

San Luis Obispo County

San Luis Obispo County Office of Education

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“ We need to recognize fine arts classes as core aspects of the academic curriculum rather than as merely ‘add-ons’ or ‘feel-good’ electives. Research is clear in indicating that students at all grade levels should be required to study the fine arts. In order to increase student opportunities, we should assure that funding for arts education in our schools is maintained or expanded. Ongoing maintenance of funding is necessary to continue the positive relationships between arts education and student learning as identified in the research literature. ”



– James J. Brescia, Ed.D., San Luis Obispo County Superintendent of Schools

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The San Luis Obispo County Office of Education (SLOCOE) acknowledges that 21st century American classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse. As total U.S. enrollment reaches 58 million future members of our democracy, we are committed to preserving and promoting the arts. Nearly one in four American students will experience



English as a second language in our ever-changing society. We believe that a school system which teaches students to think rigorously and to creatively

articulate thoughts promotes our democracy. The SLOCOE supports a humanities-based education that equips

students for long-term career development in our rapidly changing global economy. Education is one of the biggest factors in promoting social mobility and social justice. Arts and humanities-based programs do not assume individuals occupy a fixed place in society. The local economy is more dependent on media, culture and tourism than ever before in history. We acknowledge that these fields are driven by the creativity of the arts and



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humanities. If we do not support access to the arts and humanities, we risk damaging one of our most valuable natural resources, our human potential.



San Luis Obispo County is committed to the Arts in Education. In addition to the many wonderful programs

implemented throughout its eleven districts, the County Office of Education has created a Student Outreach program that connects students and professional artists. During the school year, school sites are offered the opportunity to have a professional arts organization visit their campus and provide both a performance as well as educational content for the attending students. These performances are generously funded by local donors. Some of the many professional partners include Opera San Luis Obispo, Wine Country Theatre, Drum and Perk, Classinova, Orchestra Novo and Symphony of the Vines. One recent example of this outreach was Opera San Luis Obispo presenting six outreach performances to various county schools highlighting their fall production of *South Pacific*. Professional musicians and actors performed highlights from the show, explained the process of becoming a professional artist and answered questions from each audience. Outreach performances are provided to enhance the exposure to the arts and are available to all county schools.



Another partnership with a professional organization is with a local arts studio, *Studios on the Park*. Through local donors, SLOCOE is able to lease a professional studio space alongside eleven other professional co-op spaces under the same roof. The SLOCOE *Student Art Gallery* is unique in its ability to showcase countywide student artwork. The county produces 6-8 exhibits annually in the space. Artists in grades K-12 are encouraged to participate in the various exhibits, whether they be countywide theme shows or shows highlighting a specific district. In addition, students from county high schools have the opportunity to be a student worker at the gallery.



These student "Artist-in-Residences" work part-time on the weekends. Their duties include interacting with the public while they are creating their art, selling the artwork on display, and interacting with the professional artists surrounding them each and every work shift. This awesome partnership benefits the gallery and its workers, the community and most importantly the students of San Luis Obispo County.

The purpose of these local partnerships is three-fold:

- Help all students become lifelong learners and enthusiasts of the Arts.
- Experience local professional level artists in action.
- Envision the Arts beyond schooling and the limitless possibilities available to each student.