



Dr Clare Stanhope, head of Art and Design and founder of the Centre for Creative Explorations at Harris Girls' Academy East Dulwich, reflects on how equity, representation and anti-racist practice are embedded in the NSEAD and Oak art, craft and design curriculum

Inclusion *by design*

Left
Hands created by students as part of a lesson inspired the NSEAD #HandsUp campaign, developed in support of the ARAEA Checklists

Embarking on the collaboration between NSEAD and Oak National Academy presented a rare and meaningful opportunity. It created a space to respond directly to urgent questions raised through NSEAD's Anti-Racist Art Education Action (ARAEA) Checklists, alongside wider sector research such as the Runnymede Trust's *Visualise* report (2024), which highlighted the persistent underrepresentation of minority ethnic artists in school curricula.

Crucially, the report also underscored a clear demand from teachers for practical support in diversifying their curricula, but it also revealed that they felt overwhelmed by the constraints of time-poor and under-resourced departments. The NSEAD and Oak curriculum therefore became a vital platform, providing carefully structured, well-resourced support for teachers nationally, while reinvigorating NSEAD's commitment to anti-racist pedagogical practices by embedding them meaningfully into everyday teaching.

The structural and conceptual framework

Alongside my fellow subject reviewer Stephanie Cubbin, we developed the secondary curriculum with this ethos in mind. Central to this effort was the recognition that no single perspective should define a curriculum. Efforts to diversify and decolonise cannot succeed if shaped through a narrow or homogenous lens. Instead, adopting a shared framework, rooted in anti-racist principles, established an ethos grounded

in critical questioning. This created space for multiple viewpoints to emerge, encouraging dialogue, reflection and accountability. In doing so, it sought to ensure that equity, diversity and the full breadth of art, craft and design practices were meaningfully and authentically realised.

To support this ambition, an NSEAD rubric was developed as both a structural and conceptual foundation for the curriculum. Rather than functioning as a traditional assessment grid, the rubric operated as a dynamic questioning tool, shaping lesson design through a series of interconnected strands including context and terminology, cultural capital, intersectionality, colonial legacy, criticality, unconscious bias, and diversity and belonging.

Each strand was framed through open-ended questions intended to prompt dialogue between subject reviewers and lesson producers. This ensured that curriculum development remained a collaborative and reflective process, rather than a prescriptive one. The rubric therefore acted as both a guide and a provocation, supporting consistency while allowing for nuance and interpretation.

Crucially, inclusion was embedded as a core design principle. Lesson creators were required to consider representation, including artists, objects and images, as well as voice, power, perspective and cultural context at every stage of development. Informed by the findings of the *Visualise* report, which identified systemic racial imbalances within

art education, the rubric ensured that these issues were not treated as supplementary but as integral to curriculum planning. This prompted creators to interrogate whose cultures, identities and

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artistic practices were made visible within each lesson, and whose remained absent. This included reflecting on diversity across race, gender, disability and sexuality, as well as actively challenging stereotypes through the inclusion of multiple perspectives and narratives.

Inclusion of local, contemporary and collective practices

Lessons, units of work and year groups were audited to ensure diversity across the curriculum. European traditions were balanced with artists and practices from all inhabited continents, alongside indigenous knowledge systems.

The rubric also encouraged a broader understanding of who is recognised as an artist. Rather than relying solely on canonical figures, the curriculum incorporated local practitioners, contemporary makers and collectives. This positioned art as a living, evolving practice, rooted in community, culture and everyday experience, rather than as a distant or exclusively professional domain.

Every lesson included British-based artists, ensuring that pupils encountered work grounded in familiar cultural and geographical contexts. This helped to validate local creativity and make artistic practice feel accessible and relevant.

Below

Possible creative conversations and outcomes shared through the Oak art and design lesson ‘This is Art: The power of collaborative making’ (Year 7, unit 1 lesson 1, physical and digital responses)

At the same time, it reinforced the idea that significant artistic contributions are not limited to those recognised by major institutions.

Collectives and community-based practices played a particularly important role. These included printmaking co-operatives, street art movements, architectural collectives, textile groups, indigenous communities, and organisations supporting collectives across the disabled spectrum. Such examples demonstrated that artistic authorship can be shared, collaborative and socially embedded. In doing so, they aligned with the rubric’s emphasis on understanding art from multiple perspectives, rather than purely individual expression.

The NSEAD and Oak secondary curriculum currently includes 2,180 artists. Gender is broadly balanced, while also embracing gender-non-conforming artists and collectives. In terms of heritage, the curriculum reaches well beyond UK national demographics. African heritage artists make up 26 percent against roughly four percent of the UK population, Black British artists 14 percent compared to four percent nationally, and East Asian, Middle Eastern, South American and indigenous artists are all significantly overrepresented. LGBTQAI+ artists account for eight percent, around double the national average, and over 200 disabled artists feature across the resource.

The aim is simple – to introduce educators to a wealth of creative practitioners they may not have encountered before, from well-known canonical figures to the many voices that reach beyond the usual offer. This is a provocation to explore the curriculum but also to extend curiosity beyond it. By foregrounding artists and practices that operate outside traditional hierarchies, the curriculum could expand pupils’ understanding of what art can be and, most importantly, who it is for.

Inclusion is foundational

The NSEAD rubric was central to the development of The NSEAD and Oak art, craft and design curriculum, embedding equity and diversity into all aspects of lesson design. Informed by the *Visualise* report (2024) and NSEAD ARAEA checklists, the NSEAD rubric supported a curriculum that celebrates global, local and collective creativity.

This approach integrates skill development, conceptual understanding and inclusive representation within a coherent framework, translating anti-racist principles into practical classroom application. By including underrepresented artists alongside canonical figures, it fosters cultural awareness and critical thinking, encouraging pupils to engage with questions of identity, history and power.

Ultimately, the curriculum represents a shift in approach, where inclusion is foundational rather than additive. It aims to support educators in diversifying their curricula, developing racial literacy and opening critical conversations that challenge traditional canons. In doing so, it promotes empathy, respect and awareness, marking the beginning of an ongoing process rather than a final outcome. ●

