

Del Norte County

Del Norte County Office of Education

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“The arts are an integral part of any well-rounded person’s education. As the County Office of Education, we are committed to finding ways to bring students, arts, and artists together.”

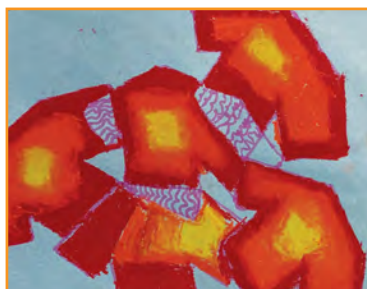
– Jeff Harris, Del Norte County Superintendent of Schools



Strengthening Learning with the Arts

In 2019, Del Norte County joined three other counties in the *Arts and Creativity Initiative (ACI)*. The initiative emphasizes professional development to support teachers with the integration of arts standards, balancing structure and creativity, and using innovative teaching practices that promote the development of higher-order thinking.

At the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, students in grades K-8 participated in various collaborative art projects where they learned elements of visual arts and collaboration skills. Students worked in small groups and made decisions about materials and



composition. Teachers noted high levels of student engagement, collaboration, and persistence as students worked to create quality compositions.



Through the ACI grant, 23 teachers in Del Norte County have been introduced to the Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS). VTS begins with the natural human behavior of wondering about things and transforms it into high-level critical thinking. Students begin to learn about the strategy by closely looking at artwork and responding to a cycle of three questions.

- What’s going on in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say ____?
- What more can we find?

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Once the strategy is learned, teachers can transfer the same strategy into other content areas.



Although this is relatively new in our district, we are already seeing results.

One elementary grade teacher noted, *“I started asking questions in language arts to see what kinds of responses students would give about a passage. Students thought more deeply about the passage. They would tell me their observations and wonderings as long as I didn’t front load a bunch of information or direct answers. The discussions were way more enriching!”.*

Another teacher said, *“Following several powerful VTS sessions centered around artwork with different groups of students, I decided to experiment using the strategy with other content areas. I was presented with an opportunity to use it when my own child was having a difficult time with her English homework. I changed the first question to, “What is going on in this stanza? She went from having nothing to write to writing several paragraphs analyzing the poem. It was truly amazing!”*

Art Partnerships

The Del Norte County Office of Education (DNCOE) partners closely with the California Redwoods Art Association to expand exposure to visual arts to all students in Del Norte County and to encourage community involvement. The partnership consists of supporting all schools in maintaining their membership in the Association, which gives them access to a wide range of services, including the opportunity to take classes at the gallery outside of the school day. Additionally, DNCOE contracts with the Association to provide a variety of opportunities for local artists-in-residence to visit classrooms, provide art lessons, and to display the created pieces at the gallery. Other collaborative partners include the Del Norte Association for Cultural Awareness, the Wild Rivers Symphony, and local community theaters.

Arts and Career Technical Education (CTE)

Another facet of the arts integration in Del Norte County is the focus on including visual and digital media arts within the career and technical education pathways. Through the use of lasers, CNC machines, digital photography and printing, 3D printing in multiple media, and other avenues, students are able to combine artistic ideas with technical skills and envision ways to enhance and expand their opportunities in the workforce and higher education.

Students are also encouraged to participate in the innovative and highly successful *E3 program*. *E3* stands for Education, Experience, and Employment. Through this program, which is a collaboration between the Workforce Development Center, Wild Rivers Community Foundation, The California Endowment-Building Healthy Communities, and DNCOE, students are able to participate in work related soft skills training and are employed by local arts-based businesses to explore the entrepreneurial side of visual and performance art.

Celebrating Success

This year Del Norte celebrates teacher, Kelly Troyna and student, Yanahlea Robinson. Mrs. Troyna has been awarded the *2019 California Hero Award* by the California Arts Council and Poetry



The pair are pictured with Sunset High School’s principal, Tony Fabricius.

Out Loud. She received the award at the distinguished California state capitol and has been highly praised by the staff and students of Sunset High School for this achievement. Her student, Yanahlea, made it to the finals of the *California Poetry Out Loud* State competition in Sacramento. Yanahlea gives all thanks to her teacher, Kelly Troyna, for her tireless efforts and dedication in preparing her for the competition.