

# San Mateo County

The visual, performing, and media arts are essential to success for all students in our 21st-century world. The arts engage students in learning by encouraging self-exploration, creativity, and empathy. They help build student resilience by providing healthy ways to process emotions and trauma. The arts require critical thinking, communication, and collaboration, all skills contributing to health, happiness, and success. With new funding sources and increasing statewide support, the County Office of Education is working hard to ensure all students in San Mateo County gain access to the arts as part of their TK-12 education.



– Nancy Magee, San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools

San Mateo County Office of Education ■ Contact: Allison Gamlen, [agamlen@smcoe.org](mailto:agamlen@smcoe.org)

## CENTERING STUDENT VOICE AND ADVANCING ARTS EQUITY IN SAN MATEO COUNTY

The San Mateo County Office (SMCOE) has made a resolute commitment to prioritize arts education. Since 2022, SMCOE has appointed a dedicated full time Visual and Performing Arts Coordinator, leading various initiatives to enhance the region’s artistic landscape while emphasizing the theme of ‘Centering Student Voice.’ These initiatives encompass districtwide Arts Professional Development sessions, quarterly Art Showcases, the development of a virtual statewide Arts Institute, the ongoing Creativity Residencies workshop, the organization of a Bay Area Arts Education Leadership Summit, a community mural project, and the implementation of strategies outlined in the 2020 Visual, Performing, and Media Arts Strategic Plan.

In response to compelling data from 2017 that revealed only 44 percent of San Mateo County students had access to arts education at the secondary level, SMCOE embarked on a steadfast mission to foster

equity and broaden arts access for all students. Fast forward to 2023, and a comprehensive survey conducted across all county schools showcases a positive shift: now, 49.7 percent of students can engage with the arts as a part of their daily school experience, marking a modest yet promising increase in accessibility. SMCOE is committed to the principle of ‘Centering Student Voice.’ To learn more, visit [www.smcoe.org/arts](http://www.smcoe.org/arts).

## EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

### Art on the Walls

The Art on the Walls gallery is an ever-evolving exhibition space within the San Mateo County Office of Education. This gallery proudly features an array of artistic creations by students from grades K-12, all beautifully-aligned with the theme of “Student Voice.” These works illuminate the unique perspectives of our young artists and offer glimpses into how they interpret and navigate the world around them. Every piece featured in the gallery has undergone a rigorous selection process overseen by a panel of student judges collaborating closely with esteemed arts leaders and dedicated SCOE personnel.



### Arts as Life Institute for Students and Educators

“Arts as Life” was an engaging day of virtual learning designed to be both enjoyable and enriching for students and educators alike. This event offered immersive professional development opportunities, encouraging participants to explore the interplay between creativity and its connections to literacy and social and emotional learning. Open to students K-12 and educational staff, “Arts as Life” provided diverse workshops, including spoken word poetry, body music, bookmaking, video arts, theatre, storytelling,

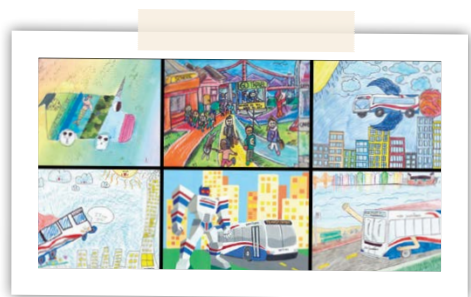
singing, and more, featuring over 30 dynamic presenters.

### **Creativity Residencies**

SMCOE recently organized another immersive day of Creativity Residencies at the scenic Miramar Farms in Half Moon Bay. This specially-curated event was crafted to offer teachers a unique opportunity to fully engage in hands-on experiences in music, theatre, visual arts, and dance. The day was thoughtfully designed to cultivate their creativity and equip them with valuable tools and mindsets to enhance student classroom engagement.

### **Art Takes a Bus Ride**

Each year, SMCOE collaborates with the San Mateo County Transit District to orchestrate the “Art Takes a Bus Ride” art competition tailored for San Mateo County students grades 1-12. This exciting initiative involves selecting a finalist from each grade whose artwork will be prominently showcased on the exterior of a SamTrans bus for an entire year. The creative expressions of these talented students are also featured on cards within the buses, celebrating their artistic contributions for all passengers to enjoy.



### **Community Mural**

The SMCOE community mural embodies the inclusive and welcoming nature that San Mateo County students aspire to create in all their schools. This mural was brought to life through a collaboration with muralist Pedro

Rivas Lopez. Students from across the county responded to the call to “envision an inclusive, welcoming community,” resulting in over 30 submissions. Working closely with Rivas Lopez, a group of students provided input on the mural’s design, refining it through multiple iterations. Initial coats of paint were applied by students, forming the foundation of its vibrant colors and intricate details, helping bring this inspiring piece of art to completion.

### **Universal Transitional Kindergarten Institute**

The Universal Transitional Kindergarten Institute (UKTI) unfolded over a dynamic week, immersing educators in a transformative approach to play based learning infused with the arts. Visual arts, music, dance, and theatre seamlessly supported language acquisition while engaging with academic content, and providing a multi-sensory pathway to understanding. Integrating these artistic forms allowed educators to view students through an asset-based lens, identifying and celebrating individual strengths. The expressive nature of visual arts, music, dance, and theatre facilitated the integration of social and emotional learning across all content areas and within play, nurturing the development of confident, self-aware students.

### **Arts Education Funding Leadership Summit**

Co-presented by the Alameda County Office of Education and the SMCOE, the Arts Education Funding Leadership Summit was a resounding success. District Teams, including VAPA Leads, Arts TOSAs, Site Arts Leads, administrators, and finance professionals, gathered to unpack the potential of Proposition 28 and the Instructional Materials Block

Grant. Participants defined best practices, identified action steps, and addressed opportunities and challenges associated with this funding. The summit guided participants in creating action plans to increase staffing for enhanced access and equity in arts education. The interactive nature of the workshop left attendees well prepared to implement staffing and equipment plans under Proposition 28.

### **Afrofuturism Student Conference**

This conference empowers San Mateo County students in grades 6-12 by leveraging the transformative influence of Afrofuturism, an artistic movement that spans literature, music, visual arts, and more, characterized by its futuristic or science fiction motifs, which intricately interweave elements of Black history and culture. This groundbreaking event, the first of its kind in the county, aspires to ignite the imaginations of young Black students, providing them with a platform to envision themselves as architects of their destinies. The conference, hosted in spring 2024, offers inclusive facilitation in affinity spaces, creative exploration, healing through the arts, and valuable data insights into students’ experiences in the educational system.

