

# Santa Cruz County

Is there anything more uniquely human than our relationship with the arts? Art inspires, informs, entertains, and – in many cases – speaks truths that cannot otherwise be articulated. So, too, is arts education a core component of teaching the whole child, and a key priority for the curriculum and programs support we offer at the Santa Cruz County Office of Education.

– **Faris Sabbah, Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools**



**Santa Cruz County Office of Education** ■ Contact: Audrey Sirota, [asirota@santacruzcoe.org](mailto:asirota@santacruzcoe.org)

The Santa Cruz County Office of Education (Santa Cruz COE) Arts Plan for Equity demonstrates our commitment to partnering with our school districts and nonprofit agencies to ensure equity in access to arts education for all students. We support districts' arts education policies and programs by serving on district arts committees offering hands-on support and resources. We recognize that robust and articulated art programs make our students' worlds richer, safer, and more compassionate. Achieving literacy in the arts is joyful and inspirational. It creates a lifelong appreciation of the arts. It prepares students for the 21st-century workforce and plays a critical role in developing well-rounded citizens.

As delineated in the California Arts Education Framework, we value all facets of arts education. We value the arts as a tool of communication, creativity, community engagement, student voice and leadership; a means to mental, emotional and physical health and wellbeing; an instrument for the expression of culture and history; a strategy for improving school culture and climate; and a vehicle for the

attainment of a fulfilling profession. We view the arts as a crucial component of the wellness of the whole child.

### **PROP. 28 USHERS IN NEW ERA**

The Santa Cruz COE Arts Plan provides a framework as we enter a new era with the passage of Prop. 28. We are able to provide customized support for each district's community needs and desires. A great example of the impact of Prop. 28 is our Artist Teacher Partnership program that matches a teaching artist with a classroom teacher in our Court and Community Schools. Together they create a curriculum that integrates a core subject area such as history with an art form. Students who have rarely experienced learning an



art form have the opportunity to study theatre, music, poetry, photography, media, and visual arts. Several of the programs have showcased their work in a theatre production, school mural, or arts exhibition. Now we have sustainable resources for bringing visual and performing arts to our students in our alternative education settings.

### **DEVELOPING ARTS EDUCATORS**

Santa Cruz COE offers a number of professional development opportunities, including the Summer Arts Education Institute. Since its inception over a decade ago, this transformative institute has been a successful collaboration between the Santa Cruz COE and the Arts Council Santa Cruz County. Over the last several years, we have expanded the institute to include all Region 5 counties. Additionally, we now have a region-wide Arts Education Community of Practice that meets monthly both in-person and online. Finally, we have formed a strong partnership with the UC Santa Cruz through the ArtsBridge program, which connects university students with mentor teachers.

## SANTA CRUZ COE COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Youth Artists Taking Action (YATA) is a leadership group for students interested in using their artistic skills to address challenges in their community and promote social change. Launched as part of the Youth Led Leadership Alliance, a wider youth leadership initiative facilitated by the Santa Cruz COE.

Collaborating with teaching artists, YATA students create artistic projects to spark action on a social, environmental or health issue impacting students across the county. Previous projects include a video collaboration addressing youth mental health, murals advocating for the protection of our oceans, and a tile mosaic mural dedicated to service workers across the county.

We also integrate the arts into our support for student climate action through our annual FashionTeens event. Partnering with local businesses and arts organizations, we encourage students to use recycled, upcycled or reused materials to create wearable clothing that make artistic statements about the environment and serve as a medium of personal and community expression.

## STEAM

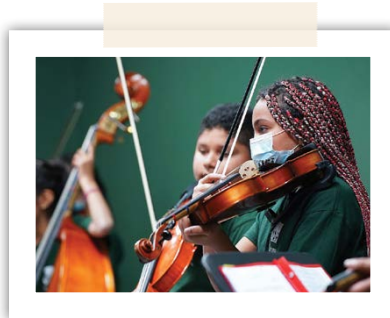
Over the past several years we have transformed our Science & Engineering Fair into a STEAM



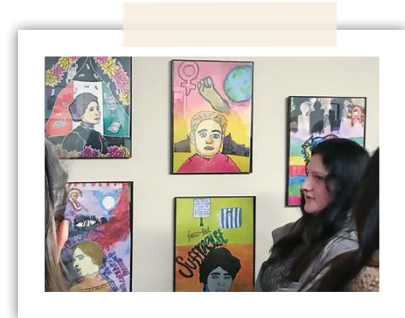
Expo where we demonstrate the integration of the content areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM). While supporting the traditional science fair, we have expanded the opportunities for students to submit a project for the Invention Convention; demonstrate their understanding of mathematical and musical concepts of pattern through Ballet Folklorico; express their creativity through both poetry and painting; and examine perspective through scientific illustration.

## MUSIC

The Santa Cruz COE works with organizations including the Santa Cruz Symphony, Kuumbwa Jazz, and El Sistema to bring music programs to our county's youth. Now in our seventh year, we collaborate with the Santa Cruz Symphony and Carnegie Hall to bring the Link Up music programs to our students. Link Up "links" music education in the classroom to that of the local symphony. Every spring, over 4,000 Santa Cruz County students learn world renowned musical arrangements such as "Ram Tori Maya" by Reena



Esmail, conducted by Maestro Daniel Stewart of the Santa Cruz Symphony. The Santa Cruz COE is proud to be one of over 110 partners around the world.



## VISUAL ARTS

The Santa Cruz COE partners with the local arts council and all our districts to bring the annual Youth Art Exhibit to the County Government Building. Each year, 500 pieces of artwork by students grades K-12 are on display from March through May.

## THEATRE, DANCE, LITERARY ARTS

In addition to collaborating with Tandy Beal & Co. to bring dance and theatre residencies to elementary schools, we work with the state and local arts councils to bring Poetry Out Loud to our county's high schools. Consistent with our commitment to multilingualism, we honor students who recite poetry in other languages such as Spanish, Mixtec and Farsi, through our World Language Poetry Showcase. In 2023-2024 we launched a partnership with our Santa Cruz County Poet Laureate to create the position of Youth Poet Laureate for a Santa Cruz County student.

