Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

Submitter:	Australian Film Television and Radio School
Submitting as a:	Government agency
State:	NSW

Summary

The Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Panel for the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools.

AFTRS is Australia's national training, education and research institution for screen and broadcast media. Its purpose is 'To find and empower Australian talent to shape and share their stories with the world by delivering future-focused, industry-relevant education, research and training.'

Extending on its excellence in screen education, current explorations of the frontiers of technology – including through, for example, virtual reality projects, biometric audience engagement and binaural soundscapes – place AFTRS at the nexus of creativity, technology and innovation.

AFTRS also provides educational resources and opportunities for Australians to participate in screen practice. AFTRS runs workshops for primary and secondary schools and teachers in media storytelling, creation and communication and recently piloted the Media Lab online learning curriculum, mapping Media Arts modules against the National Curriculum.

AFTRS believes there is a very powerful case to extend the current focus on STEM into STEAM, to include a new focus on Arts and creative practice. An emphasis on creativity and innovative forms of leaning can generate new forms of deepened engagement with learning across the whole curriculum.

AFTRS also advocates strongly for the development of a new focus on media participation and screen literacy in schools, and to help build the core capabilities of creativity, innovation and the new forms of communication that will be required for the jobs of the future.

The new creative economy and mediated public sphere require students to be empowered with new forms of digital literacy to enable them to participate and thrive, engaging globally and shaping the future of Australia.

Main submission

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What should educational success for Australian students and schools look like?

Educational success would see Australian students equipped with the confidence, core capabilities, knowledge and innovation skill set to prepare them for their futures.

Fundamental to this success is the role of creativity; students' ability to access and harness their creativity, solve problems and communicate effectively across all

digital platforms. Creativity is a core capacity that empowers students to engage in innovation, deep learning and higher-order thinking that can 'supercharge' engagement and learning in other areas. There is strong evidence that creativity, drawing on quality arts experiences and processes, can transform learning across curriculum in schools. (see, eg Lucas, B., Claxton, G., Spencer, E., 2013. Progression in student creativity in school. OECD education working papers, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris. https://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/5k4dp59msdwk.pdf)

The importance of creativity and an innovative mindset has been outlined extensively in the national debate regarding the skills needed for the jobs of the future.

It is therefore important to include creative practice within the significant work that is currently being taken undertaken with STEM education initiatives. There is a strong movement, within Australia and internationally, advocating for a focus on the arts alongside the 'STEM' educational priorities – from STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths to include creative (Arts) based enquiry in STEAM. Professor Peter Charles Taylor (Professor of STEAM Education and Director of the Transformative Education Research Centre (TERC) in the School of Education at Murdoch University) asserts that:

integrating the arts with science, technology, engineering and mathematics is not just another curriculum fad but an important response to the pressing need to prepare young people with higher-order abilities to deal positively and productively with 21st century global challenges (crises) that are impacting the economy, the natural environment and our diverse cultural heritage.

(http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1299&context=research_conference)

AFTRS has designed a bespoke initiative to empower primary and secondary school teachers and students to increase their creativity and communication skills through Media Lab, a national initiative available to all schools and their teachers online. Media Lab, delivered in partnership with a range of stakeholders, is designed to be available at scale, to provide a new creative and communication literacy and to be a game changer for education.

Media Lab will provide online curriculum for K-12 that is in step with evolving technological advancements and storytelling trends. The disciplines will include filmmaking, documentary, gaming, virtual reality, podcasting and social and digital media production. Teachers will choose from an expansive range of online workshops and courses, including a pool of supplementary resources.

AFTRS, as the national media school, has extensive experience in providing education for primary and secondary school students via its Schools and Youth

Programs which provide short course training for primary and secondary school teachers and students during school holidays. In 2016–17, AFTRS ran 87 schools and youth courses for more than 2,000 students. AFTRS also has the IP and the national relationships to build applicable resources. AFTRS has already tested a proof of concept and has identified a strong appetite amongst teachers and students alike for these resources.

AFTRS Schools Advisory Committee continues to provide expert advice on the schools and youth programs to ensure educational value and suitability. The committee draws on a broad range of experience from primary and secondary schools, the public, independent and Catholic sectors. The Committee Chair is Dr Miranda Jefferson with members Matt Clausen, Margot Bowen and David Chapman.

AFTRS has also been building capacity for remote and regional schools via a communication skills pilot training program for Distance Education and Access School Teachers. This program develops better communication skills and use new platforms, technologies and video content as a basis for new forms of learning, including extending into mobile content creation.

Media participation is now central to so many of our forms of work, creative expression, public debate and civic engagement. Media studies can and should play a vital role across the Australian curriculum. We need to build digital literacy and media skills amongst young Australians to empower them for the creative, digital economy – not just for employability, although this is vital – but also for participation as audiences, consumers and citizens.

Educational success in this context would see students armed with strong capacities in media participation and creation, as well as critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving and self-expression.

- What capabilities, skills and knowledge should students learn at school to prepare them for the future?

Media literacy and communication have been described as the new 'reading, writing and numeracy'. Increasingly, communication is taking place through media channels and students need to be equipped with the ability to tell compelling stories, to any audience on the most relevant platform. These are now essential skills for businesses, as well as to public participation. According to a recent Cisco report:

- It would take an individual more than 5 million years to watch the amount of video that will cross global IP networks each month in 2021. Every second, a million minutes of video content will cross the network by 2021.

- Globally, IP video traffic will be 82 percent of all consumer Internet traffic by 2021, up from 73 percent in 2016. Global IP video traffic will grow threefold

from 2016 to 2021, a CAGR of 26 percent. Internet video traffic will grow fourfold from 2016 to 2021, a CAGR of 31 percent.

(Cisco Visual Networking Index: Forecast and Methodology, 2016–2021. Executive Summary: Video Highlights. Updated September 2017.)

Students need to have the confidence in their creativity and ability to communicate their ideas, including through audio-visual media. AFTRS has developed expertise in this area, through experience working with schools and youth programs since 2000. Applied, hands-on experiences provide students with 'employability skills' – as well as theory – elevating the student experience to be a producer in addition to a consumer of messages by adding media production skills to capacities in, for example textual analysis.

In 2016–17 the very popular school holiday program was expanded. New courses this year include podcasting for teens, a 'make it on YouTube' course and specialist editing, camera and sound workshops.

AFTRS sees the Media Lab model as a key way that Australian schools can build skills for the future in contemporary forms of media production, new models for dissemination of ideas and creative thinking.

Australian schools' curricula should equip Australian students for the jobs of the future. Multiple recent Australian and international reports have highlighted the centrality of creativity and digital literacy in the skills required for future work. These include:

- PWC's 2016 21st Century Minds Accelerator Program (21CM) which describes the importance of building '21st Century skills' amongst students for the jobs of the future including the ability 'to think smart and creatively, solve problems, persist and take risks, have strong digital skills and know how to collaborate effectively'.

- Deloitte's 2015 Tech Trends report, which projects the reliance of future work on creativity, because: "Designing engaging solutions requires creative talent; creativity is also critical in ideation — helping to create a vision of reimagined work, or to develop disruptive technologies deployed via storyboards, user journeys, wire frames, or persona maps".

- Internationally, NESTA's 2017 The Future of Skills: Employment in 2030 report, which found that "Creative, digital, design and engineering occupations have bright outlooks and are strongly complemented by digital technology" and highlighted "the skills that are likely to be in greater demand, including interpersonal skills, higher-order cognitive skills, and systems skills."

AFTRS has been in conversation with a range of high-profile Australian screen businesses, including Animal Logic and Finch, who have expressed the need for stronger skills in coding and digital areas (including across genders). These skills can be applied in focus areas like games or CGI, or more broadly across a range of industries.

AFTRS sees bringing a renewed focus on creativity and the arts, including digital and media literacy, as central to equipping our next generations for employment in the new creative economy, and for participation in the contemporary public sphere.

What can we do to improve and how can we support ongoing improvement over time?

- How could schools funding be used more effectively and efficiently (at the classroom, school or system level) to have a significant impact on learning outcomes for all students including disadvantaged and vulnerable students and academically advanced students?

Effective scalable and online initiatives are important to help teachers navigate technology and distance limitations.

Substantial resources have been invested into digital literacy programs in schools, however the lack of relevant, targeted resources learning tools are proving to be significant obstacles.

With the introduction of Media Arts into the national curriculum (already incorporated into the Creative Arts syllabus in every state except NSW), it is essential that there are education and experiential-learning resources available for primary and secondary teachers and students.

To provide these efficiently at scale AFTRS is suggesting an online media portal where rich experiential media resources are available across a range of media genres and technologies, mapped to learning outcomes by year and modularised so that teachers and students are able to co-curate their learning experiences. These resources would aggregate all the best examples of content for Australian students and provide access to Australian content and history through partnerships with other organisations such as the National Film and Sound Archive.

There is an opportunity to leverage existing publicly funding, including over 40 years of investment in AFTRS, to expand existing resources, areas of expertise and IP into the education sector for the benefit of all Australian students. AFTRS sees best scope for this at the Federal level. AFTRS has met with The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and many of the state government departments of education, who all exhibited strong willingness to work with AFTRS but appear to have few funds available to support resource development.

Access to online participation-based resources across subject areas would benefit students, including disadvantage or vulnerable students, including by engaging them creatively in some of the heavy knowledge based subjects.

AFTRS also works with UNSW Aspire to provide skills development opportunities for primary and secondary students from targeted communities such as regional and remote, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, Indigenous and low socio-economic groups.

AFTRS is leading initiatives across the screen sector to create new career pathways for groups underrepresented in media practice, including by spearheading the Screen Diversity and Inclusion Network (sdin.com.au), including membership from all Australian broadcasters, screen funding agencies and industry partners.

- What actions can be taken to improve practice and outcomes? What evidence is there to support taking these actions?

A recent ARC linkage project, led by QUT's Professor Stuart Cunningham, Professor Michael Dezuanni and Dr Ben Goldsmith titled "Screen Content in Australian Education: Digital Promise and Pitfalls" found, through engagement with teachers across Australia:

High quality and educationally useful screen content is often not discoverable for teachers.

Teachers have little time to spend identifying and adapting high quality screen content for the classroom, and see it as a core part of their professional identity to curate and customise screen content, so that it best meets the needs of their particular students. This causes a dilemma for those wishing to provide bridging materials and outreach services to the education sector. Teachers need somewhere to quickly find high quality curriculum-relevant content for classes, but they also need a level of flexibility in bridging materials so they can be tailored to specific groups of students. Comprehension-based study guides are not meeting the needs of all teachers.

Screen Content in Australian Education: Digital Promise and Pitfalls Findings from ARC Linkage project LP130100031 Partnering with Screen Australia, ABC, SBS, ACTF

AFTRS sees an immediate need for practical, applied teaching modules and experiential learning resources to build capacities amongst teachers and students. These would both leverage the current focus on digital literacy into media practice and participation and would draw on existing investments in AFTRS as an Australian centre of excellence in screen education, training and research.

AFTRS had hugely positive testimonials from the Media Lab pilot, and strog advocacy for the need for such materials, including:

Media Arts is the fastest growing subject in Queensland. Teachers are hungry for Australian material.

Jacqui Wilton, Curriculum Services Director, Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

The intention is to launch Media Lab resources nationally, online. Additional resources would enable a far more content-rich and interactive set of materials for use in Australian schools than the current prototype PDF documents. AFTRS would build collaborations with key partners, such as Data61 on robotics and technology partners on the platform, to ensure that the Media Lab assets are at the cutting edge of innovation.

- Are there any new or emerging areas for action which could lead to large gains in student improvement that need further development or testing?

- What are they and how could they be further developed?

AFTRS sees a need to build capacities amongst educators in media production and screen-based training.

Anecdotally, teachers are currently accessing resources from the US and UK rather than locally-produced, culturally relevant material. AFTRS Media Lab has been, to-date, a proof on concept to develop resources for teachers across primary and secondary schools across Australia. These resources can build training skills around in media production and participation from podcasting to documentary filmmaking. In 2016-17 Media Lab, offered up a pilot of five teacher Professional Development courses with 58 enrolments as a pilot to building capacities amongst teaching staff. Teachers can choose to follow the program as designed, or mix and match content to suit their students' interests. Units include documentary, stop-animation, podcasting, screenwriting and filmmaking.

These new teaching capacities are applicable in Media Arts, now a stand-alone Australian curriculum subject for students from K to 12, but also across the curriculum in a range of subject areas. Whether it's a Year 10 Drama teacher guiding students through a mockumentary project or a Year 4 Science teacher illustrating life cycles with stop-motion exercises, the pilot has been eagerly received from a wide range of educators. Media Lab will also include newly accredited professional development workshops for teachers, available both online and at our Sydney campus.

AFTRS seeks to provide resources to teachers and students, regardless of location and socio-economic profile, levelling the playing field for future generations. Through its initiation and chairing of the Screen Diversity and Inclusion Network (sdin.com.au) AFTRS has taken a leadership role in its commitment to building opportunities for participation and career pathways for groups underrepresented in

media and screen practice including: women, Indigenous Australians, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people living with a disability and Australians in remote and regional areas.

We would like to see Australian schools building capacities amongst our educators and students to foster participation in screen practice to unleash creativity, support self-expression and build future-ready communications capacities for the next generation of Australian thinkers, workers and citizens.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission with you.