The arts are essential elements to enable youth to develop an imagination and foster creativity.

– Cecilia A. Massetti, Ed.D., Madera County Superintendent of Schools

Madera County ArtsFest

The Madera County Superintendent of Schools (MCSOS) and the Madera County Schools Foundation organize an annual ArtsFest in May. In 2019, more than 700 people enjoyed the day listening to live student musical and dance performances and visiting booths to create their own works of art. Children worked with their parents to create origami. One of the highlights of ArtsFest was the student gallery featuring 308 art pieces from 23 elementary, middle, and high schools in Madera County.

Multimedia Resources to Support Arts Education

The Madera County Superintendent of Schools’ Educational Resources and Services (ERS) program provides digital media resources to teachers and students to support arts education through www.CaliforniaStreaming.org and www.CalSNAP.org. Both are ongoing projects of the California County Educational Technology Consortium www.ccetc.net. Teachers also borrow a variety of multimedia resources from ERS to support their arts education curriculum, from art prints and musical instruments, to DVDs on dance, theatre, and music.

Arts Education in MSCOS’ Early Learning Program

MCSOS has an extensive early learning program serving young children in Madera and Chowchilla. Every day students in this program participate in creative dramatics, signing, instrumental music, and visual art lessons and activities. Not only do students learn the art foundations outlined in the California Preschool Learning Foundations, but there is the added bonus of supporting social and emotional learning through the arts for these young children.

Public Oral Interpretation Opportunities for Students in Correctional Academy

The Madera County Superintendent of Schools and the Madera County Correctional Academy share a unique experience providing competitive oral interpretation
opportunities for students in the Academy. For more than seven years, students have entered and won in community oral interpretation contests. The competitions include: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Local Host Committee Speech Contest, Madera Rotary Club Speech Contest, Poetry Out Loud, and Fresno State University’s Young Writers’ Conference. The success of these cadets can be attributed to the hard work and harmonious goals of both staff and students.

The Arts at MCSOS LIFE Games
The Madera County Superintendent of Schools hosts MCSOS LIFE Games. MCSOS LIFE Games grew out of the desire to demonstrate that all students, even the most severely disabled, can be included in any activity with the right preparation. The event connects the community to students, and families to community resources. Students from all districts in Madera County are served in the regional programs operated by MCSOS. Students have the opportunity to participate in a series of activities focusing on physical education and visual and performing arts standards. LIFE Games was organized by a team of MCSOS staff members for over 350 students with special needs and the 300 staff and community volunteers that assisted them. There were eight art stations for the students. Approximately 100 local high school students staffed the student stations.

MCSOS LIFE Games received a Golden Bell Award from the California School Boards Association (CSBA) and an Apple for Excellence Award from California County Boards of Education (CCBE).

Almond Blossom Festival in Chowchilla Elementary School District
Each Spring, Merle L. Fuller Elementary School in the Chowchilla Elementary School District hosts the Almond Blossom Festival of Performing Arts and Visual Interpretation. The Almond Blossom Festival is a celebration of performing arts to promote literacy, public speaking skills, and self-confidence among the students at Fuller School. More than 500 students participate in large group, small group, and individual performances. Volunteers from the community, Wilson Middle School, Chowchilla High School, Chowchilla Elementary School District, and Madera County Schools Administration are essential to the success of the festival. The event is run strictly as a festival, not a contest. Participants are evaluated on their artistic performances and not ranked against one another. After each performance, the judges speak to the students for a few minutes to share positive and constructive feedback. As a culmination of their hard work students are recognized for their achievements at a special ceremony.

Teaching Artists in Madera Unified School District
Through the efforts of the Madera County Arts Council, all students in grades three and four in Madera Unified School District receive art lessons throughout the school year. Art instructors, hired by the Madera Arts Council, provide art lessons to students who would otherwise not have the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of art. The art lessons include air dry clay, chalk, oil pastel, and stop motion.

String Orchestras in Madera Unified School District
Madera Unified School District (MUSD) has a thriving String Orchestra Program at nine of their elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. The string orchestra program continues to grow every year with approximately 300 students learning to play the violin, viola, and cello. Madera Unified has invested in the training of teachers to provide Mariachi music instruction to students beginning in third grade. Currently, there are two elementary programs, one middle school program, and one high school program with plans for expansion at the elementary level in the 2020-21 school year.