minor changes to the original memo in this summary. All the evidence and references to support this summary are available in the original memo, alongside a full bibliography, and case studies from around the world.

2. Situational analysis

"Students need to be capable not only of constantly adapting but also of constantly learning and growing, of positioning themselves and repositioning themselves in a fast changing world. These changes have profound implications for teachers, teaching and learning as well as for the leadership of schools and education systems." **Schleicher, 2012** [4]

2.1 Why? what is the rationale for a focus on creativity?

- There is an increasingly strong economic rationale for our schools systems to prioritise the development of pupils' creative capacities. Employers around the world consistently assert the need for a more creative workforce and argue that schools should do more to harness creativity.
- There is a developmental rationale for an increased and sustained focus during the adolescent years. The foundations for creative exploration – conceptual thinking, abstract reasoning and reflective capacities – are generally lacking in the pre-teenage years, but combine powerfully during adolescence with an increased drive for reward and propensity to take risks.
- There is an educational rationale for creative capacity development as a means to raise overall achievement, and close stubborn, persistent achievement gaps.

2.2 How? do we know whether a focus on creativity will get results?

- There is an emerging consensus from various academic disciplines that creativity is innate in all of us and learnable in different ways in specific knowledge domains.
- Research is also demonstrating the interplay between the development of creative capacities and other cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes.
- Evidence also points to the effectiveness of whole-school approaches in comparison to specific interventions.

2.3 Why now? why is such a focus both more necessary and more possible at this particular time?

- New technologies offer untapped potential, both to deliver more traditional outcomes more efficiently (leaving space for creative development), and to offer tools that support and assess such creative development.
- New, evidence-rich pedagogies are emerging that support more collaborative applications of knowledge to real-world problems, changing the relationships between teacher and learner.
- Diverse, more outward models of schooling, often supported by civil society and businesses, offer possibilities for new models of teaching and learning that could spawn successful, replicable practices.

2.4 What is our baseline? what do we know about the current creative capacities of children and young people, and the role that schools play in this development?

- The evidence on whether young people's creative capacities have improved or declined over time is mixed and inconclusive.
- Although there is no evidence that young people from lower income groups have less creative ability or potential, we also need to recognise the significant (and in some cases growing) inequalities in power, resources and opportunities between people in different social and economic positions. This affects their ability to put ideas into practice and make change happen.
- Our understanding of the impact of technology on our creative capacities is limited, and often more polemical than evidence-based.
- Similarly, schools are often pathologised as 'creativity-killers', when there is very limited evidence that this is the case.

"The idea that formal education reduces creativity appears to be supported largely by anecdotes rather than scientific evidence, although it is sometimes cited as if it were a well-established fact. **Beuke, 2011** [5]

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4. Schleicher, A. (2012). *Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21st Century: Lessons from around the World* Paris: OECD Available at: http://www.oecd.org/site/eduistp2012/49850576.pdf

5. Beuke, C. (2011) "Does Education Stifle Creativity?" *Psychology Today, November 2011*. Available at: www.psychologytoday.com/blog/youre-hired/201111/does-education-stifle-creativity

3. Complications

"Very roughly, creativity comes from two rather distinct sources: knowledge, memory, fast native intelligence, perseverance, strategy, attention; unusual connections and daydreams made by the brain when it is at rest."
Abadzi, Martelli & Primativo, 2014[6]

3.1 Definitional: The definitions of creativity and creative capacities are continually contested, within and beyond the education system, and this has led to a lack of progress in assessing creativity.

Robust, common assessment mechanisms would raise creativity's status amongst decision makers, enable a better understanding of the impact of specific interventions and, most importantly, support pupil metacognition of their own creative capacities, and how to improve them.

3.2 Political: In virtually every education jurisdiction around the world, curriculum, assessment and accountability regimes offer minimal, and possibly declining, incentives for schools to focus on the creative development of their pupils.

Political opposition to creativity is subtle. It is rarely argued that creativity is an undesired outcome. More common is the proposition that creativity cannot be taught, or that the development of creative capacities will emerge organically through a high-quality, knowledge-centric approach to learning.

3.3 Professional: The dominant professional culture of school leaders and educators has become increasingly risk-averse and constrained.

The move towards decentralised education systems and autonomous schools should enable both existing schools and new providers to innovate and diversify their offers. However, the accountability systems that can come with decentralisation can stifle innovation and maintain cultures of conformity and compliance. High-stakes assessment environments militate against both the initiation and sustainability of creative teaching approaches.

3.4 Societal: Although parents, employers and the broader public are generally supportive of a broad education that goes beyond 'the basics', there has been very little parental demand for schools to focus on creativity.

Although the 'elite' view of creativity is no longer a dominant societal attitude, there is a residual belief amongst teachers (and policymakers) that the nurturing of students' creative capacities should be confined to the most gifted students, or should be developed only after the culmination of – and never at the expense of – knowledge acquisition. Parents and employers rarely back up calls for a creative workforce with sustained action and, when probed, often revert to more traditional expectations for school leavers.

3.5 Tactical/Strategic: Those of us who attempt to promote creativity in schools have sometimes been our own worst enemies, building our arguments on advocacy-heavy or unsubstantiated claims

Creativity-focused programmes rarely apply the latest research on learning and creativity forensically to their practices. Interventions have often proceeded without the necessary rigour to understand impact, Some of the rhetoric, in exaggerating the problems without offering practical solutions, may have prevented a more meaningful dialogue with the more sceptical or cautious parts of the education sector.

4. Questions

"Giving teachers responsibility as professionals and leaders of reform... requires teacher education that helps teachers to become innovators and researchers in education, not just civil servants who deliver curricula." **OECD, 2012**[7]

Given the current situation and the complications outlined above, what questions do we need to answer?

a. **Learners**: What types of classroom pedagogies and broader learning experiences will do most to improve the creative capacities of learners whilst also narrowing achievement gaps and supporting a broader set of outcomes?

a. **Teachers**: How can we best recruit, train and develop teachers so that they have the capacities, motivation and opportunities to practise disciplined innovation and inquiry-based teaching?

a. **Institutions and systems**: How can we re-engineer schools and systems to drive systemic capacity for innovation and a sustained focus on creative teaching and learning?

a. **Society**: How can we transform public, professional and political attitudes so that the development of creative capacities is actively encouraged and prioritised, and where interventions are targeted at those from low income families and communities?

6 Abadzi, H., Martelli, M. and S. Primativo (2014) *Explorations of Creativity: a review for educators and policy-makers* Qatar: WISE. Available at: www.wise-qatar.org/sites/default/files/wisematters-cognitivecreativity.pdf

7. OECD (2012) "Does performance-based pay improve teaching?" *PISA in Focus, No. 16.* Paris: OECD 6

5. Answers

"Creative capacity building should not be misrecognised as the reiteration of an oft-repeated call to a more student-centred approach. Rather, it signals a fundamental shift towards a more complex and experimental pedagogical setting…. It will not happen simply by being hoped for despite our systems of formal education, nor can it be left to 'arty' types or IT gurus to develop 'at the margins'. There is no doubting the exciting teaching and learning that is now emerging in some quarters of education. It is not a matter of finding examples of such capacity building and parading them on awards nights, but of understanding the new principles through which relevant pedagogies can be made scalable and sustainable at an institutional, and indeed, systemic level." **McWilliam & Haukka, 2008** [8]

The four questions are connected and interlocking. Therefore rather than answer each question in turn, we have drafted a set of twelve design principles.

Defining Creativity

Definitions of creativity often become overloaded with a baggy set of skills, behaviours and expectations. Conversely, creativity can also be conflated reductively with problem solving - a necessary but not sufficient foundation for creative thinking. Whilst it might be tempting to accept Treffinger's view that creativity will always be a "complex and multi-faceted phenomenon, which prevents promotion of a universally accepted definition", a common definition may help creativity to become better accepted and embedded across school systems. [9]

For this report, we define creativity as '*the type of imaginative thinking that produces an outcome possessing some level of originality as well as some sense of value'.*[10] **We define creative capacities as capabilities and dispositions needed to generate new ideas and turn them into action.** The figure below provides a breakdown of these capacities, developed with teachers in schools.[11]
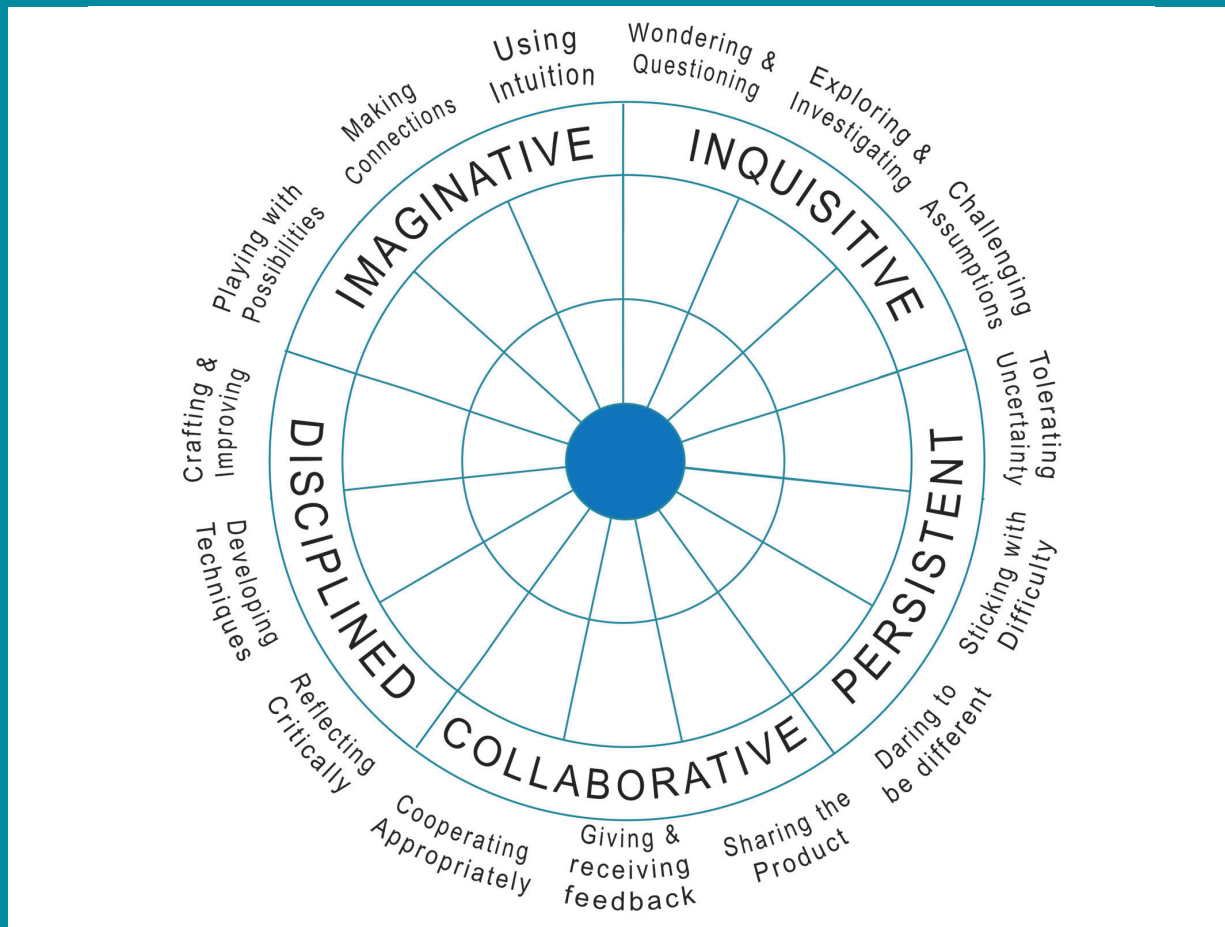
8. McWilliam, E. and Haukka, S. (2008) "Educating the creative workforce: new directions for twenty-first century schooling" *British Educational Research.Journal 34(5): 651-666*

9. Treffinger, D., Young, G., Selby, E. & Shepardson, C. (2002) *Assessing Creativity: A guide for educators.* Connecticut: The National Research Centre on the Gifted and Talented

10. National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1999) *All our Futures: Creativity, Culture & Education.* London: Department for Education and Employment

11. Lucas, B. Claxton, G. and Spencer, E. (2012) *Progression in Creativity: Developing new forms of assessment.* Paris: OECD
Available at: www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/50153675.pdf

RSA ACADEMIES AND THE POWER TO CREATE

THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

1

Develop a whole-school strategy

Model and enable creative behaviours across your whole school

In 2016 all RSA schools signed up to 'commitments' in demonstration of their progress towards two key areas: Arts, Creativity and Cultural Education, and Preparing for the World Beyond School. Designed to support schools at all levels, they include actions for students, teachers, principals and chairs of governors.

"The commitments provide a practical set of areas for governors, school leaders, teachers and pupils themselves to develop, whatever the school's starting point."

Alison Critchley, Chief Executive of RSA

2

Give your staff creative professional development

Ensure teachers have both deep subject and content knowledge, and the design skills to develop creative new pedagogies

"Establishing the RSA Academies' Teaching School Alliance has brought not only our academies, but also our strategic partner schools closer together through a common purpose. Our goal is for high quality career development of teaching and support staff, no matter what level they are at in their career – all as creative educators."

Danielle Sloyan, Teacher, Whitley Academy and Director of RSA Academies Teaching School Alliance

3

Understand and address the Creativity Gaps

Concentrate efforts and interventions on pupils from lower income families, connected to broader achievement-raising strategies

The RSA Academies Year 8 leadership programme brings together fifty pupils each year, with a particular focus on Pupil Premium pupils. They undertake workshops with creative practitioners and deliver a social action project in their school or community.

"The whole experience has helped our development as individuals, building confidence and developing skills relevant to us both as student leaders and in our future careers."

Andrew Watts, former Head Boy, RSA Academy in Tipton

4

Stay level-headed about technology

Understand both the creative potential and the distractive risks of new technologies

Led in partnership with the Comino Foundation and Black Country Atelier, the *RSA Pupil Design Awards* aims to improve learning about design thinking through the exploitation of the latest thinking and practice from digital fabrication technologies.

"Just as we are seeing a rich cross-fertilisation of ideas in modern technology companies, we see teachers actively embracing a multi-disciplinary approach to learning. The results are richer, and students report a deeper appreciation of why their learning is relevant."

Jing Lu, Chief Executive, Black Country Atelier

5

Ensure that progression matters

Build coherent and progressive provision across your whole curriculum, understanding how pupils' creative potential changes in the journey from childhood to adolescence

"Fostering creative thinking lies at the heart of all great teaching in schools, whether it is at age 4 or 18. In the Redditch RSA Academies Trust we are developing our curriculum across this age range so that children are challenged and inspired to be creative, whether this be in art, English, or maths."

Guy Shears, Principal, Arrow Vale RSA Academy and RSAA board member

6

Love your subjects, and foster powerful knowledge

Develop subject-specific pedagogies to support the knowledge-rich development of creative capacities

Our cross-school networks enable subject leads to develop family-wide practices. English teachers are working with the Royal Shakespeare Company on an intensive Year 9 project. Drama-based pedagogies bring the text to life, encouraging a love for Shakespeare.

"Research about effective CPD , emphasises the importance of working with specialists to expand ideas and expectations. The energy released by RSA Academies' subject networks represents an important opportunity to do that and to turn those ideas into real changes in classroom practices."

Philippa Cordingley, Chair of Governors, RSA Academy in Tipton and RSAA board member

RSA Academies is a growing family of schools for pupils of all ages. Established by the RSA in 2011, our mission is to provide an inspirational and creative education for all pupils which relates their learning to the wider world and provides experiences that broaden horizons, enabling them to develop the skills needed for success and personal fulfilment. To achieve this, we aim to develop creative, resourceful teachers that provide challenging and stimulating teaching. Working with the RSA offers schools opportunities to participate in research and innovation, access networks that bring benefits to pupils and teachers, and increase profile and influence.

We can use the design principles to show the steps we are taking on our own creative journey.

RSA | RSA Academies

EVALUATION

PARTNERSHIPS

7
Make it real

Create structured, sustained, and rigorous opportunities for project-based, inquiry-oriented learning

Building on the RSA's Opening Minds framework, Year 7 pupils at RSA Academy in Tipton are involved in project-based, inquiry-oriented learning through the REAL programme.

"The approach provides a great opportunity to really embed growth mindsets through multiple drafts and critique. In one project the exhibition venue acted as a client within the projects and set constraints and briefs which supported pupils work. This provided both an authentic audience and a real world context."

Gemma Alldritt, Teacher, RSA Academy in Tipton

9
Measure what you value

Develop clear and consistent processes to assess the creative capacities of your learners, including opportunities for self and peer assessment

Performing Pedagogy is a CPDL project in which teachers, SLTs and drama practitioners collaborate to develop creative capacities, measuring their impact on pupil attainment. Learning new pedagogies in groups, they will implement them in peer-observed lessons and reflect on their effectiveness.

"We believe that maintaining a positive, supportive ethos with everyone encouraged to engage with new thinking, share ideas and reflect on practice without fear of criticism is central to whole school improvement."

Lorna Owen, Vice Principal, Holyhead School

11
Don't try this on your own

Engage with resources and opportunities beyond the school, especially with people and organisations who are willing to evolve their 'offer' to suit your school's creative needs.

Academies' pupils regularly work with the RSA's Royal Designers for Industry. World-leading designers have inspired and enriched student experience of design, enhanced critical thinking and practical skillsets, encouraged problem-solving, and boosted confidence in pupils' capabilities.

"The students enjoyed sharing their creative journey and experiences with someone at the top of their game."

Paul Taylor, Director of Learning and Standards, Arrow Vale RSA Academy

8
Make the most of the arts

Prioritise the arts, design and cultural learning as unique and crucial vehicles for creative development

Pupils have been working with artist Helen Storey to develop new approaches to understanding climate change. Helen's work combines fashion and science with thinking about our own humanity. Taking Helen's work as inspiration we have created learning experiences for teachers and pupils that allows them to take a multidisciplinary approach to the topics inspired by the work.

"You can see young people's potential start to shine, when they realise that it is their own lives which are the materials for growth and self-realisation."

Professor Helen Storey MBE RDI

10
Work out what works

Design tough-minded evaluation processes that aim to understand, rather than demonstrate, the impact of specific interventions

RSA Academies' Teaching School Alliance coordinated a collaborative project with 14 other alliances, developing a framework on how research can best be developed and embedded within schools. From this came www.researchrichschools.org.uk, offering ideas to support all schools.

"Developing a collaborative typology has encouraged reflection on our own practice in R&D whilst providing inspiration through the endeavours of the other schools."

Mat Carpenter, Vice Principal, RSA Academy in Tipton

12
Build support from all stakeholders

Foster demand for creativity from parents, carers and the community

"At Ipsley we have become accustomed to parents talking about the RSA as an integral part of the school's distinctiveness. They value both the creativity within the curriculum and the opportunities for their children to have real world opportunities to develop their creative skills. The response to our first Wonder Day, planned by an Assistant Principal with responsibility for closing the creativity gap, was overwhelmingly positive from pupils, staff and parents alike; so much so, we now have several more planned for the year ahead."

Nicola Beech, Principal, Ipsley CE RSA Academy

6. Design principles for creative capacity-building schools

Already tested with a few schools, these principles can be used by anybody with influence over pupil learning – policymakers, governors, school leaders and teachers. They are configured to apply across any education jurisdiction. So whilst they are not in themselves policy recommendations, analysis of these principles to your particular context could generate particular recommendations for policy and practice. We suggest that, in exploring these principles, you:

- Try to put them in order of priority, discounting those which are not relevant to your context;
- Consider your school's current progress and performance against each relevant principle; and
- Propose some possible priorities and next steps which relate to one or more of the principles.

Our website includes a downloadable A3 table that can support the use of these principles. Please let us know if you do use these principles, or have any thoughts on how they could be improved.

Strategy

1) Develop a whole-school strategy
Model and enable creative behaviours across your whole school.

2) Give your staff creative professional development
Ensure teachers have both deep subject and content knowledge, and the design skills to develop creative new pedagogies.

3) Understand and address the Creativity Gaps
Concentrate efforts and interventions on pupils from lower income families, connected to broader achievement-raising strategies.

4) Stay level-headed about technology
Understand both the creative potential and the distractive risks of new technologies.

Curriculum

5) Ensure that progressions matters
Build coherent and progressive provision across your whole curriculum, understanding how pupils' creative potential changes in the journey from childhood to adolescence.

6) Love your subjects, and foster powerful knowledge
Develop subject-specific pedagogies to support the knowledge-rich development of creative capacities.

7) Make it real
Create structured, sustained, and rigorous opportunities for project-based, inquiry-oriented learning.

8) Make the most of the arts
Prioritise the arts, design and cultural learning as unique and crucial vehicles for creative development.

Evaluation

9) Measure what you value
Begin to develop clear and consistent processes to assess the creative capacities of your learners, including opportunities for self and peer assessment.

10) Work out what works
Design tough-minded evaluation processes that aim to understand, rather than demonstrate, the impact of specific interventions.

Partnerships

11) Don't try this on your own
Engage with resources and opportunities beyond the school, especially with people and organisations who are willing to evolve their 'offer' to suit your school's creative needs.

12) Build support from all stakeholders
Foster demand for creativity from parents, carers and the community.

The RSA: The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce

The RSA been at the forefront of social change for 260 years. Through combining our research, actions, ideas platforms and 27,000-strong Fellowship, we seek to realise a society where creative power is distributed, concentrations of power are confronted, and creative values are nurtured. The RSA sees unprecedented opportunities in the modern world to expand the scope for human agency, but big barriers stand in the way. Our mission is to help pull down those barriers, so that everyone has the freedom and power to turn their ideas into reality. We call this "the power to create".

RSA Creative Learning and Development

The power to create is already here; it's just unevenly distributed. We see creativity gaps widening amongst learners, educators and institutions. We believe that closing these gaps is key to achieving well at and beyond school, and crucial to people's employment prospects and their wider flourishing. To address these inequalities, we need to boost the creative capacities, opportunities and motivations of all learners, champion the development of innovative, empowered educators, and support education institutions and systems to foster creative public leadership.

Our programme of enquiries innovations and mobilisation aims to discover new approaches and transform attitudes to learning so that everyone, regardless of age or background, is empowered to generate new ideas and make them happen.

Join a creative community with a cause:

Five ways to get involved

1) Watch and listen to our events, and read our blogs and reports

We host over 100 free public lectures, debates and screenings a year, bringing the best in new thinking to a global audience of millions online. Many of our events feature leading experts on issues highly relevant to learning and development, inspiring creative learners and educators worldwide. **www.thersa.org/events**

2) Become a Fellow

If you are passionate about RSA's cause and want to help make change happen then become a Fellow. Our 27,000 Fellows have access to the brightest new ideas, innovative projects, and a community of like-minded people. Over 20% of our Fellows are involved in education, including 1,000 teachers and school leaders. **www.thersa.org/fellowship**

3) Join our Innovative Education Network

A diverse and growing group of educators – teachers and leaders, entrepreneurs and parents - are coming together through our IE network to provoke, prototype and promote new thinking and action. The IE network and smaller faculty act as testbeds for RSA's research, and develop new ideas to inform RSA's future programmes. **www.thersa.org/iegetinvolved**

4) Participate in our programmes

During 2016, we'll be testing our 'power to create' school review framework, training teachers in design thinking, and helping build an international movement for teacher empowerment. Our Academies' programmes on performing arts and digital manufacturing will reach out to other teachers. We'll also be carrying out research on school governance, further education and adolescent creativity.

5) Support our work

Our programmes make a difference thanks to generous funding from many people and organisations. Current partners include the Comino Foundation, Further Education Trust for Leadership, Local Government Association, and the World Innovation Summit in Education. If you are interested in partnering with us on events, research or practical innovations, please contact **laura.partridge@rsa.org.uk**.

www.thersa.org/learning   **education@rsa.org.uk**   **www.rsaacademies.org.uk**