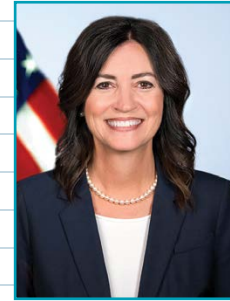


# Fresno County

Access to an arts education opens our children's hearts and minds, helping them learn to think critically, solve problems, develop collaboration and communication skills, and develop the creative capacity to turn their dreams and ideas into reality full of limitless possibilities. The arts are a great equalizer in society and regardless of background or zip code, I believe all children must have access to a comprehensive arts education that will help them be successful in the classroom and beyond. The Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools is not only an advocate for education; we are champions for the transformative power of arts education in Fresno County.

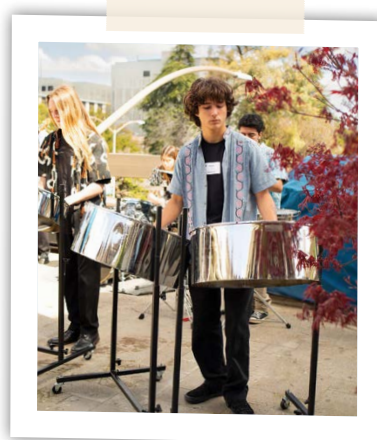


- Michele Cantwell-Copher, Fresno County Superintendent of Schools

**Fresno County Superintendent of Schools** ■ Contact: Aaron Bryan, [abryan@fcoe.org](mailto:abryan@fcoe.org)

The Fresno County Superintendent of Schools (FCSS) is steadfast in its commitment to a visionary future where every student in Fresno County thrives in a challenging, supportive, and inclusive environment, leading to limitless possibilities. We believe the arts are essential to achieving this vision and an integral component of every child's holistic education. Our mission is to foster artistic learning for both students and educators, forging collaborations with school districts and arts organizations on ambitious initiatives while passionately advocating for the arts at the local, state, and national levels.

With various partners, we are committed to cultivating equity and ensuring access to top-tier arts education for every student, in every school, every day. Michele Cantwell-Copher, Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, allocates over \$250,000 in annual general fund support to the arts. This funding encompasses



staffing, direct services to schools and students, and a robust team of six full-time and more than twenty part-time employees within the FCSS Arts Education Department. This team is equipped to deliver outstanding professional learning, curriculum development, personalized instructional coaching for arts specialist teachers and support for general education teachers, integrating the arts into their classrooms, along with diverse student programs spanning PK-12 schools.



FCSS is proud to continue our partnerships with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts that began in 2012. FCSS is honored that the Kennedy Center has elevated the work of our Arts Education Department and has shared it across their national networks, inviting our team to present at numerous conferences and serve in national leadership roles. The work with the Kennedy Center has led to the development of Any Given Child (AGC) Fresno County, an arts strategic planning initiative to ensure that EVERY child in each of our partner districts has equitable access to arts education.



The collaborative partners that make up AGC Fresno County include Fresno Unified, Caruthers Unified, Clay Joint Elementary, Fowler Unified, Sanger Unified, and Selma Unified school districts, as well as the City of Fresno. In addition to the Any Given Child initiative, FCSS proudly collaborates with the Fresno Art Museum as one of the Kennedy Center “Partners in Education” teams. This partnership affords students in Fresno Unified and Sanger Unified the unique opportunity to visit the valley’s only accredited art museum, engaging with the Illustrator’s Gallery and participating in arts learning facilitated by the museum’s education staff.

Beyond national partnerships, FCSS’ Arts Education Department is proud to provide leadership and support in arts education throughout the Central Valley as Region 7 Arts Co-Lead with our partners at the Tulare County Office of Education, forging a unique shared leadership model that has led to a consistently engaged region of arts leaders known as the Highway 99 Arts Initiative.

The FCSS Arts Education Department’s impactful work has been sustained in part by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for the past six years. This support has fueled the Spark! Initiative, aiming to ignite the arts in schools with limited access. The initiative, facilitated by pairing local business leaders with schools,

has granted over \$300,000 to arts programs, including artist residencies, arts integration professional learning, mural projects, and arts opportunities for all students, including those with special needs. The Spark! Initiative has also heightened awareness of the role of arts education in the local economy through radio, television, and social media. Additionally, this support has led to the establishment of the Fresno County Rural Theatre Collaborative (RTC), offering assistance to theatre teachers and programs in rural schools across Fresno County through instructional coaching and program/production support. The culmination for RTC schools is an all-expenses-paid trip to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (Ashland, OR) for their theatre teacher and students at the end of the school year. This enriching experience includes attending five professional shows, engaging in pre-show talks with production staff, touring the OSF facilities, and fostering discussions about dreams and plans for their own programs among students, teachers, and classmates.

FCSS presents students with outstanding opportunities to showcase their skills through meaningful arts education programs. The annual heARTbeat Student Photography Exhibition features the work of student photographers in grades three to twelve in a gallery exhibition at the beautiful K-Jewel Art Gallery in downtown Fresno. The Picture the Valley film festival invites middle school and high school students to submit films that celebrate their unique perspectives on life in the Central Valley. The Fresno County Office of Education Lobby Concert Series features arts performances from countywide middle school and high school programs each Friday in March as part of our Arts Education



Month celebrations. Fresno County high school students have access to an exceptional summer arts program, the Fresno County Summer Arts Academy (FCSAA). This program, in collaboration with Fresno City College, offers students the opportunity to continue their arts learning during the summer, completely free of charge. With esteemed local collegiate and high school arts teachers comprising the instructional faculty, course offerings encompass a diverse range and change annually; they include concert band, jazz band, rock band, choir, theatre (acting and stagecraft), film production, photography, speech and debate, modern dance, mariachi, and visual art. The FCSAA serves as a platform for students to connect with like-minded peers from across the county, sparking creativity during the summer and preparing them for a seamless transition into their school programs in the fall.

To achieve our vision that every child in Fresno County thrives in a challenging, supportive, and inclusive environment that leads to limitless possibilities, the Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools provides educational leadership, fosters partnerships and coordinates services to districts to ensure equitable opportunities for ALL students. FCSS is not just an advocate for education; we are champions for the transformative power of arts education in our society.