

[High culture in schools](#) [1]

Written by [Tom Bowman](#) [2] | Friday 15 February 2008



I imagine that many reacted as I did to the news that a minimum of five hours of high culture is to be included in schools. These ministers come and go, making these announcements as they pass, but little happens on the ground. I wonder if these 5 hours will come before or after the compulsory 3 hours of sport previously promised (but not happened)? Or maybe they'll come after the compulsory cookery hours to be introduced? Perhaps they could be fitted around the promised lessons in "What it means to be British."

Ministers and bureaucrats sit at the centre signing pieces of paper to commit schools to each popular fancy, while hapless teachers shudder and groan at each straw added to an already over-burdened and top-heavy curriculum. Then the fuss dies down, the gloss wears off, and there are no more column inches to be gained, so the initiative is quietly forgotten.

Isn't there a case for giving teachers more discretion in this? Shouldn't head-teachers draw up proposals and put them to parents to see what they think of them? Couldn't education be decentralized so that local schools could offer an education they thought suitable. That way lies parental choice, with the money following the child. That way lies the transformation of education from a monolithic state system into one which tailors itself to the needs of parents and children and the talents of teachers.

In the meantime, would anyone care to guess what the next ministerial initiative will add to the school timetable?

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