

BREAKOUT SESSION 1

11.30am - 12.20pm

REBECCA DE PELET

Writer, Educator & Curator

Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf? Rethinking our provision for young people who are good with words.

Right now, there is a steep decline in the number of English teachers, people wanting to train as English teachers, young people choosing to read English at university and young people electing to study English at A level. At the same time, we are waking up to what we - and young people - really need as human beings. We are beginning to renegotiate our relationships with our 'phones and with social media. We are beginning to make sense of our relationship with A.I. and simultaneously, employers are clamouring for young people who can communicate effectively, think critically, show empathy and understand human behaviour. There is a disconnect here. We are losing what we need the most just at that moment when so-called soft skills are emerging as the new hard skills. Join Rebecca de Pelet in thinking about how we can reconnect who we are with what we need, in the education of young people.

"In a world where A.I. is very smart and capable of doing so many things, the things that make us human will become much more important - not less." *Daniela Amodei, President and co-founder of AI company Anthropic*

CHLOE COMBI

Best-Selling Author, Speaker, Researcher, Futurist & Consultant

Future Ready: Helping your students stand out

In a rapidly changing world, some of the traditional models of education - both school and higher - are framed as not being 'future-ready' or adequately preparing young people for the world. This is actually a bit of a myth, and in this session, Chloe Combi will share some of her conversations with top industries and companies showing what schools and teachers are doing absolutely right and what's in demand. Chloe will also provide ideas on how you can make your pupils future-ready, confident and able to stand out from the competition, whatever their skills and level.

MUNGO DUNNETT

Sector Consultant

The Cultural Problem: Getting Kids to be Kids

Parents vary in their backgrounds, their incomes, and their level of academic aspiration. But a common factor across parents, whether choosing state or private schooling, is that they all want their child to be happy. They want them to be busy, making friends, being engaged and having fun. But often this doesn't happen. So much depends on the school's culture. Is it too driven, too stressy, too joyless? But what about the culture amongst the children, particularly as they get beyond the early, unselfconscious years? And how has this been affected by the arrival of the suspicious, introspective Gen Z - and exacerbated by the social isolation issues resulting from Covid lockdowns? The very best cultures address this and engender open participation by the pupils. How can this be done?

JAMES NICHOLS

Director, Political Education for Students

Using Politics to Drive Leadership in Schools

In a rapidly shifting national and global landscape, politics is far more than an option for A Level study; it is the tool to develop visionary and active citizens and leaders. With the franchise in UK elections extended to 16- and 17-year-olds, it has never been more crucial for us to enthuse, engage, and educate all young people about politics, government, citizenship, and democracy throughout the academic and pastoral curriculum.

This session will explore how, when viewed as a force for good, politics sharpens social literacy and academic rigour while fundamentally shaping a student's worldview. By moving beyond the noise of political events, we can use political discourse to cultivate essential leadership traits: empathy, communication, critical analysis, and strategic action.

This talk offers a roadmap for school leaders to build a positive whole-school culture where students aren't just observers, but active participants in democracy.

BREAKOUT SESSION 2

2.00pm - 2.50pm

CATHY ELLOTT

Head, Clapham & Streatham High School

Creating connections: Why Parent Partnerships Matter More Than Ever

Part of the joy of being in schools is building connections not just with our students, but with their families too. As teachers and educators, we are so committed to the flourishing of our pupils, and no one cares more about this than their parents. When schools and families work together, we can form powerful partnerships which are fundamental to every thriving school.

This connection starts with parents' sense of a school's culture and values, and this shared commitment importantly supersedes the merely transactional. It is a relationship rooted in our mutual trust and sense of belonging, and we build it through emotional connection and strategic endeavour.

In this session, Cathy Elliott draws on her background in boarding and her experience of London day schools to explore why a genuine sense of belonging is essential to building a successful school community. When parents understand and share a school's vision and values, they become its most trusted advocates, supporting change and strengthening opportunities and outcomes for pupils.

However, engaging parents, building connections and sustaining effective communication can be challenging in a shifting school market, when schools and families are so busy. This session offers practical insights into how schools can bridge that gap, build trust, and foster a culture of partnership - and harness the value of a more connected, supportive school community.

RAYMOND DEGIORGI

Assistant Head, London Academy of Excellence

Leading on the bright side: Character-driven student leadership

This session presents reflections from a group of Year 12 students at the London Academy of Excellence who took part in a year-long leadership programme in partnership with Eton College. Structured around collaborative projects, workshops, and sustained cross-school interaction, the programme placed character explicitly at its centre, treating it not as a set of competencies to be acquired but as the foundation of genuine human flourishing. Students will share what the experience gave them, how working alongside peers from a different school shifted their sense of their own potential, and how they have grown as people with a clearer sense of who they are and what they value. Participants will leave with a clear picture of the programme's framework and practical thinking about what meaningful cross-school partnership can offer young people on both sides.

JANE BASNETT

Director of Digital Learning at Downe House

Presenting AI - Your Glamorous Assistant

Artificial intelligence is rapidly entering the world of education, but rather than replacing teachers, it has the potential to become a rather useful assistant in the classroom. This lively session explores how schools can take a practical and positive approach to AI and educational technology, using intelligent tools to support great teaching and enrich student learning. Through demonstrations and examples from classroom practice, we will explore how AI and digital tools can help generate ideas, support feedback, spark creativity and encourage deeper thinking. Along the way, we will also consider how these tools can be used in ways that build students' AI literacy, helping them question, direct and critically engage with intelligent systems. There may even be a chance for delegates to try out a few ideas during the session. Delegates will leave with practical ideas, strategies for the classroom and perhaps even a glamorous assistant of their own.

ROB CASTELL & REBECCA PRESTON

Director of Performing Arts at Downe House / Head of Drama at Kennet School

Claiming Centre Stage: Performing Arts at the heart of education

What young people need more than ever is the ability to communicate effectively, collaborate with confidence, and approach problem-solving with creativity. Where can they develop these skills? Through the Performing Arts.

Often dismissed as the 'light luxuries' of a school's curriculum, Rob Castell and Rebecca Preston discuss why the Performing Arts need to be reframed as a vital element of education that equips students with the qualities employers demand in today's rapidly changing workplace.

You will be invited to reconsider the role of Performing Arts in your school and explore how to articulate their true value to students and parents alike.
