In the fall of 2018, the Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools Office (TCSOS) was awarded a $583,000 Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant through the California Department of Education. The grant was used to develop STEAM Tracks; an intensive professional development program for sixty K-8 teachers, representing all K-8 schools in our county.

The focus of the grant was to provide intensive professional development to improve Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Arts education (STEAM); promote collaboration among teachers and among teachers and artists in Tuolumne County; and produce curricular materials that provide students with art-infused STEM learning opportunities. The professional development included evening collaborative meetups with teachers, content artists, and staff. The meetups offered teachers short introductions to forms of art integration such as nature journaling, animation, dance, and technology, and also provided a space for teachers to collaborates and discuss the opportunities and challenges related to art integration. Also, teachers participated in an online and on-demand arts integration and STEAM conference that provided access to sessions on STEAM techniques, lessons, models, and examples of practical solutions.

“Art is a uniquely human experience that connects us to each other and to the world around us. Arts education provides us the opportunity to educate the whole child and to help them develop a vision of what the future can be.”

- Cathy Parker, Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools
A second part of the STEAM Tracks grant was Art infusion in the classroom with community artists demonstrating how visual arts, music, dance and theatre/drama can be implemented in the classroom. Each teacher was assigned one artist for ten classroom periods.

A STEAM Tracks summer institute offered participants a two-week professional learning opportunity to experience different forms of art integration; delve deeply into the Next Generation Science Standards, mathematical practices, and art standards; and work collaboratively with other grade-level teachers to develop STEAM learning sequences for use in their classrooms. After the summer institute, participating teachers were invited to teach their developed lesson sequences to students at STEAM events at their selected school sites.

In addition to the STEAM Tracks grant, Tuolumne County school teachers benefit from a historically strong community partnership with the Tuolumne County Arts Alliance to provide arts education for students, and professional development for teachers. Dedicated to bringing the arts to all ages ARTS-Reach to Schools (ARTS) is a 30-year partnership with the Tuolumne County Arts Alliance, the Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools Office and Tuolumne County’s schools. It is an Arts Education program that brings artists in dance, theater, visual art and music into classrooms. All lessons are fully aligned with California’s curriculum for the arts and its core academic subjects. Guest artists, with supplies and instruments, visit classrooms to inspire and share knowledge and love of the arts with many age groups. ARTS-Reach to Schools has been recognized numerous times as an exemplary arts education program.

Artists in Schools (AIS) is a California Arts Council (CAC) matching grant program (the selected schools match the CAC grants), designed to support high-quality artists in residency in schools for use with in-class or after school programs. These residencies bring the arts to school age children and empower classroom teachers to teach the arts, while they employ local artists. The residencies last at least 12 weeks and many times much longer.

Additionally, each March, the TCSOS coordinates an annual choir and band concert with area schools, featuring guest directors. The Annual Student Art Show features students throughout the county. This is a all student art show (K-12). Two age groups, K-6 and 7-12 grade students submit artwork with the help of their teachers. The art of 7-12 grade students is judged and ribbons are awarded. The work awarded the Best in Show is framed and hung in the Supervisors’ Lobby at the County Court House. The show is held at the Tuolumne County Library.

In partnership with the Tuolumne County Arts Council, our county’s high school students participate in the nationally recognized Poetry Out Loud Contest each year. We are very proud that our local finalist went on to win the State title in 2015.