

Alameda County

Art isn't just a subject—it's a way of knowing, being, and learning that brings hope and healing for our most vulnerable students in Alameda County. Arts education is a therapeutic tool that addresses trauma and facilitates the healing process. It is a source of joy that empowers young people to thrive. California now has guaranteed arts funding through Prop 28 that will serve as a springboard to success for students chronically failed by our public education system.

– **Alysse Castro, Alameda County Superintendent of Schools**



Alameda County Office of Education ■ Contact: Bernie Phelan, bphelan@aco.org

The Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE) is a champion for advancing equity and opportunity in arts education. We empower students to develop as artistically literate citizens, while gaining an understanding of themselves and their communities. Additionally, ACOE provides guidance in leveraging resources and partnerships to assist school districts and other county offices of education in supporting the whole child. Art holds particular significance for vulnerable students who may face various challenges in their lives. These can range from socio-economic disadvantages and learning differences to adverse childhood experiences and difficult living conditions that create barriers to learning. Arts education is vital to a thriving California. This is an exciting and unique time for the state, as we leverage resources to empower students' creativity, hope, imagination, and skills, and to find solutions for the complex problems facing our communities and society.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

REACH Ashland Youth Center is a community-based organization managed by the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency's



(HCSA) Center for Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC). The Arts & Creativity Program at REACH is a partnership with ACOE and provides accessible, quality arts programming for the unincorporated area of Ashland/Cherryland and adjacent communities. Social emotional learning competencies and the Studio Habits of Mind are core to this approach. Our flexible curriculum shepherds youth members through multiple tiers of art experiences – from introduction to arts, to collaborative art projects, to more advanced peer-education opportunities. Direct services are provided to 11-17 year olds and Transitional Age Youth (TAY) ages 18-24. Services include visual and digital art workshops, community projects such as mural creation, Dia de los Muertos celebration, and a student intern program. Through these classes and interactions,



students build critical thinking skills, hone visual acuity, and build resilience to traumatic issues in their lives. Knowledge is shared through cascading mentorship and guiding experiences by our teaching artists and program staff.

ART + WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

This ACOE initiative focuses on career pathways in Design, Visual & Media Arts – part of the Arts, Media, and Entertainment sector. Reports from the San Francisco Bay Center of Excellence indicate there is a significant undersupply of qualified workers and a strong employment outlook for several occupations. As a result, the Alameda County Office

of Education partnered with three organizations over several years to help create opportunities for students within the county:

- **The BRIC Foundation**

BRIC (Break, Reinvent, Impact, Change) had students take part in a paid, virtual creative experience. During the six-week-long internship, students worked in small groups to create an original concept for a television show, movie, or video game and pitched their project to development executives and creators from companies that included Nickelodeon, Warner Media, Bungie, and Netflix. The program also provided free tablets and laptops for all participants to help complete their work.

- **Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC) & The Alliance for Media Arts + Culture**

This multi-partnership venture included BAVC Media, The Alliance for Media Arts + Culture, and ACOE, and supports students in exploring storytelling and media arts. Interns created 1-2 minute videos and a group video around the theme of Futures We Dream, inspired by the Smithsonian FUTURES exhibitions in Washington, DC. All phases of the design process and production were explored with hands-on experiences. In addition, award-winning filmmakers from the Smithsonian were featured guest speakers and mentors.

- **Sector Weeks**

ACOE, in partnership with Earn & Learn, hosted a number of webinars highlighting an array of professions within the Arts, Media, and Entertainment industry. These events consisted of multiple sessions designed to educate learners about these industries, as well as showcase local and national companies.

EMPOWERING EDUCATORS TO SERVE THE WHOLE CHILD

The pandemic has had profound effects on education, leading to widespread changes in teaching and learning. As schools and educational institutions transition to a post-pandemic environment, there is a growing recognition of the need for arts integration in the curriculum. Statistics have also shown that the arts will increase attendance and language acquisition, while reducing behavioral issues. As a result, ACOE has provided a variety of professional learning series for educators in Alameda County and regionally that integrate the arts in social emotional learning, English language development, history, science, trauma-informed healing, and universal design for learning.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

An essential aspect of reshaping education in Alameda County is to ensure adequate funding for public education, including providing all students access to arts education.

- **Design Teams**

Grant funding is ongoing and has played an integral role in the development of design teams. Arts teams from Hayward, Oakland, and Berkeley unified school districts built schoolwide curriculum, communities of practice, and arts alignment over multiple grade bands.

- **Arts Education Leadership Summit**

California voters have spoken. Prop 28 provides guaranteed arts funding for public schools every year. The Alameda County Office of Education and the San Mateo County Office of Education co-hosted The Arts Ed Funding Leadership Summit, which was a resounding success. District Teams, including VAPA Leads, Arts TOSAs, Site Arts Leads, administrators, and finance



professionals, gathered to share best practices, identify action steps, and address opportunities and challenges associated with this new funding. The summit guided participants in creating targeted action plans to increase staffing for enhanced access and equity in arts education. The interactive nature of the workshop facilitated idea-sharing, question-solving, and collaborative strategy development, leaving attendees well-prepared to implement their action plans for staffing and equipment needs.

- **Arts, Media, and Entertainment (AME) - CTE Credential Program**

Prop 28 requires LEAs with 500 or more students to use 80 percent of the funding for employing teachers. ACOE's goal is to increase the pipeline of credentialed art educators in the county who are well prepared to serve our students with confidence and compassion. Program goals include:

- ▶ Enable talented industry professionals in the arts to begin teaching in Alameda County public schools upon enrolling in our program, while earning a California Career Technical Education (CTE) clear teaching credential;
- ▶ Provide a unique, barrier-free pathway to a valid teaching AME-CTE credential (this program is free);
- ▶ Engage our school districts and community as partners in leveraging Prop 28 funding to increase capacity in the arts.