

# Sonoma County

## Sonoma County Office of Education

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*“All great journeys begin with a first step. Districts and schools are encouraged to learn and consider the Arts Education Framework as a first step in considering how the Framework can be used to achieve school goals. Arts education provides creative solutions to look forward and plan a journey for the future.”*

– Steven D. Herrington, Ph.D., Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools



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Through a collaborative effort of the Arts Education Alliance, Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE), and Creative Sonoma, the Sonoma County Arts Education Framework presents a vision of what arts education can be in Sonoma County and includes strategies to implement that change forward. The Framework offers a menu of choices to Sonoma County Public schools and districts to increase and improve access and equity in arts education. In addition to the many resources existing in our county, it includes recommendations prescribed by leading educational authorities throughout California as well as a statewide coalition of educational agencies.

The Framework is the result of research and data collection on the state of the arts in Sonoma County. From this data, key takeaways have been developed, identifying areas of greater effectiveness. Starting with

a vision of arts education in Sonoma County, the Arts Education Leadership Team developed strategies

that help districts enhance and increase their offerings. Specific action steps have also been developed for strategic ways to address developing more arts for students while developing support for sustainability.

In addition, Creative Sonoma in cooperation with SCOE has invited any Sonoma County public school or district to apply for a planning grant to receive customized consultation in the development of a strategic plan to increase access and equity in arts education. The grant



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will be awarded to five schools or districts, and it is expected that five more will be awarded each year until we have supported all 40 districts in Sonoma County.



## Sonoma County STEAM Showcase

The Synopsys-*Sonoma County STEAM Showcase* began in 2017. The traditional science fair, a long-

standing event in Sonoma County, had always been well attended. However, in 2016 we began to examine the radical shifts in both science as a profession and science education. We also heard from students themselves that they wanted learning to be integrated and purposeful. *The STEAM Showcase* was developed to address these needs and allow more equitable access to STEAM for all students.

The STEAM Showcase promotes integration and purpose for projects and encourages digital documentation and multiple project iterations. The event isn't a competition but rather a celebration of what had been done and an opportunity to engage in making and engineering activities. A diverse group of students participate, TK-12th graders from private and public schools, from clubs and after-school programs, and from special education classes. Students share with the industry professionals serving as project evaluators about their work and the purposes and possibilities that lay behind what they've done. When they aren't interviewing, students make event t-shirts, engage in engineering challenges, and view each other's projects.

A number of interesting projects have been brought to the Showcase, including those incorporating visual and performing arts. One student learned how to weld in order to make a sea turtle sculpture that could be sold to raise money for conservation...out of spare parts from a VW Bug. Another group of students performed a dance about water properties accompanied by a song that was written by one of the students and sung by the school's choir. A group of 6th grade students, including English learners, an RSP student, and an elective mute, stood on the stage

together and showed and narrated films they'd created about plate tectonics and earthquake



safety. In 2018 after the devastating wildfires in Sonoma County, many groups addressed this tragedy in their work. One team designed a new house for their teacher who had lost her home. Another developed an app for cataloging the contents of your house.

The STEAM Showcase highlights the incredible capacity, potential, and creativity of students. The adults who volunteer are consistently blown away by what's possible when students are given opportunities to learn and create with purpose. Many have commented that the event has restored their hope.

## Community Involvement

The *Five-Minute Film Festival* is an annual countywide event that provides an opportunity for K-12 students to demonstrate learning in a 21st century context and showcase their work in front of a community audience. To participate, students create, as individuals or in groups, short films (up to five-minutes long) on a designated theme and submit them to SCOE for judging. The SCOE judging committee uses a rubric to score the films on storytelling, connection to the theme, creativity, and curricular content. The top films debut at a spring film festival at Third Street Cinema in Santa Rosa where students walk the red carpet. A panel of celebrity judges from the media industry provide feedback to all the top films and select winners in various categories. Selected films are also automatically entered into the *Alexander Valley Student Film Festival* so they can reach a wider audience.

Students learn storytelling as well as digital media skills when they create films for this event. Each year more than 1,000 students throughout the county participate, many of them first time filmmakers.