

Sonoma County

I have seen firsthand how the arts can set young people on a path of growth and discovery. We know access to innovative, diverse, and high-quality arts education is essential for all students' development. Sonoma County has long been an incubator for talented artists across a broad range of disciplines. We are fortunate to have a rich community of artists and arts organizations who partner with the Sonoma County Office of Education. I'm excited to see Proposition 28 adding fuel to our community's thoughtful work on the Arts Education Framework. It's essential that future generations are backed by a well-rounded arts education that reflects our schools' diversity, encourages creativity, and empowers them to express themselves.



– Amie Carter, Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools

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SONOMA COUNTY ARTS EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

To support Visual and Performing Arts work throughout the county, VAPA staffing positions were created at the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE), in both director and coordinator roles. SCOE provides leadership to the Steering Committee of the Sonoma County Arts Education Alliance (AEA). The Steering Committee is a governing body that oversees the mission and vision of the AEA and the committees that support the Sonoma County Arts Education Framework

Created as a countywide master plan for arts education, the Sonoma County Arts Education Framework (2019-2024) has been implemented with progress to report! This five-year vision of arts education was launched late in 2019 by the AEA, SCOE, and Creative Sonoma. The framework charts a course for more sequential, comprehensive, culturally relevant arts education. This guiding light was crucial throughout the pandemic. Thirteen school districts have written and implemented their own strategic

arts plans based on a template drawn from the framework's goals, strategies, and outcomes. School districts developed these plans with district leadership teams and consultation, either with support from Creative Sonoma planning grants or through other district funding sources. SCOE and Creative Sonoma's County Arts Education Framework outline processes for supporting districts based on the strategic plan goals; these represent promising practices for supporting arts education in rural areas.

ARTS EDUCATION ALLIANCE AND ARTS NOW COMMUNITY

The Sonoma County AEA received a designation as a Create CA Arts Now Community. With three years of support and training from Create CA, the AEA has become a strong coalition, and has identified strategies to support communities within Sonoma County districts themselves.

For example, the AEA offered professional development through Meetups for School Administrators. These meetups provided information,



networking, and partnership building, and a trusted space where administrators could ask questions. The AEA also created dialogues with parents through Parent Ambassadors for the Arts about the opportunities available through the arts, encouraging parents to become active advocates in their schools. Finally, cohorts of School VAPA Leaders and District Arts Coordinators round out the ecosystem of support for strong arts education programs throughout the county. These district coordinators and their teams are receiving professional development through a community of practice focused on strategic arts plan implementation. These newest cohorts ensure support and accountability for staying the course of an arts plan.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

SCOE supports the countywide celebrations of students' work in the arts through the annual STEAM showcase. Each showcase features demonstrations of high-quality learning in and through the arts by student performances and exhibitions. The programs amplify student voices, as the audience hears how the arts have had deep, long-lasting impact on their lives. Student presenters have asked for more such arts opportunities from the adults they trust.

A goal of the Arts Education Framework is for districts or regions to create their own arts showcases to increase student and community engagement, as well as parental involvement. Creative Sonoma provided grants for districts to coordinate working with local artists to shape, produce and enliven these events.

The passing of Proposition 28 has led to more conversation and action around creating sequential, robust arts learning, and placed an even greater importance on strategic arts planning. It has also led to collaboration to address the pressing need for more arts educators. The North Coast School of Education at SCOE has partnered with the AEA to provide information and career pathway options to those interested in learning more about careers in arts education.



Collaborations are occurring in the community with SCOE, Creative Sonoma, higher education institutions, and arts partners to discuss this pressing need for more arts educators and identify next steps.

Multilingual Learners and the Arts

Each year, SCOE offers a robust menu of cutting-edge researchers and impassioned practitioners for its Multilingual Learner Leadership Conference. And 2024 is no exception. SCOE invited administrators, teachers, teachers on special assignment, and paraprofessionals to its annual conference bannered under the theme, "Voices of Light." Presenters and participants were warmly asked to question, "How might we celebrate and honor the voices of multilingual learners to co-create practices of belonging?"

Among many nationally recognized thinkers, we were honored to host keynote speaker, Dr. Yadira Luz Herrera, co-author of *En Comunidad: Lessons for Centering the Voices and Experiences of Bilingual Latinx Students*, who facilitated learning around En Comunidad's Critical Bilingual Literacies Framework. Dr. Herrera also led a session entitled, "Cosechando Conexiones con Poesía: Poetry as Teaching, Healing, and Resistance."

Dr. Herrera was accompanied by Emmy-award-winning artist Erika Lutz whose "See You On the Other Side" mural experience at SCOE's Amarosa Academy in Santa Rosa, invited multilingual learners into an inner and outer transformation of their school. Lutz's yearlong arts-integrated program prioritized the social and emotional well-being of students by embedding community-centered art into its school. Participants heard Amarosa's story and engaged in an interactive art activity based on collective resilience and creative spirituality.



Visual Arts in Early Childhood

SCOE takes great pride in being the hub for "A Festive Thought: Art Through the Minds of Young Children," a countywide initiative focused on early childhood art. This project is designed to assist preschool, TK, and Kindergarten educators in seamlessly blending visual arts throughout their curriculum. Educators specializing in early childhood education, project-based learning, STEAM, and art integration from various corners of the county will actively engage in this art-centered endeavor.

Intersectionality of the Arts and Education

SCOE believes that the intersectionality of arts and education underscores the importance of incorporating creative and expressive outlets within educational frameworks. It recognizes the arts as not just standalone disciplines but integral components that enhance learning, foster creativity, and promote holistic development in individuals of all backgrounds and abilities.

