We know that the arts can foster powerful emotions within our students, allowing for more empathetic, creative and imaginative thinkers - qualities that are needed in all fields of study. It is imperative, especially in our small and rural communities, that we continue to find ways to expose our students to the arts.

In Inyo County, we are proud to partner with our local arts community and arts council in providing a variety of arts and music programming that enriches our students educational experience while also contributing to their social and emotional health. Keeping the arts alive for our students should be a foundational goal in every educational organization.

– Barry Simpson, Inyo County Superintendent of Schools

In order to implement the Visual and Performing Arts standards and framework and support art experiences for students and teachers, Inyo County Office of Education (ICOE) partnered with the Inyo Council for the Arts (ICA) in 2010. ICA in collaboration with the Education Services department plans field trips and assemblies for students throughout the year and provides in classroom and afterschool arts programming. More than just providing assistance to school districts, ICOE and ICA have taken a new approach to arts education by bridging the gap between the creative communities and educational institutions in our county, creating opportunities for teachers to tap directly into the arts resources available here. With a student population of approximately 2,500 countywide, including remote school districts such as Death Valley, the partnership with ICA was a logical step which has not only proven cost effective but has also allowed the arts council to take a leadership role in arts education across the county. Although Inyo is a rural county, it is fortunate to have an incredible community of teachers and artists who recognize the importance of keeping arts education in our schools. ICOE’s partnership with ICA has been instrumental in channeling these arts resources into the classroom.
Art Education Programs
The partnership between ICA and ICOE has generated a number of programs in the schools and the community that benefit the students of Inyo County.

The Brummitt-Taylor Classical Music Listening Program: This successful program is a five-year daily curriculum developed to teach students about classical composers, compositions, musical vocabulary, and instruments. The program, which has been implemented in 65 K-8 classrooms countywide, goes beyond “music appreciation,” and teaches true musical literacy.

K-5 Art Docent Program: The Art Docent program provides visual art curriculum trainings for volunteer classroom docents who then combine history and art theory lessons with engaging hands-on art activities for students. ICA and ICOE have brought this program into classrooms across the county, including many Spanish-English dual immersion programs, for the past six years.

Workshops and Assemblies: Nationally and internationally touring musicians present educational workshops at Inyo County schools in conjunction with the annual Millpond Music Festival, produced by ICA. In addition, ICA and ICOE continue to partner with the University of Nevada Las Vegas’ music department to bring high quality educational presentations to underserved schools in Inyo County’s most isolated school district, Death Valley.

Poetry Out Loud: ICA and ICOE facilitate county-wide participation in the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council’s Poetry Out Loud competition, which encourages students to learn about great poetry, master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

Inyo County Community Reads: For the last twelve years ICOE and ICA have presented the Community Reads Program which engages both students and community members in a focused reading of a selected book each year. A series of events relating to a theme from the book is produced, and the program as a whole promotes both literacy and community involvement in our county.

Student Art Show at ICA: Each year ICA welcomes art from students of all ages in many different mediums for a show in their downtown gallery. This is one of the most popular and well attended gallery shows of the year, and students and family members love to see their art displayed in public.

After School Art Classes: ICOE and ICA, with additional support from the California Arts Council, are in their seventh year of offering a wide array of after school arts classes in such subjects as oil and watercolor painting, ceramics, music (guitar), beading, caricature drawing, aboriginal dot art, and origami. These classes are taught by local artists and are presented in schools across the county, including schools for at-risk student populations.

The collaboration between ICOE and ICA shows a commitment to thinking “outside the box” to bring quality arts education to California’s rural community schools. ICOE has spearheaded an innovative effort to maintain high quality arts education in our schools by bringing the creative resources of our community into the classroom and actively seeking out artistic and cultural resources to “import” into our isolated county.