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The case for creativity in an automated world

The year is 2042.

Current Reception pupils are stepping out of university and into a world transformed—one that looks nothing like the one we knew growing up. It's faster, smarter, and more connected than we ever imagined.

AI is everywhere. Automation hums beneath the surface of most professions. Brain-computer interfaces enable us to control technology with thought alone. Humans have touched down on Mars, and the Moon hosts research bases and mining outposts—visible from orbit through the windows of commercial spacecraft. When thinking about how schools are preparing children for this ultra-efficient new norm, one thing stands above all else: creativity.

As machines take over the repetitive and the logical, it's imagination, originality, and emotional intelligence that define the human edge. These aren't soft skills—they're survival skills. They're what will drive innovation, connection, and meaning in a world of endless possibility. That's why creativity in schools can't be a gimmick. It needs status[1]. And yet, over the past two decades, creativity in education has been quietly pushed to the periphery. Between 2007 and 2023, GCSE music entries nearly halved. A-Level music has seen an even sharper decline, so steep that researchers predict it will disappear from state schools entirely by 2033.

This isn't just a sad statistic for those who love the arts. It's a warning light for our entire economy, culture, and society.

When students lose access to creative subjects, they lose more than the ability to compose a melody or paint on canvas. They lose the chance to explore who they are, to work with others on open-ended problems, and to engage in the kind of thinking that can't be Googled or generated by an algorithm.

We often talk about STEM—and yes, science, tech, engineering, and maths are crucial. But without the A for arts, STEM lacks soul. Creativity is what binds knowledge together, what transforms data into insight, and what turns an idea into something that resonates. Here's the interesting bit: while creativity is fading from classrooms, business leaders are crying out for it. In study after study, employers list creativity as one of the top skills they're looking for, alongside critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. They don't just want someone who can tick the boxes or follow instructions. They want someone who can ask better questions, see patterns others can't, and bring new ideas to the table.

The World Economic Forum lists creativity consistently in its top ten skills for the future. And a survey by LinkedIn revealed it as the most in-demand soft skill across industries, from tech and marketing to finance and healthcare.

So the economic imperative is clear: Creativity isn't a luxury. It's a necessity. It's what makes a company adaptable, a product memorable, and a brand human.

And yet, we continue to strip creative subjects from our schools, often in the name of 'rigour' or budget constraints, failing to see that what we're cutting isn't fluff. It's future currency. As school leaders, we must think about creativity as more than the traditional arts, though they're vital, and see it instead as a great disruptor to rigid thinking. Creativity is a cognitive rebellion that encourages curiosity, risk-taking, mistake-making and problem-solving. It's a direct invitation to neuroplasticity that should be encouraged in all subjects.

The benefits go beyond skills. Students engaged in the arts show higher levels of well-being, stronger school engagement, and even better academic performance across other subjects. Creative education helps build empathy, confidence, and resilience—qualities we desperately need in a world facing climate crisis, political polarisation, and mental health challenges.

> "We can't keep preparing children for a world that no longer exists"

We can't keep preparing children for a world that no longer exists. A curriculum built around memorisation and high-stakes testing doesn't equip young people for the real world. What today's—and tomorrow's—students need is an education that helps them create, not just consume; to collaborate, not just compete; to imagine, not just remember. That means embedding creativity in every subject. It means trusting teachers to innovate and giving children space to explore messy, meaningful, and ambitious ideas. It means funding the arts properly, not just with the scraps that are left over.

Imagine walking into a school in 2042—not a sci-fi fantasy, but a real, thriving learning environment. Students are co-creating immersive theatre pieces based on climate science. They're designing AI companions to support isolated older adults. They're blending music, maths, and coding into live performances. They're failing often—and proudly—because they understand that failure is part of invention.

Teachers are facilitators of curiosity, not gatekeepers of content. Learning is interdisciplinary, collaborative, and connected to the wider world. Assessment is based on reflection, portfolios, and real-world application, not just timed exams. In this vision, creativity isn't confined to art rooms or drama studios. It flows through every subject, every hallway, every conversation. It's how the school breathes.

So let's make more room for messiness, for experimentation, for big, bold ideas. Let's protect and elevate creative subjects—not just for their cultural worth, but for their power to shape minds that can thrive in the world ahead.

Because in the end, when the robots can do almost everything, the one thing they can't replicate is us. Our stories. Our imagination.

Our ability to dream something new and bring it to life.

Lucas Motion joined Faraday in 2022, bringing over a decade of teaching and leadership experience, including 10 years in inner-city state schools across London. Prior to joining Faraday, he was Deputy Head at its sister school, Maple Walk. He has a strong background in English and the arts, shaped by his academic training in English and Drama. Lucas enjoys cooking and sports of every kind. He lives in East London with his wife and two children.



[1] Do Schools Kill Creativity, Sir Ken Robinson, Ted Talk, January 2007