Nevada County Superintendnet of Schools

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“Nevada County has a rich tradition of arts in the community. Whether it is a film or music festival, art gallery, or poetry reading, the arts are engrained in our community. As educators it is our duty to make sure that journey begins in our schools with a quality, integrated arts program that exposes our students to all forms of art. The connection between art and a successful educational experience is undeniable. In Nevada County, we take that mission to heart.”

– Scott W. Lay, Nevada County Superintendent of Schools

Nevada County Superintendent of Schools

The Nevada County Superintendent of Schools (NCSoS) offers a variety of art education programs within our county under the leadership of our Arts Coordinator and supports other art programs with key community partners. These programs and services include our Art Docent Program and our Annual Young At Art Exhibition as well as our Annual STEAM Expo. NCSoS provides Instructional Coaching for teachers on integrating art across curriculum areas; professional development for county educators on the VAPA standards; and support for other extra-curricular activities and competitions across the county.

NCSoS partners with community cultural organizations and programs, including Nevada County Arts Council’s Poetry Out Loud; The County Library’s Nevada County Reads Program; and the educational programs of InConcert Sierra and Music In the Mountains.

NCSoS’s partnership with the Nevada County Arts Council over the years has led to the formation of a key arts education committee comprised of school administrators (active and retired), educators, local artists and local arts agencies. As a state-local partner
with the California Arts Council, the Council advocates for Access, Equity and Community Engagement through promotion of arts education projects. As a partner of California Alliance for Arts Education (CAAE) it works to improve teacher preparation, advocate for public funding for the arts, and ensure equity and access to arts education by closing opportunity gaps and eliminating inequities in access to arts education.

Programmatic initiatives locally include Poetry Out Loud, Artists in Schools, Student Voices Campaign, Wild & Scenic Film Festival, as well as engaging in grant writing efforts and other activities. Together with the Arts Council, NCSoS was one of three county offices awarded a grant to participate in an arts education planning process in partnership with CCSESA and the CAAE. The Arts Council’s survey, a State of the Arts Instruction in Western Nevada County K-12 in Public Schools, was a key document in the grant process, as it highlighted the need for more comprehensive arts instruction for students and professional development for educators.

In its 5th year, Steam Expo 2020 continues to grow and expand each year beyond our expectations. Students exhibits, projects and performances throughout the day demonstrate the interconnectedness of art in every science, technology, engineering and math discipline. We have several areas throughout the expo where art is displayed, created and even considered as part of the judging criteria of many competitive projects submitted by students.

This one-year grant allowed us to gather a committee comprised of administrators, educators across the grade-level spans, local artists, local arts agencies and other committed community members to work on the development of a county-wide comprehensive strategic arts plan to guide increased and improved arts education within our schools, ensuring equity and access for all students.

A highlight of one of the collaborative programs with the Nevada County Arts Council is Artists in Schools. Four local schools are receiving a program that provides first, second, third and fourth graders weekly art lessons integrating VAPA standards across Common Core academic curriculum. These model art lessons have been collaboratively developed by classroom teachers and teaching artists. Ultimately, the program will include model lessons for all students (Grades 1-5).