Access to Arts Education is an important component of our struggle for equity in our schools. We deeply value the Arts as they play a fundamental role in our efforts to serve the whole child. Arts Education helps our students find their voice and guide their own trajectory towards success.

— Faris Sabbah, Ed.D., Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools

Santa Cruz County Office of Education
The Santa Cruz County Office of Education (Santa Cruz COE) is committed to partnering with our school districts and nonprofit agencies to ensure equity in access to arts education for all K-12 students. We work with our districts to support their policies and programs for arts education by serving on District Arts Committees that offer hands-on support and resources. We recognize that robust and articulated art programs make our students’ worlds richer, safer, and more compassionate.

The importance of the Arts is articulated in the Santa Cruz COE’s new five-year Strategic Plan. We view the Arts as a crucial component of the health and wellness of the whole child. In addition to continuing our annual events and ongoing services in the Arts, our goals include “increasing student access to ongoing, standards-based programs in the Arts, and supporting ongoing standards-based STEAM programs”. Deep engagement with art creates well-rounded individuals who possess vital skills, such as collaboration, empathy, and problem-solving for successfully pursuing a multitude of career pathways.

Santa Cruz COE Professional Development
Santa Cruz COE offers a number of strong professional development opportunities, including the Summer Arts Integration Institute. Since its inception a decade ago, this transformative Institute has been a successful collaborative effort between the Santa Cruz COE and the Arts Council of Santa Cruz. Over 300 teachers throughout Santa Cruz County have participated in the Institute to experience both arts immersion and arts integration strategies that are grounded in Harvard’s Studio Habits of Mind.

As a recipient of the 2019 Student Support and Enrichment Grant, we brought the Artist Teacher Partnership Program to Alternative Education programs. Classroom teachers and teaching artists work together
to create a curriculum that integrates a core subject area such as history with an arts discipline. Students who have rarely experienced arts leaning in the classroom had the opportunity to learn more about theatre, music, poetry, photography, and/or visual arts. Several of the programs have showcased their work in a theater production, school mural, or arts exhibition.

**Santa Cruz COE Collaborative Partnerships**

**MUSIC** • The Santa Cruz COE works in partnership with several music organizations including the Santa Cruz Symphony, QS Music Productions, Kuumbwa Jazz, and El Sistema to bring music programs to our county’s youth.

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. In the spring of every year, over 4000 Santa Cruz County grades 4-5 Link Up students have the opportunity to learn and recite world-renowned musical arrangements such as Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony and the Blue Danube conducted by Maestro Daniel Stewart of the Santa Cruz Symphony. The Santa Cruz COE is proud to be part of this world-wide commitment to music education. We are proud to be one of over 110 partner orchestras around the world.

*El Sistema* offers daily music education in several schools throughout our county with the majority of programs based in Pajaro Valley Unified School District. Their goal is to increase equitable access to music education. By connecting school-based and out-of-school music learning through partnerships, community events, and performances, *El Sistema* promotes the long-term development and success of over 500 students currently attending the program. They also are studying the academic and social-emotional gains that students are able to make when they have access to ongoing, sequential, standards-based arts programs.

**VISUAL ARTS** • The Santa Cruz COE partners with the Arts Council and all of our Districts to bring the annual *Youth Art Exhibit* to the County Government Building. 500 pieces of artwork from Kindergarten through 12th grade students are on display from March through May. From this collection, 35 pieces are selected to hang on permanent display at the Santa Cruz County Office of Education.

**THEATRE, DANCE, LITERARY ARTS** • In addition to collaborating with Tandy Beal & Co. to bring dance and theater residencies to elementary school students, we work with the state and local Arts Council to bring *Poetry Out Loud* to our county’s high school students. We are unique in Santa Cruz County in that we want to highlight our commitment to multilingualism. Therefore, between every student reciting for our *Poetry Out Loud* competition, we honor students who recite poetry in other languages such as Spanish, Mixtec, Farsi, and French.

**STEAM** • To support our youth in dealing with environmental stress, Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Faris Sabbah, has launched a youth leadership initiative focused on student climate action. Students apply to work with a countywide team of students and administrative leaders to design, plan, and facilitate a spring Summit.

We integrate the Arts into our support for student climate action through our Annual Fashion Teens event. This event encourages students to use recycled or reused materials to create wearable clothing that make artistic statements about the environment and serve as a medium of personal self-expression.