All San Diego County children deserve access to high-quality visual and performing arts education, regardless of where they live or how much money their parents make. The arts provide a crucial link to engaging students in other academic fields and help students develop the critical and creative thinking skills that are necessary for success in college, career, and beyond.

– Paul Gothold, Ed.D., San Diego County Superintendent of Schools

San Diego County

San Diego County Office of Education

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San Diego County Office of Education

The San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) supports nearly 780 schools and more than 500,000 students. SDCOE provides a variety of services for the 42 school districts, 124 charter schools, and five community college districts in the county. The full-time Arts Coordinator at SDCOE provides innovative, high-quality professional learning grounded in California Standards to strengthen academic instruction and works to ensure equity and access for each and every student.

Arts Empower San Diego

Arts Empower is a collective impact working to improve and support arts education in San Diego County. The mission of Arts Empower is to ensure high-quality arts education for every student, supported through the collective impact of a motivated community of arts advocates.

Arts Empower:
- Builds leadership in and through arts education
- Promotes advocacy to strengthen arts education
- Encourages and assists districts in all phases of the arts education strategic planning process
- Fosters meaningful partnerships between educational entities and community stakeholders
- Facilitates professional learning opportunities
- Measures access to equitable arts education

Leadership Development

The San Diego Area Arts Leadership Community engages school and district arts leaders in professional learning and leadership development focusing on instruction and student learning aligned with the new California Arts Standards. Through collaborative observation, discourse, and reflection, we build the capacity of arts leaders as they support educators in their district. The Community investigates arts education topics and current research
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to maintain awareness of issues and policies impacting arts education in California. We provide a system of support for arts leaders as they implement a Strategic Arts Education Plan and make systematic change. This work is a partnership between SDCOE and the Southern Counties California Arts Project (SouthCAP), a regional site of The California Arts Project.

Strategic Arts Education Plans
Arts Empower San Diego, in partnership with SouthCAP, assists districts in writing and implementing Strategic Arts Education Plans. Fourteen school districts, serving sixty percent of the students in the county, have written strategic plans since Arts Empower first began this work in 2012. Arts Empower facilitates all phases of the strategic planning process including advocating for a district plan, guiding districts in preparing and executing the plan, and supporting an internal plan evaluation and subsequent actions.

Partnerships
The Arts Education Resource Organization (AERO) is a collective of arts organizations and artists dedicated to working together to build bridges between schools and the arts community. AERO began in 2006 with the vision that all San Diego County students have access to engaging, relevant, quality arts education. Members meet throughout the year to network, share best practices, collaborate, and participate in professional learning.

Since 1999, SDCOE and the La Jolla Playhouse have been recognized as a Partners in Education site as certified by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C. Currently our Arts Academy program is being conducted in three elementary schools in the Chula Vista Elementary School District. Each teacher spends 10 weeks developing text-based arts integration curriculum and co-teaching with La Jolla Playhouse teaching artists. Teachers use theatre making strategies to activate student learning in subject areas such as Science, Language Arts, and History. By the end of this program, teachers develop the confidence and tools to continue using arts integration, thus making exponential impact on students for years to come.

Professional Learning and Resources
Every October since 2013, Arts Empower San Diego and the San Diego County Office of Education, in partnership with AERO, SouthCAP, local professional arts educator associations, and Balboa Park arts and cultural institutions host the premier conference for arts educators, administrators, college students, and parents in the region. Every year, more than 500 participants attend more than 70 professional learning sessions throughout beautiful Balboa Park.

A Criteria for Quality STEM/STEAM in San Diego (SDQC) was created by SDCOE to support the growing number of K-12 STEM/STEAM schools and programs as they implement integrated STEM/STEAM learning experiences in all K-12 classrooms. This tool may serve as a framework to facilitate inter-segmental discussion on program quality indicators. School and district personnel, after school program providers, community members, business partners, parents, and STEM/STEAM professionals may find this SDQC tool useful to ultimately provide measurable program outcomes. When used as part of a collaborative analysis and goal setting process, it has the potential to guide the thinking and decision-making process. In 2019, the SDCOE STEAM Team revised the attributes, components, and elements to include perspectives in equity, Career and Technical Education, Computer Science, and Universal Design for Learning.