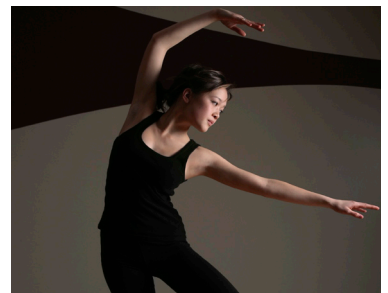




# An Unfinished Canvas



Local Partnerships in Support of  
Arts Education in California



Research conducted by SRI International

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Copies of this and other *An Unfinished Canvas* reports can be downloaded from <http://policyweb.sri.com/cep/publications>

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# **An Unfinished Canvas**

## **Local Partnerships in Support of Arts Education in California**

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Center for Education Policy  
**SRI International**  
2009



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# PROLOGUE: KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM *AN UNFINISHED CANVAS*

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In early 2007, SRI International published *An Unfinished Canvas. Arts Education in California: Taking Stock of Policies and Practices*, a statewide study on the status of arts education in California. That study's findings served as the impetus for a series of follow-up studies, including this study examining the role of local partnerships in supporting elementary arts education in California. A summary of key findings from the initial *An Unfinished Canvas* follows.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Overview of Arts Education in California

- 89% of California K-12 schools fail to offer a standards-based course of study in all four disciplines—music, visual arts, theatre, and dance—and thus fall short of state goals for arts education.
- Methods of delivering arts instruction vary by school level, often resulting in a limited experience at the elementary level and limited participation at the secondary level.
- 61% of schools do not have even one full-time-equivalent arts specialist, although secondary schools are much more likely than elementary schools to employ specialists.
- At the elementary level, arts instruction is often left to regular classroom teachers, who rarely have adequate training.
- Arts facilities and materials are lacking in most schools.
- Standards alignment, assessment, and accountability practices are uneven in arts education, and often not present at all.

### Arts Education in Elementary Schools

- 90% of elementary schools fail to provide a standards-aligned course of study across all four arts disciplines.
- Elementary students who receive arts education in California typically have a limited, less substantial experience than their peers across the country.
- Inadequate elementary arts education provides a weak foundation for more advanced arts courses in the upper grades.

### Arts Education in Middle and High Schools

- 96% of California middle schools and 72% of high schools fail to offer standards-aligned courses of study in all four arts disciplines.
- Secondary arts education is more intense and substantial than elementary arts education, but participation is limited.

### Change Over Time in Arts Enrollment

- Enrollment in arts courses has remained stable over the last 5 years, with the exception of music, which has seen a dramatic decline.

### Unequal Access to Arts Education

- Students attending high-poverty schools have less access to arts instruction than their peers in more affluent communities.

## **Barriers to Meeting the State’s Arts Education Goals**

- Inadequate state funding for education is a top barrier to the provision of arts education, and reliance on outside funding sources, such as parent groups, creates inequities.
- Pressure to improve test scores in other content areas is another top barrier to arts education.
- At the elementary level, lack of instructional time, arts expertise, and materials are also significant barriers to arts education.

## **Sources of Support for Arts Education**

- Districts and counties can play a strong role in arts education, but few do.
- Schools are increasingly partnering with external organizations, but few partnerships result in increased school capacity to provide sequential, standards-based arts instruction.

# **RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **State Policy-Makers**

- Increase and stabilize education funding so that districts can develop and support a standards-based course of study in each of the four arts disciplines.
- Strengthen accountability in arts education by requiring districts to report on the arts instruction provided, student learning in the arts, and providers of arts instruction, and by supporting the development of appropriate, standards-aligned assessments for use at the state and district levels.
- Rethink instructional time to accommodate the state’s goals for meeting proficiency in English-language arts and math, while still providing access to a broader curriculum that includes the arts.
- Improve teacher professional development in arts education, especially at the elementary level, and consider credential reforms.
- Provide technical assistance to build districts’ capacity to offer comprehensive, standards-based arts programs.

## **School and District Leaders**

- Establish the infrastructure needed to support arts programs by developing a long-range strategic plan for arts education, dedicating resources and staff, and providing for the ongoing evaluation of arts programs.
- Signal to teachers, parents, and students that the arts are a core subject by providing professional development for teachers and establishing assessment and accountability systems for arts education.

## **Parents**

- Ask about student learning and progress in the arts, and participate in school and district efforts to improve and expand arts education.
- Advocate for comprehensive arts education at the state and local levels.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In 2006, at the request of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, SRI International conducted a study aimed at assessing the status of arts education in California relative to state goals. The final report, *An Unfinished Canvas. Arts Education in California: Taking Stock of Policy and Practice*, revealed a substantial gap between policy and practice. The study found that elementary schools in particular are failing to meet state goals for arts education. In light of these findings, The Hewlett Foundation commissioned a series of follow-up studies to identify policy mechanisms or other means of increasing student access to arts education. This study, focusing on the ability of school districts to leverage support for arts education through partnerships with local arts organizations, is one of the follow-up studies.

Partnerships may allow for the pooling of resources and lend support to schools in a variety of ways including artists-in-residency programs, professional development for teachers, exposing students to the arts through the provision of one-time performances at school sites, and organizing field trips to performances and exhibits. According to the *California Visual and Performing Arts Framework for California Public Schools*, partnerships among districts, schools, and arts organizations are most successful when they are embedded within a comprehensive, articulated program of arts education. Questions about the nature of partnerships that California districts and schools have been able to form with arts organizations, and the success of these partnerships to increase students' access to a sequential standards-based course of study in the four arts disciplines, served as the impetus for this study.

A team of SRI researchers conducted case studies of partnerships between districts and arts organizations in six diverse California communities in spring 2008. The case study sites were selected for their particular arts education activities and diverse contexts and, as a result, do not offer generalizable data about partnerships between school districts and arts organizations in California. Instead, we highlight the ways that a sample of partnerships promotes arts education in California elementary schools to inform others who may be interested in building partnerships between school districts and arts organizations.

## KEY FINDINGS

The six case studies illustrate the variety of ways that districts, schools, and arts organizations can work together to increase access to arts education. From these case studies, the following key findings emerged.

### Partnership Goals and Design

- Partnerships were initiated by diverse stakeholders—including parents, artists, arts administrators, and educators. Motives were similarly diverse—for example, parents acted to sustain arts instruction, arts organizations sought to serve and engage with their communities, and school and district staff aimed to provide a well rounded educational program.
- Partnerships aimed to meet numerous and varied goals, ranging from increasing engagement in school to developing life-skills (e.g., discipline, confidence) to increasing students' familiarity with or appreciate of a specific art form.
- Most partnerships filled a gap in arts education caused by insufficient funding and created educational opportunities that students would otherwise not receive.
- Case study partnerships ranged from simple transactions, in which arts organizations are providers of arts instruction and schools are consumers, to joint ventures, where a school and arts organization work together to define students' needs and design an arts education program to meet those needs.

### **Partnership Activities: Instruction for Students**

- Partnerships provided students with an array of arts learning experiences ranging from exposure to a sequential course of study.
- Partner organizations ensured alignment of arts instruction with visual and performing arts standards through artists training and curricular guidance.
- Partner organizations sometimes integrated their arts curriculum with other core-subject curricula to support students' educational experience.
- Partnerships typically provided arts instruction in select disciplines (e.g., dance or theatre) to select grade levels (e.g., all fourth grade classes).

### **Partnership Activities: Teacher Capacity Building**

- Partnerships ranged from those providing no formal teacher professional development opportunities to those that explicitly emphasized a teacher capacity-building component.
- Motivating teachers to participate in professional development required principal leadership and efforts to offset the cost of participation.
- Teacher participation in capacity building for arts education varied widely due to multiple factors, including conflicting school and district priorities and lack of time.

### **Funding**

- Nearly all partnerships relied on private sources of funding.
- Distributed funding—that is, a funding model that pools contributions from multiple partners—can help sustain a partnership.
- Delivering arts instruction through partnerships may cost districts less, often at the expense of arts organizations and artists.

### **Assessment and Accountability**

- Few partnerships involved systematic assessment of student learning in the arts.
- Evaluation of partnership services was often based on inputs (e.g., attendance, satisfaction) rather than outcomes (e.g., arts learning).

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

- Partnerships can enable student access to a wider variety of rich and authentic arts learning experiences than the school or district can offer on its own.
- Partnerships can supplement, but do not substitute for, foundational arts education programs offered by schools and districts.
- While partnerships can have a lasting impact on participating students, this approach may not build long-term district or school capacity for arts instruction.
- Although each partnership has its unique strengths and challenges, themes emerged that suggest common steps that arts organizations, schools, and districts might take to improve the quality and stability of their partnerships, including 1) assess school and district needs, 2) establish clear learning goals and assess progress towards those goals, 3) explore embedded professional development for classroom teachers, and 4) share responsibility for funding.

# INTRODUCTION

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The California Education Code requires public schools to offer all students a course of study in the visual and performing arts, including the subjects of dance, music, theatre, and visual arts (California Education Code sections 51210 and 51220). To support this requirement, in 2001, the State Board of Education adopted *The Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards* (VPA standards) describing what students should know and be able to do in each arts discipline. In 2006, at the request of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, SRI International conducted a study aimed at assessing the status of arts education in California relative to state goals. The final report, *An Unfinished Canvas. Arts Education in California: Taking Stock of Policy and Practice*, revealed a substantial gap between policy and practice (see Woodworth, et al., 2007). The study found that elementary schools in particular are failing to meet state goals for arts education. Nearly half of California's elementary students are not receiving *any* standards-aligned instruction in music and visual arts, and more than four in five are not receiving *any* standards-aligned instruction in theatre or dance. The study also found that those elementary schools that do offer arts instruction tend to limit the duration and frequency, and the number of art disciplines that students are exposed to. Overall, the report concluded that arts education in California's elementary schools is not comprehensive and substantial enough to support high-level achievement at the secondary level.

In light of these findings, The Hewlett Foundation commissioned a series of follow-up studies to identify policy mechanisms or other means of increasing student access to arts education. This study, focusing on the ability of school districts to leverage support for arts education through partnerships with local arts organizations, is one of the follow-up studies. Findings from the initial *An Unfinished Canvas* study suggested that California schools are increasingly partnering with external organizations as a means of providing arts instruction to their students. Likewise, an earlier national study for the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, found that school districts across the country commonly identify community collaborations as a strategy for overcoming the challenges they face in offering arts education to their students (Longley, 1999). Interest in school-community collaboration as an emerging strategy to support student access to arts learning is also evidenced in a recent study conducted by the RAND Corporation that describes the development of large-scale arts education initiatives in six U.S. cities (Bodilly and Augustine, 2008). The RAND study provided a historical analysis of the evolution of arts education in the U.S. and investigated factors that fostered or impeded citywide coordination efforts to improve access and quality of in- and out-of-school arts education opportunities for students.

Partnerships may allow for the pooling of resources and lend support to schools in a variety of ways including artists-in-residency programs, professional development for teachers, exposing students to the arts through the provision of one-time performances at school sites, and organizing field trips to performances and exhibits. According to the *California Visual and Performing Arts Framework for California Public Schools (VPA Framework)*, partnerships among school districts, schools, and arts organizations are most successful when they are embedded within a comprehensive, articulated program of arts education. To promote partnerships and collaborations, the *VPA Framework* calls on districts to provide the leadership and support for coordinating arts resources, maintaining regular communication with stakeholders, incorporating joint planning and professional development for artists and teachers, and employing ongoing program evaluation (California Department of Education, 2004). A summary of research on model partnerships reveals that partnerships with the greatest reach focus on students' needs for high-quality learning experiences, incorporate multiple arts disciplines, attempt to affect systemic reform in arts education, and involve diverse and multiple community sectors (Teitelbaum and Gillis, 2004). Arts organizations may also benefit from partnerships. For arts organizations, partnerships may

fulfill a responsibility to serve the community, improve their own capacity to deliver arts education, and develop future audiences and funding bases (California Department of Education, 2004).

## OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Questions about the nature of partnerships that California districts and schools have been able to form with arts organizations, and the success of these partnerships to increase elementary school students' access to a sequential standards-based course of study in the four arts disciplines, served as the impetus for this study. Because arts organizations are a potentially powerful and perhaps underutilized source of support for elementary arts education, we set out to better understand the variety of ways that arts organizations can increase schools' capacity and facilitate the delivery of arts instruction. A team of SRI researchers conducted case studies of partnerships between districts and arts organizations in six California communities in spring 2008. The purpose of the case studies was to learn about the nature of partnerships that districts and schools have formed with arts organizations, the ways in which partnerships support students' access to a sequential standards-based course of study in the arts, and the key barriers—and strategies for overcoming barriers—to leveraging support for elementary arts education from arts organizations. We sought to highlight the ways that a sample of partnerships promotes arts education in California elementary schools in order to help others who may be interested in building partnerships between school districts and arts organizations. Our purpose was not to evaluate the implementation or effectiveness of particular partnerships.

Using school districts as the focal point for our case studies, we solicited nominations from individuals known for their content knowledge and experience in the California arts education field. We sought to identify partnerships involving arts organizations and school districts rather than individual schools because we thought these partnerships would be more instructive regarding system level change. We focused on partnerships affecting arts education at the elementary school grade levels for two reasons: 1) our prior research suggests that arts education is more uneven at the elementary grades, and 2) we received almost no nominations for partnerships with districts involving secondary schools (a noteworthy finding in and of itself). SRI researchers chose, by a combination of reputation (i.e., they were nominated) and criteria (e.g., arts discipline, stage of development, provision of teacher professional development, and use of VPA standards), six districts to include in the study.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, we selected the six case study sites because the partnerships reflected a range of efforts to ensure student access to standards-based arts instruction. Although the partnerships illustrate many promising practices, we did not select them as models for others to emulate as much as we selected them to better understand both the possibilities and potential limitations of arts partnerships. As a group, the sites reflect diversity in terms of arts disciplines (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) and format (individual artists providing services to schools, efforts to develop teachers' knowledge and skill) as well as student population (socioeconomic status, student achievement, cultural diversity, etc.), geography (northern, central, and southern California), and population density (urban, suburban/large town, and rural) to the extent possible.

SRI researchers visited each case study site and conducted semistructured, open-ended interviews with personnel from county and district offices, leaders of local arts organizations, artists, school principals,

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<sup>1</sup> We sent nomination request e-mails to 96 individuals and received 37 nominations. We conducted screening calls with the 14 most promising sites before selecting the final six. Although we originally intended to include only sites with partnerships that supported the provision of sequential standards-based instruction to all or nearly all students in the district and/or provided teacher professional development, few, if any, of the nominated partnerships met these criteria. For example, few nominated sites offered *sequential* arts education for *all* students. That is, many partnerships offered standards-based arts education to select grade levels (e.g., kindergarten, third, and sixth grade only), rather than offering sequential instruction that built on itself in each successive grade level from kindergarten through sixth grade. Likewise, few of the nominated partnerships offered services to increase the capacity of classroom teachers to deliver arts instruction.

arts teachers, elementary classroom teachers, and other relevant individuals involved in each partnership. We conducted a total of 78 interviews across the six sites, ranging from 7 to 23 interviews per site. Interviewees provided information about the goals and breadth of the partnership; the role of the partnership in providing standards-aligned arts instruction; funding the partnership; professional development opportunities for teachers and artists; evaluation, assessment, and accountability; and perceived barriers to implementing and sustaining partnerships. Researchers also gathered and reviewed existing documentation on districts, schools, and arts organizations, including district arts plans, arts organization descriptions, demographic information about populations served, evaluation materials, and other materials available on relevant websites. Our analysis of the qualitative case study data involved a cross-case examination of the similarities and differences across sites and a distillation of themes and lessons for others interested in supporting the development of partnerships among districts, schools, and arts organizations. The case study sites were selected for their particular arts education activities and diverse contexts and, as a result, do not offer generalizable data about partnerships between school districts and arts organizations in California. To provide a statewide view of partnership activity, we included a few questions about arts partnerships on our 2008 survey of California school districts.<sup>2</sup> Overall, however, the information presented in this report examines the ways that a small sample of school districts and schools partner with external arts organizations to support their capacity to deliver arts instruction.

## **REPORT ORGANIZATION**

This report intends to accomplish two goals. The first is to describe the six sites that participated in our study. The second is to synthesize information across the six sites and present themes and lessons learned to inform others interested in developing arts-related partnerships. To meet these goals, the report consists of six sections. The first section presents profiles of the six sites, including summaries of local context, partnership goals and activities, and funding mechanisms. The second section describes common themes in partnership goals and design. The third section discusses trends in terms of specific partnership activities, including the provision of student-focused arts instruction and teacher capacity building. In the fourth section, we synthesize information about the partnership funding and, in the fifth, we turn to a discussion of student assessment and partnership accountability. The final section distills the lessons learned about the potential of partnerships among districts, schools, and arts organizations as a strategy to help meet state goals for arts education.

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<sup>2</sup> The survey instrument is included in an appendix to our report entitled *An Unfinished Canvas: District Capacity and the Use of New State Funds for Arts Education in California* (2009).



# THE CASE STUDY SITES

Our 2008 survey of California school districts revealed that 68% of districts were involved in arts-related partnerships with community arts or cultural organizations, such as museums and performing arts centers.<sup>3</sup> Sixty-five percent of districts reported that partnerships help build schools' capacity in arts education by providing artists or other arts professionals.<sup>4</sup> Of these districts, 77% reported that the artists and arts professionals supported the provision of a standards-based arts program, and 70% reported that the artists and arts professionals supported the provision of a sequential arts program. The districts included in this case study report are among the California districts involved in such partnerships, and they reflect some of California's diversity in terms of location, student enrollment, community served, and academic performance (see Exhibit 1).

**Exhibit 1**  
**Characteristics of Case Study Districts, 2007–08**

School District	County	Student Enrollment	Percent of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Meals	Percent English Language Learners	District Academic Performance Index (API)
Blue Lake Unified School District	Humboldt	154	48%	0%	789
Emery Unified School District	Alameda	815	80%	14%	671
Los Angeles Unified School District	Los Angeles	693,680	68%	35%	683
Mountain View–Whisman School District	Santa Clara	4,406	37%	45%	806
Rialto Unified School District	San Bernardino	29,070	71%	30%	680
Robla Elementary School District	Sacramento	1,980	84%	45%	724

Source: All district demographic and performance data come from the California Basic Educational Data System (CDE, 2009).

The six case study sites illustrate the variety of ways that school districts, schools, and arts organizations can work together to increase student access to arts education. These descriptions set the stage for the following discussion of themes and lessons that are based on our analysis across the six sites.

<sup>3</sup> We surveyed 385 public school districts from across the state; 258 districts, or 67% of the sample, responded.

<sup>4</sup> Partnerships that involve artists or other arts professionals working with schools appear relatively frequent in California. Although survey items and respondents are not comparable, a national *school* survey administered in 1998–99 found that 38% of elementary schools reported hosting visiting artists, and 22% hosted artists-in-residence. At the secondary level, the percentages were 34% and 18%, respectively.

## **BLUE LAKE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

In Blue Lake, a small (population 1,300), rural, former lumber mill town in northern California, Dell'Arte (DA), a community-based physical theatre company, has been providing arts instruction to Blue Lake Union Elementary School District (BLUE) students for more than 20 years.

BLUE is a one-school district serving approximately 160 kindergarten through eighth-grade students. In 2007–08, the student body was mostly white (68%), with a large Native American minority group (20%). Nearly half of the students (48%) were eligible for free or reduced-price meals, an indicator of family poverty. Student enrollment in the BLUE has been declining, and the district has been experiencing corresponding cuts in funding. According to the BLUE superintendent/principal, declining enrollment has been partly due to families moving out of the area for economic and employment reasons and in part due to families choosing to enroll their children in competing charter schools in the area.

DA is a large (approximately 50 staff) “internationally renown” arts organization, known for its professional theatre company, youth academy (e.g., in-school partnerships, after-school programs), and school of physical theatre (e.g., ensemble-based physical theatre masters program). DA draws individuals and resources from afar to participate in their programs and thus exposes Blue Lake residents to a wealth of talent, experiences, and theatre arts resources. According to the DA youth academy director, although DA currently partners with a number of local schools and districts, its partnership with BLUE is its “flagship” in-school arts education program, as it was their first and is their longest-standing collaboration.

### **Purpose and Goals**

The partnership began in 1987 when DA leadership decided that they should, and could, build a better relationship with their host community by “giving back” and offering after-school theatre arts programming, at no cost, to BLUE students. Later, in 1991, DA leadership was inspired to expand their theatre arts programming to all BLUE students by offering an additional in-school component. At that time, DA wrote and won a 3-year grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to provide year-round theatre arts programs to all K-8 students at BLUE.

According to the DA youth academy director, the impetus behind the grant was that “the students at BLUE are poor, many are Native American, and most are dealing with some kind of oppression. The grant was written to provide theatre arts instruction to students as a way to help them transform the way they look at their experience and transform the conditions that oppress them.” After the 3 years of NEA funding, BLUE and DA administrators were eager to continue the program and have remained committed to finding alternative funding sources over time. According to the DA website, “drama education offers an approach to learning based on personal responsibility, critical thinking, adaptability to new situations and ideas, and creative solutions to problem solving.”

Since the inception of the in-school program in 1991, the intensity, duration, and breadth of instruction provided and the number of students impacted have continually changed as a result of fluctuations in available funding. At times in the past, all students in all grade levels at BLUE were exposed to DA theatre arts. At the time of our site visit (2008), the partnership served only those students in kindergarten, sixth grade, and eighth grade.

Although the stated goals of the program varied depending on the perspective of the person interviewed, there is consensus that an overarching purpose of the partnership is to provide students with access to theatre arts instruction that they would not otherwise experience. The DA curriculum that guides instruction is aligned with the California visual and performing arts (VPA) standards and linked to content standards for English-language arts and history-social science at the participating grade level. Currently, the BLUE-DA partnership has no formal capacity building or professional development goals for classroom teachers.

## Partnership Activities

The BLUE-DA partnership provides students with in-school instruction in juggling, clowning, mask acting, mime, improvisation, creative movement, creative dramatics, movement on stage, voice projection, script writing, memorization, and research (depending on grade level). The DA teaching artist and artist assistant collaborate with classroom teachers in the provision of instruction. At all three grade levels, short-term and production-focused theatre arts instruction is integrated into the classroom instruction.

All kindergarten students are provided with 34 hours (approximately two 1-hour sessions per week) of basic introduction to theatre arts during a 3-month period. According to the teaching artist, “We do movement and some characterization. We introduce them to the idea of live theatre and how it is different from TV and movies.” Kindergarteners learn theatre terminology, how to be expressive without inhibitions, body and voice control, and are introduced to public speaking and critical thinking. The kindergarten program culminates in the opening performance for the eighth-grade production.

Sixth-grade students who elect to participate receive 41 hours of instruction (approximately one 2-hour session per week) during a 5-month period. Programming for the sixth grade focuses on the development of small group skits for competition in the annual California History Day competition. Activities include basic script writing, characterization, movement on stage, voice projection, costuming, and set design.

Eighth-grade students who elect to participate in the program are involved in an intensive 3-month project (49 hours of instruction) that culminates in the development of a full-scale theatre production, loosely based on Shakespeare. The production occurs for two nights at DA’s formal theatre space. Activities include learning Shakespearean language and historical context, storyline development and script writing, characterization, memorization, voice projection, movement on stage, and construction of sets and costumes.

## Use of Visual and Performing Arts Standards

DA has a written curriculum that guides the instruction that the teaching artist team provides. The curriculum contains lesson plans that include learning objectives and activities that are aligned with the dance and theatre standards for each grade level. The DA youth academy director reviews the DA curriculum and the *California Visual and Performing Arts Framework (VPA Framework)* with his staff during ongoing trainings. Teaching artists are free to adapt curriculum for particular classes as long as these adaptations are approved by the DA youth academy director.

According to the DA director, “the [arts] standards are written as if you have all the students, all the time, all year. But really, we don’t see the students all that much.” He goes on to explain that given the limited amount of time that artists can spend with students, only a subset of the arts standards are actually addressed. Also, because of the limited amount of time that artists have with students—and the fact that the partnership is implemented with only three grade levels—he says that “the program is only sequential within each project period and not really sequential in the way the state intended.” In sum, the curriculum outlines objectives aligned with the VPA standards as if they are sequential from grade to grade, but in reality this “is impossible given the [limited] time we are there and requirements of the productions.”

Formal assessment of student learning in the arts is not a part of the BLUE-DA partnership. The DA youth academy director reports that the DA curriculum includes assessment questions for each lesson, but that these are not routinely utilized by artists. Although there is a grade for drama on the BLUE report card, teachers do not collaborate with the teaching artists to determine the grade and note in interviews that the grade given is for participation and effort, rather than competency in any particular VPA standard or theatre skill. The superintendent/principal and interviewed teachers also indicated that student learning is informally assessed through observations of performances.

## **Logistics**

The delivery of in-school theatre arts instruction is supervised and managed by administrators at BLUE (the superintendent/principal) and DA (the youth academy director). Together, the DA youth academy director and the BLUE superintendent negotiate the annual partnership contract, which involves identifying available funds and determining services to be provided.

The superintendent/principal selects interested classroom teachers for participation and maintains organization-level communication with DA. The DA youth academy director develops the curriculum and lesson plans; hires, provides training, and supervises teaching artist staff; and collaborates with participating teachers and artists to finalize program content and schedules after the contract is set.

The day-to-day implementation of the partnership is coordinated by the DA teaching artist, the artist assistant, and participating classroom teachers. Teachers and the artists agree that the DA artist-artist assistant pair is responsible for delivery of the physical theatre content to students and that coordination and collaboration between the teacher and artist pair is informal and depends on the individual teacher, the project, and the grade level. Classroom teachers generally support the artist pair by assisting with classroom management and participating in the activities.

## **Funding**

Over the years funding for the partnership has come from various sources, including federal and state grants, foundations, the school district, parents, and other community fundraising events. In general, DA provides services under contract with BLUE at a price that is fixed each year, with programming adjusted to meet funding available at that time.

There have been many changes in the breadth of program delivery since its inception, with decreases in the number of students “touched” and in the length and intensity of programming provided. All interviewed say these changes are the result of changes in available funding. For example, in the first 3 years of the partnerships, the NEA grant covered all costs for all grades. Later, DA received a fair amount of California Arts Council (CAC) matching funds to provide the program. Recently, these CAC funds have been cut, which caused DA to raise its fees to schools. At the same time, BLUE receives less money from the state due to declining enrollment.

Currently, BLUE spends \$5,000 out of categorical funds (e.g., Gifted and Talented Education program funds) with extra support from parent fundraising when needed (e.g., for transportation) and from the district general fund (for incidentals, like paint for advertisements or props for productions). DA contributes \$3,000 in support of the BLUE-DA partnership from a grant that they received from the CAC to provide in-school arts instruction. Many hours of artist time and use of the arts organization facility for the kindergarten and eighth-grade performance are given for free.

The superintendent/principal ensures that the school’s contribution to the partnership continues—pooling money from multiple sources to fund the partnership each year. He said, “We have done everything under the sun to keep this program, even with funding cuts. In the past, we have paid as much as \$15,000. But right now, with funding cuts, we are down to \$5,000.” This has meant a reduction in the intensity of services and in the number of students served.

## **EMERY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Emery Unified School District serves Emeryville, a small city (population 7,000) located between Oakland and Berkeley. Serving 815 students in 2007–08, Emery Unified is made up of two schools, one elementary and one secondary. The students come from poor families—80% of students qualified for free or reduced-price meals—and reflect their diverse community. In 2007–08, the students were 61% African American, 16% Latino, 10% Asian, and 2% White.

For its size, Emeryville has a significant number of arts organizations and arts-related nonprofits and business, including Pixar Animation Studios. The district's proximity to Berkeley and Oakland also allows it to benefit from relationships with arts organizations and institutes of higher education in those neighboring cities. The district takes advantage of these community resources and leverages partnerships to expand its capacity. In fact, the district's tagline is "Where partners power student success!" Emery Unified participates in the Alameda County Office of Education's Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership initiative as an Arts Learning Anchor District. This countywide initiative involves many local arts organizations in a coordinated effort to build districts' arts capacity. In addition, Emery Unified engages in its own partnerships with several arts organizations that allow for teaching artists to work directly with students.

Among the partner organizations providing arts instruction to Emery Unified students was Kala Art Institute, an international workshop for artists in Berkeley. As part of the Alliance, Emery teachers and administrators had access to professional development provided by groups such as Luna Kids Dance in Berkeley, the Museum of Children's Art (MOCHA) in Oakland, and Opera Piccola in Oakland, among others. A district leader described how the district works with all of the various partners: "It's about people getting along and working together and exchanging good work."

### **Purpose and Goals**

The district has a clear and consistent goal with respect to arts education. As one district leader explained, "The district is committed to using the arts as an entry point for learning. We look at our test scores and where our students are falling short, and we agree that we're teaching something one way and it works for some of our kids, but for others it just doesn't make sense. So, through the arts, we're adding another way to get X student involved ... We're not trying to make artists, we're trying to help them develop critical thinking, the ability to think through what's in front of them, no matter what it is." Another district leader added that the district uses the arts "as an efficient tool to engage and inspire people."

To this end, Emery engages with a diverse group of arts organizations, and the purposes of each partnership are equally diverse. In those cases in which Emery partners with an arts organization to arrange for artists to work directly with students, the goals are generally to provide students with a creative experience that complements the district's effort to provide integrated arts instruction throughout the school year. As one district leader explained, "they inform and enhance and add to what our [classroom] teachers are doing." Another district leader said, "To me, the purpose is to have the child deepen their knowledge, skill, and love for the art."

Alameda County's Alliance initiative has a much broader goal. As the county arts coordinator put it: "What we're trying to do here is to change hearts and minds—about what a quality education looks like—as well as how the arts are a way to differentiate instruction so that every child can be successful in school today and can be engaged in ways that help them to achieve learning outcomes." The formal goal of the county initiative is to ensure "equitable access to the arts as an essential component of a meaningful and complete education for all children in Alameda County" (Alameda County Office of Education, 2005, p. 6). To achieve this goal, the county provides and brokers professional development for teachers, administrators, and teaching artists; connects artists and educators; and supports the development of common language and goals.

The various partners in the County's Alliance initiative each have their own goals. The leader of one partner arts organization described: "Our mission is about every child having access to arts education, and the majority of children are in the public schools. We're anxious especially to work with kids who don't usually get arts education." Another partner arts organization is focused on the skills that they are hoping to develop in young people: "We want people to have the skills when they enter the workforce ... the capacity to be creative ... problem solving." Alliance partners are also able to articulate the purpose of the countywide initiative. For example, the leader of one partner arts organization described it as follows: "[It's a] very intentional effort to make [sure] ... every child has art every day in the classroom—not just, it's a weekly thing that somebody comes in and provides for you—and that teachers really understand why and not just that they're doing it because, oh, it's a requirement, or now one more thing on my plate, but that they really see for so many kids it's the hook."

### **Partnership Activities**

Partnership activities mostly fall into one of two categories: teaching artists providing arts instruction for students, and professional development—for teachers, teaching artists, school and district leaders, and arts coaches—aimed at building capacity.

Emery Unified students have a variety of opportunities to work with teaching artists, and the district has taken steps to ensure that each partnership's programs are rich and meaningful for participating students. For example, through Emery's participation in the Kala Art Institute's Artist-in-Schools program, a cohort of elementary students participate in arts instruction once a week for 1 hour for approximately 8 to 12 weeks. The elementary principal explained that she tries to keep the artists with a cohort of students over several years: "So, for instance, our Indian dance teacher is through Kala, and she has worked with the same group of students for the fourth year now. So, when the sixth graders leave, she'll start with a new cohort ... so the students can develop their talent.... If it's hodgepodge or quick, that doesn't build [their knowledge and skill]."

District leaders also explained that they are working with teaching artists to ensure that their pedagogical approach is consistent with the approach the district is working towards. As one district leader explained, "We had people who were artists, not teachers, and it became a burden to our teachers when they were in the room. So now our teaching artists have to participate in classroom teacher professional development so everyone hears the same message.... That was one of our holes. There was cool art going on, but there was no reflective process."

While the county's arts initiative involves many activities with partner arts organizations—including, for example, advocating for arts education—our study focuses on those capacity-building activities that most directly affect Emeryville schools. To achieve the goal of arts learning in every classroom, every day, the Alliance works with arts organizations and school districts to provide professional development for teachers, teaching artists, school and district leaders, and arts coaches (highly experienced arts educators who provide technical assistance and professional development). As the county arts coordinator explained, "Primarily what we're doing through the county office is about professional development.... And so we work with the arts providers to help them think about how they can provide professional development to support our school districts."

Arts organizations that are part of the Alliance help to put on week-long summer institutes, sponsored by the county or one or more of the Anchor School districts, that are open to all Emery teachers. A leader at one of the arts organizations described the summer institutes as opportunities for the teachers to be "immersed in being artists themselves." The county partnerships also support professional development for school and district leaders, for artists, and for arts coaches. Much of the county work with the various educators and artists is aimed at developing expertise in the Teaching for Understanding framework, a pedagogical approach developed by researchers at Harvard University's Project Zero. The county arts coordinator described how this plays out in their work with teaching artists: "Over time, what we've done is to try to think about how we can help them become more effective partners.... And so instead of just

bringing their lovely standards-based programs into the schools, it's about listening to principals, teachers, district administrators [regarding] this is what our teachers need to know, this is what our kids need to know.... [It's about] understanding deeply who the kids are, who the teachers are, who the schools are, what they're trying to achieve, and how they can bring arts learning to aim it directly at the learning goals of the classroom." The Teaching for Understanding framework cuts across disciplines and is not specific to the arts. The county also endorses the Studio Thinking framework that specifically addresses the "habits of mind" that are cultivated through arts learning.

To ensure a cadre of leaders in the county, school and district leaders and leaders of arts organizations have engaged in a variety of other in-depth professional development experiences as well, including summer trips to Harvard to study the Teaching for Understanding and Studio Thinking frameworks, online courses through Harvard, and, in the case of Emery's arts integration coordinator, a fellowship at the California College of the Arts that was established in partnership with the county in recognition of the need for people to work with the arts Anchor District schools as coaches in the Teaching for Understanding framework.

### **Use of Visual and Performing Arts Standards**

The role of the visual and performing arts standards varies across the partnerships. In general, the various partners seemed aware of the arts standards, but the standards did not necessarily serve as the focal point for their work. As a leader of one arts organization explained: "We know them [the arts standards] and we definitely look at them, but it's not our emphasis." A leader at another arts organization who had explained that the standards are "a mandate on our part and more of an education for [the artists]," noted that "we really try to create a program that [encourages artists] to teach to their strengths. So we give them information about these sort of standards and policies, but do not create an environment where they feel like they're being told what to do, other than create really high quality, engaging arts programming in a way that's exciting and inspirational."

As described above, the Alameda County's emphasis is on the Teaching for Understanding and Studio Thinking frameworks, both of which are consistent with a standards-based approach to teaching. Over the years, the county has worked with their community arts partners to support them to understand and use the visual and performing arts standards and work with non-arts teachers to think about how standards in the arts align and connect with other content areas. At the same time, the Studio Thinking Framework and Habits of Mind frame discussions about what students are learning. As the county arts coordinator explained it: "What they provide is intentionality ... so that the teachers are thinking about more than developing excellent pieces of artwork.... They're thinking about what else are kids learning to do here.... It goes to why it's important to have arts education." Artists and educators in Alameda County, including several district arts leaders in Emeryville, who have been immersed in these frameworks have changed their practice as a result. A leader of an arts organization described the shift: "We became better teaching artists ... it made us think a lot harder about what we're doing when we go in and teach ... what we're doing when we do the arts, and what teachers are trying to do as educators."

These frameworks involve ongoing assessment of the student learning for the purposes of informing instruction. The focus is on documenting the learning process at the classroom level and through individual student portfolios. The extent to which these frameworks are in use in Emery Unified classrooms varies substantially.

### **Logistics**

Emery Unified is involved with multiple partners. Relationships vary in their complexity and the day-to-day logistics of each partnership differ substantially. For example, when it comes to working with Kala Art Institute, the logistics are managed by Kala's artists-in-schools program coordinator who works directly with school and district leaders and, in some cases, with teachers to look for matches between what schools are interested in and what artists are able to provide. The program coordinator then

facilitates the scheduling and ensuring that the necessary supplies are there. The logistics of being part of the Alliance are more complex. The County Office of Education led a strategic planning process through which Emery Unified was identified as an Anchor District—because it had been involved in the state’s Model Arts Program and was therefore well positioned to serve as a lead district in the county initiative. As an Anchor District, Emery Unified receives support from the county and shares resources and best practices with Anchor Schools in two other districts (Berkeley and Oakland). The county’s focus is on professional development, and the county works with area districts and arts partners to provide the professional development. Over the years, responsibility for coordinating the teacher professional development, such as the Summer Institute for teachers in Anchor Schools, has shifted from the county office to the districts.

## **Funding**

The partnerships that nurture arts education in Alameda County and Emery Unified are supported by a combination of public and private funds. The Alameda County Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership is funded through the County’s Office of Education, government, corporate, and foundation dollars. The County Office of Education, in turn, provides resources to school districts and contracts with arts organizations to support their work with schools and districts. For their part, the arts organizations do their own fundraising and offer fee-for-service programs. For many of these organizations, the bulk of their work involves serving Alameda County public schools. Emery Unified benefits directly and indirectly from County Office of Education support by receiving funds from the county and by being part of a larger countywide initiative. The district also has its own sources of support, including the Emeryville Education Fund (EEF), the City of Emeryville, and the Haas Foundation. The EEF raises funds and then provides support to the district and to arts organizations for their work with the district. For example, the EEF matches a California Arts Council grant that Kala Art Institute receives for their work in Emery. The district identified the arts as one of three priority areas for the EEF. EEF’s sources of funds include foundations, local corporations, and annual fundraisers held by Pixar and with Ex’pression College for Digital Arts. In 2007–08, their budget was approximately \$850,000—more than \$1,000 per student in the district—and about 15% was spent on arts education. In addition to receiving support from EEF and the California Arts Council, Kala raises additional funds from foundations, individual donors, and the City of Emeryville. The Haas Foundation’s support for Emery Unified, through the EEF, provides the district with the resources necessary to fund staff positions, including the arts integration coordinator whose job is to carry out the county initiative, and pay for stipends to support teachers’ participation in summer professional development.

While substantial private support allows Emery teachers to access professional development institutes and in-school coaching and students to participate in arts instruction without consuming resources from the district general funds, district leaders still feel the funding situation is somewhat precarious. As one arts leader said, “I would like to see not having to question the stability of a program every year as we wait for grant money to roll in. The idea would be to be to guarantee the provision of certain arts all the time.” Ultimately, the focus on building district capacity is intended to make the delivery of arts instruction more sustainable. However, district and county leaders acknowledge that it will take time to get to that place, and there will always be a need for ongoing support and maintenance. Moreover, even if teachers further develop their capacity to teach the arts, district leaders see an ongoing role for artists in the classroom.

## LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Reflecting its large and diverse population, Los Angeles is home to a wide variety of arts organizations. Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is the second largest district in the country and served 693,680 students in 2007–08. The student population has been mostly Hispanic (73%), with minorities of African American (11%), White (9%), and Asian (4%) students. In 2007–08, 68% of the district’s students qualified for free or reduced-price meals, and 35% were English language learners (ELL). LAUSD’s Board of Education unanimously passed a 10-year (1999–2010) Arts Education Plan (AEP), and by the time of our visit in spring 2008, it was clear that arts education in the district had been guided by the goals, objectives, and strategies specified in the AEP.<sup>5</sup> LAUSD’s arts education work was managed by the district’s Arts Education Branch, and strategies were realized through three major strands: Arts Program Schools (APS), district-provided arts teachers at APS schools, and the Arts Community Partnership Network (ACPN). Our case study focused on partnerships supported through the ACPN.<sup>6</sup>

APS started as the Arts Prototype Schools in 1999. In its first year, there were 54 APS schools (APS schools are only elementary). In the 2007–08 school year, 365 of 501 (73%) LAUSD elementary or primary center schools were APS schools. Schools entered the program in waves, based on systems established by local subdistricts. APS schools receive funding (\$20,000 per year per school) and a variety of arts-related services (e.g., provision of arts instruction by district arts teachers and access to the ACPN) from the district. APS schools receive the same level of support from the district, regardless of school size.

In addition to providing instructional support services, the district provides a music teacher for one instructional day per week to all LAUSD elementary schools. For APS schools only, the district also provides credentialed arts teachers in dance, theatre, and visual arts. Each APS school receives one 12-week rotation with each of three arts teachers. The arts teachers are at each school for a total of 2 days per week for 12 weeks of the year.

APS schools also have access to ACPN services.<sup>7</sup> The ACPN is noted as part of the strategy to achieve goals I and II of the 10-year AEP. It is a network of district-approved arts instruction services packages provided by community arts organizations. Once a year, the district issues a Request for Proposal (RFP) inviting local arts organizations to submit proposals that outline a program “that meets the needs of the District’s populations, culture and geography yet maintains the richness and diversity and mission of the applicant.” Arts organizations submit their proposals and, if accepted by the district as a member of the ACPN, make their proposed packages available to district schools. Schools essentially have a district-approved menu of services in dance, music, theatre, visual arts, multimedia, and interdisciplinary arts to select from through the ACPN. In 2007–08, there were 15 dance organizations, 8 music organizations, 10 visual arts organizations, 22 theatre organizations, and 15 multiarts organizations included in ACPN. Schools can choose to partner with as many arts organizations as they like.

### Purpose and Goals

The district, schools, and ACPN arts organizations share the same overall goal for ACPN: to increase student access to varied arts forms. While the purposes and preferred outcomes of ACPN vary somewhat by entity, there is goal alignment in the sense that the district and schools want increased arts exposure for their students, and arts organizations have the capacity and desire to provide arts programming in the

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<sup>5</sup> One of the AEP’s goals is to “develop partnerships with public and private community arts organizations and with businesses to offer fiscal and programmatic support to augment and complement the District arts education goals.”

<sup>6</sup> While the LAUSD Arts Education Plan 1999–2010 is for elementary and secondary schools, we focus on the elementary level.

<sup>7</sup> APS schools could use their APS funds to purchase ACPN services. Any LAUSD school, APS or not, could partner with ACPN organizations using their own funds.

schools. The structure of the model leaves ACPN open to all types of arts organizations, resulting in a portfolio capable of attracting different schools with unique needs. Through the model, schools have the opportunity to find a district-approved arts provider that meets the needs of their school community.

Prior to ACPN's formation in 2003, district schools were independently partnering with various local arts organizations. The district was aware of the partnerships and felt they did not have full knowledge of what was being delivered through the partnerships. Consequently, they did not know how aligned partnership programs were with the district AEP. The partnerships also tended to be with larger, more established organizations, and the district wanted to take advantage of a broader range of local talent. LAUSD's director of arts education described the genesis of the ACPN: "I knew that if the district was going to invest the kind of money it wanted to into the arts, it would have to be part and parcel of a vital arts community that existed in L.A., which meant there were lots of people who wanted to do that type of work given the opportunity,... so I created the ACPN as a specific way to provide master service agreements with as many people could qualify.... It would be a matter then of schools being able to pick from a wide variety of people." Within the ACPN model, small and large organizations are on equal footing in terms of access to district schools. Because ACPN organizations create their own delivery package, they have the freedom to align their work with their own goals and priorities, resulting in a diverse portfolio of ACPN organizations and services. Every year, more schools take advantage of ACPN, and more organizations apply to be included.

In LAUSD, district arts teachers provide the foundational arts program—the sequential, standards-based arts instruction—and ACPN organizations provide students with authentic opportunities to create art with professionals in the field. Art forms range from graffiti art to Flamenco dance to “crumping” to Shakespeare theatre. LAUSD also requires that all partner organizations provide some professional development for teachers as part of their service delivery package. At the school level, administrator and teacher goals for ACPN participation are similar to the district's in that they want to increase student access to the arts. School staff appreciate what exposure to the arts can do for their students—they cite increased confidence, artistic appreciation, and higher student achievement as desired outcomes. A school principal also noted that she values the teacher training that is provided through ACPN because “we'd like our teachers to be well versed in all disciplines.”

ACPN arts organizations' broader goal is exposure to the arts, but their individual goals tend to focus more on their particular organization or art form. Because the APCN model gives participating arts organizations the flexibility to maintain their own missions, individual arts organization goals vary as much as the organizations. For example, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) is interested in promoting open-ended questioning in teacher practice and student experience through contemporary art. MOCA's Education Program Manager described one of the museum's goals as, “fostering awareness of and facility with the kinds of thinking skills through which you notice what you're noticing, what you're thinking and feeling, and then being encouraged to articulate that in a group learning context.... Art uniquely supports creative and critical thinking to the degree that there isn't only one valid answer to be uncovered when considering a work of art.” The Los Angeles Opera is more student-focused and hopes to introduce students to the operatic form while helping them become comfortable with the art. The director/teaching artist reported, “My goal is to introduce opera in a way that is attractive to a young student which will hopefully motivate them to look more into other forms of opera...In opera you have to develop an interest for it.... So you really have to introduce it in a way that's fun, that's loving.”

### **Partnership Activities**

ACPN organizations are expected to include at least two program components: student instruction, and professional development for classroom teachers. In their RFP, LAUSD outlines ten Guiding Principles of a Quality Plan:

1. Demonstrating a depth of content knowledge in each or individual art forms (dance, music, theatre, visual arts, media, integrated arts, multiarts, or interdisciplinary)

2. Having a strong foundation in learning opportunities within a particular discipline that are not recreationally based and go beyond entertainment and passive participation
3. Having a balanced set of educational offerings between the required components of the plan as well as appropriate fee structures
4. Meeting the needs of all students, with varying abilities, through differentiated experiences
5. Rooted in and reflecting the LAUSD Superintendent's Core Goals and specifically the LAUSD Arts Education Plan
6. Supporting standards-based arts education implementation utilizing the California State Framework for the Visual and Performing Arts, K-12
7. Representing the cultural and linguistic diversity of the District
8. Being cultural responsive and relevant
9. Allowing for adequate preparation for the school site prior to the event
10. Providing flexibility in scheduling

The district evaluates each organization's proposals using the guiding principles (each principle is equally considered). If the organization adequately addresses the guiding principles through the two program components, they are accepted into ACPN. While the ten principles provide for some level of consistency, the process results in each ACPN organization having a unique instructional package. For example, depending on their own goals, organizations may place different weight on student instruction relative to professional development for classroom teachers. For example, in addition to its emphasis on first-hand student experiences in the museum with MOCA staff, MOCA focuses particular attention on teacher professional development—specifically, supporting teachers to learn to lead open-ended student discussions about contemporary art as well as how to integrate contemporary art images and concepts into other curricular areas. The Los Angeles Opera's emphasis is on preparing students for their final opera performance, and the professional development component is focused on how teachers can help facilitate the process for the students. The California Dance Institute's main goal is to teach students the discipline and focus that goes along with fully learning and engaging in dance. Thus, student instruction leading to a culminating performance forms the core of the program. The professional development component is mainly focused on orienting teachers to the program and providing them with basic information about dance and movement.

ACPN organizations' delivery models tend to be influenced more by their mission and niche in the arts world than general school needs. Because schools select organizations based on the school's interest, the organizations' service delivery package does not have to be adapted to accommodate individual schools. ACPN organizations report that they may alter their instruction based on student needs (e.g., for special education students) and strive to be flexible in their scheduling, but the basic package remains the same. ACPN organizations are able to adhere to their priorities, in part, because they hire and train their teaching artists, develop their instructional materials, and create their own curriculum. The number of students served, hours of instruction, and cost of services are also determined by the organization and vary across ACPN service providers.

### **Use of Visual and Performing Arts Standards**

District arts teachers provide the foundational standards-based arts education in APS schools, and ACPN offerings supplement the district arts teachers' instruction. ACPN offerings typically do not build sequentially over years; more often, they provide students with authentic arts instruction for a set number of weeks in a given year.

Although ACPN packages do not have to be sequential (over years), alignment to the arts standards is one of the ten guiding principles in the RFP, and district staff check for this when reviewing proposals. Reviewers expect ACPN applicants to “have a working knowledge of the standards.” However, there is no formal student assessment requirement. Interviewed ACPN organizations consider their culminating performance or informal observations of students as assessment. Schools are aware that LAUSD reviews the proposals for standards alignment and feel confident that if a program has cleared the district review process, then it is aligned with the visual and performing arts standards. One assistant principal stated if the district has approved a program, it is “pretty much a done deal” and feels no obligation to check her ACPN programs for standards alignment. Interviewed ACPN organization directors stated they are familiar with the arts standards, and they have mindfully incorporated the standards into their programs. Interviewed artists had varying levels of familiarity with the standards. Some felt their program was strong and inherently addressed the standards by being of a high quality, others were aware that their program was written to address the standards and felt less responsibility for being personally familiar with the standards.

### **Logistics**

The key players in ACPN are the district, schools, and arts organizations. LAUSD acts as a broker—they review applications and qualify programs, provide schools with lists of ACPN organizations, and monitor customer satisfaction. The district also handles invoicing for ACPN transactions and manages bussing for all ACPN organizations.

At the school level, APS schools have teachers who serve as arts cadre chairs and often liaise with ACPN organizations. When the whole school, or a large number of classrooms, is involved with a partner organization, the arts cadre chair or the principal typically manage scheduling. If specific teachers are involved, they typically work directly with teaching artists to manage day-to-day logistics. In most cases, scheduling and sharing of physical space were identified as significant challenges.

Each ACPN organization has its own way of working with schools, largely dependent on the nature of their program. Arts organization staff whom we interviewed were sensitive to scheduling issues and worked hard to accommodate school staff.

### **Funding**

In the beginning of their ten year arts plan, LAUSD’s Arts Education Branch was funded to implement the plan. At the time, the ACPN did not exist and the scope of the district arts program was smaller. As the district has implemented the plan, funding has increased to support the expansion of the district arts program. At the time of our visit, in spring 2008, the overall district arts budget was \$45 million per year, and the district general funds that provide the bulk of the support for implementation of the 10-year AEP were seen as a stable and reliable source of funds.

The 365 APS schools each receive \$20,000 per year for school-based arts programming; they are able to spend as much or as little of this money on ACPN services. In addition to APS funds, the district supports the program with instructional support services provided by Arts Education Branch staff.

For schools, the direct cost of ACPN services is the price that each arts organization sets for its service package. ACPN organizations vary in how they determine their price, but all are responsible for paying their own staff and providing any necessary instructional materials. Some organizations subsidize their services in order to be more accessible; others see ACPN participation as an important source of revenue.

## **MOUNTAIN VIEW-WHISMAN SCHOOL DISTRICT**

The city of Mountain View is located in the Bay Area's Silicon Valley approximately 35 miles south of San Francisco. The Mountain View-Whisman School District (MVWSD) serves a diverse student population in six elementary schools (K-5) and two middle schools (6-8). Of the 4,406 students enrolled in 2007–08, 37% were eligible for free or reduced-priced meals, 43% were Hispanic, 32% were White, and 45% were English language learners (ELL). The six elementary schools in the district differ fairly substantially in terms of both demographics and student achievement.

MVWSD's partner, the Community School of Music and Arts (CSMA), is large and well-established in the local area. CSMA was founded in 1968 and is the region's largest nonprofit provider of music and arts education programs for children and adults. CSMA offers services in public schools as well as at Finn Center, its Mountain View facility. According to the CSMA website, the organization's mission is to enhance "the quality of life in our region by engaging our diverse community in high-quality arts education, performances and exhibitions" (CSMA, 2009). CSMA's partnership work with MVWSD is a small part of their overall portfolio, accounting for approximately 8% of their operating budget. CSMA also offers visual art and music camps, private music lessons, art lessons, preschool art and music classes, and New Media (digital arts) classes. Prior to the inception of the partnership with MVWSD, CSMA had been operating in the area providing visual arts and music education.

Prior to the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, the Mountain View School District<sup>8</sup> had an arts program provided by district paid and credentialed arts teachers. After Proposition 13, funding for the arts was eliminated and parent volunteers attempted to fill in the gaps by teaching and hiring musicians and artists with city funds. The program was piecemeal and unstable and the city and district wanted to have a more stable arts education program for their elementary students. CSMA was a well-established arts organization in the local area, already providing in-school arts education aligned with both city and district goals. CSMA's presence and interest coupled with the desire for arts education in the district sparked the partnership included in our study. Since the inception in 1981, the visual arts and music instruction provided by CSMA has been the foundational arts program for the (now merged) MVWSD and over time has become "part of the fabric" of the district and local community.

Community expectation and support for the partnership is evidenced by the ongoing fiscal support from the City of Mountain View, the community-supported Mountain View Educational Foundation (MVEF), the voter-approved parcel tax used to support MVWSD, and CSMA. A CSMA teaching artist commented, "I think culturally in general, in the Bay Area, we're very sophisticated and in the South Bay we have a higher income.... In general, this area because it's so multicultural, people are very sophisticated and interested in all aspects of culture and think it's important to have it [arts education]." CSMA's program format, coordination, and funding have stayed consistent over time with no signs of changing in the near future.

### **Purpose and Goals**

Given the historical context of the partnership, the overarching goal is to provide a foundational arts education program to elementary students in MVWSD—a course of study they would otherwise not receive. Both CSMA and district staff commented on the outsourcing of a foundational arts program that many thought should be provided by credentialed arts teachers employed by the district. Partners at the city, school, and arts organization share the common goal of providing standards-aligned sequential music and visual arts education to elementary students. Because the district has determined that a district-provided arts program is not feasible given ongoing budget constraints, the district and local community are grateful to have the partnership in place. A CSMA teaching artist described the partnership's goal as

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<sup>8</sup> The Mountain View and Whisman school districts merged to become the Mountain View-Whisman School District in 2001.

“definitely giving the arts education that otherwise wouldn’t be available to these kids. Without CSMA involvement, these art activities wouldn’t be happening in these schools.” Another teaching artist shared a similar sentiment: “I see what CSMA is doing as a huge service and its providing something that for most of the students would not exist otherwise.”

### **Partnership Activities**

CSMA provides a fee-for-service program to MVWSD. They are responsible for hiring and training the teaching artists, developing curriculum, and scheduling arts classes with MVWSD elementary schools. All kindergarten through fifth-grade students in MVWSD’s six elementary schools receive arts instruction through the partnership: music instruction is provided for all kindergarten through fourth-grade students (with electives for fifth graders) and visual arts instruction is provided for all first through fifth-grade students. Depending on the grade level, the duration of arts instruction ranges from 12 to 26 weeks; instructional periods are 45 minutes long for music and 1 hour for art. For most of the programs, the minimum duration is 21 weeks. CSMA staff report that seeing students over a longer period of time ensures that teaching artists have enough time to meet program goals.

CSMA developed visual arts and music curricula, including a sequential series of lessons aimed at achieving end-of-year learning goals. The learning goals, in turn, were designed to ensure that students built on skills taught in previous years. Teaching artists may alter the lessons slightly based on individual interpretation or requests by the classroom teacher. CSMA artists reported that some classroom teachers discuss their larger units with them so that the arts lessons can align with classroom instruction, but there is no formal meeting time and collaboration is completely dependent on classroom teacher interest.

The arts program is solely for MVWSD students and does not include any professional development or training for the district’s classroom teachers. Because CSMA artists are not credentialed, classroom teachers are required to stay in the classroom while they are teaching. While some classroom teachers learn from being in the classroom with the artists, teacher involvement is highly dependent on the individual. A teaching artist commented, “On the lower end of that involvement, I have teachers who are just there working on their own things in the back of the classroom ... on the other end of the spectrum, I have teachers participating and doing activities with the students ... and actively involved in trying to explain things to students.” A CSMA administrator commented, “Teachers really depend on us for arts education. Lots of them don’t have the knowledge and, even those who do, don’t take the time because we’re doing it for them.”

### **Use of Visual and Performing Arts Standards**

CSMA developed their curriculum over 20 years ago, before the development of California’s visual and performing arts standards were created. The curriculum has changed over time, but the core of the curriculum has remained the same. After the visual and performing arts standards were developed, CSMA leaders examined the existing curriculum and found much of it was already aligned with the state standards. As one CSMA administrator explained, “I think [the state arts standards] have informed the evolution or development of our curriculum to some degree.”

CSMA teaching artists receive training in the curriculum and, through that training, become familiar with the visual and performing arts standards. A CSMA administrator reported, “We do a lot of professional development with our own staff, and we work with our teaching artists to train them in what the standards are. Even if they don’t know that word, they’re teaching the standards because that’s what our curriculum is delivering.” CSMA provides training before the school year starts and holds artist meetings two to three times a month over the course of the school year. The meetings are organized by arts discipline and are mostly content-focused with some modeling of lessons provided. Teaching artists report their training is thorough and rigorous, and the continuous meeting throughout the school year creates a strong network of artists. One artist commented on the benefits of the regular contact: “Because we’re meeting on a biweekly basis and we’re essentially going through the same list of skills and content throughout the year

... you know the outcome for a child is going to be pretty equal no matter where they've been in the school district. I think that is really powerful because it's not something that happens on its own. To have an organization that is overseeing the arts content is wonderful; it's also wonderful for the arts teachers to have a community they're working within.... That level of camaraderie and community and support as well as having a common vocabulary and sense of purpose means that our students are getting higher quality instruction and are certainly getting a more standard set of art instruction."

CSMA, district, and school staff all cited end-of-year performances and art exhibitions as evidence of student learning and documentation of the outcomes of the program. In addition, CSMA has recently begun asking their artists to assess whole classes on lessons. There is no individual assessment of student learning.

### **Logistics**

The major players in the partnership are CSMA, MVWSD, and the external funders. CSMA handles the delivery of the arts program, curriculum development, scheduling, artist hiring and training, and provision of supplies. CSMA works with MVWSD's six elementary schools through one contract with the district. In order to schedule artist visits to the schools, CSMA leaders sit down with school principals to map out the schedule for the year. MVWSD also helps with logistics. Scheduling is difficult for the schools and CSMA, and the district has been trying to help with the issue. A district administrator commented, "Scheduling is a nightmare. Schools are asked to do more and more,... and we just don't have enough time in the day,... so that is what we're working on right now.... Time is our biggest issue."

The artists and classroom teachers stick to the predetermined schedule, altering it on occasion to accommodate field trips or other unplanned events. The artists visit the classrooms on the scheduled dates, deliver the CSMA curriculum, and may or may not meet with the classroom teacher depending on the teachers' interest and availability. Some teaching artists feel the lack of dedicated space at the school sites is a challenge: classes are limited to 45 minutes to 1 hour, and some of the time is spent setting up and taking down classrooms.

External funders, including the City of Mountain View and the MVEF, are consistent in their support, but do not involve themselves in the day-to-day operations of the partnership.

### **Funding**

The funding model for the partnership is unique in its diversity. MVWSD, CSMA, the MVEF, and the City of Mountain View fund the large majority of partnership services, with small amounts of supplemental funds from parent and school fundraising efforts. While each major funder has a slightly different reason for funding the partnership, they share the goal of providing arts education to MVWSD elementary students. A CSMA administrator described the strength of the funding model:

Because each partner is contributing to this, they really care about the program. In some years, we've leveraged some against the others.... Some years the district has been short, so CSMA has plugged in a little more to keep it balanced. Each of the partners has adjusted a little through the years to maintain stability. Having the City, district, and education foundation involved means the parents in the community are really involved. They have a say and a stake, and they have saved our program a couple times throughout the years.

In 2007–08, the City of Mountain View funded about a fifth of the cost of the partnership. The City of Mountain View's City Manager explained, "Since the city's goals are to provide arts education, and we don't have it in recreation, we want to make sure it happens in the schools and this [CSMA partnership] is our vehicle." A CSMA artist observed, "I think the fact that the City helped out in the beginning and continues to be there sends a message to the district that the city thinks it's important, and they're putting their money where their mouth is."

The MVEF began funding the partnership in 2000 in response to budget cuts affecting the arts. When MVEF started funding the partnership, they polled the parents about what needed to be funded in the district, and arts education emerged as the top priority. A MVEF staff member explained the interest in the partnership: “I think art has always been a part of the fabric here, and it’s always been an expectation. Our kids were used to getting the arts, and we wanted to sustain it. Parents have always been very supportive in that. I think it’s unique we have CSMA in our backyard, and we grew up together.” In 2007–08, MVEF provided about a quarter of the partnership’s funding.

The community also shows its strong support for the partnership through passage of a parcel tax: in 2008, voters passed the parcel tax with an 80% majority. MVWSD funds an annual average of 40% of the partnership, with the entire district contribution coming from the parcel tax. Had the parcel tax not passed, district staff were concerned they would be unable to continue funding the partnership.

CSMA contributes nearly 15% of the annual cost of the partnership. At the time of our interviews, the amount was not set to increase or decrease in the near future.

The partnership between CSMA and MVWSD has been long-standing, is established in its operations, and has become “part and parcel” of the district’s academic offerings. The stable financial support from various community organizations ensures continuation of a long-standing partnership.

## **RIALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

San Bernardino County, part of California's Inland Empire and located approximately 60 miles east of Los Angeles, is home to a partnership between the County Superintendent of Schools (SBCSS) and the East LA Classic Theatre (ECT) that provides Beyond Borders, a program including standards-aligned theatre arts instruction for elementary students and professional development for teachers. Beyond Borders is funded through a federal grant that SBCSS initiated to support the work of ECT teaching artists in classrooms throughout the county.

Although program services were provided at seven elementary schools in two San Bernardino County districts during the 2007–08 school year, our case study examined the implementation of Beyond Borders through the lens of one school in the Rialto Unified School District (RUSD). RUSD, located in the city of Rialto (population, 92,000), is a large suburban school district serving 29,070 students in 18 elementary and 10 secondary schools. In 2007–08, the student body was mostly Latino (73%), while 18% were African American, and 6% were White. Most students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals (71%) and nearly one-third were ELL (30%). According to the RUSD Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, although total student enrollment in the district has been declining, ELL enrollment continues to increase.

Headquartered in Los Angeles, ECT is dedicated to a vision of cultural inclusion and academic excellence through exposure to and education in the performing arts. It seeks to provide literacy training and engaging relevant theatre experiences to disadvantaged youth and minority communities. ECT offers a variety of programs for students, who according to the ECT Executive Artistic Director are those “most in need and the least often served” by the public education system. ECT programs offered in schools across southern California include Beyond Borders,<sup>9</sup> Language in Play, ECT's after-school and Saturday program, as well as professional Shakespeare adaptations for youth presented at venues throughout Southern California. All ECT programs are intended to create accessible and culturally relevant experiences that develop literacy skills through theatrical processes and techniques, which often include examination of classical texts.

### **Purpose and Goals**

The overarching purpose of the 3-year U.S. Department of Education grant that funds the SBCSS-ECT Beyond Borders program is to integrate arts instruction within the English language arts curriculum at each of the seven schools participating in the program. Primary goals include increasing teacher capacity to provide effective arts-integrated language arts instruction, improving students' language proficiency (specifically targeting students designated as ELL), and achievement of proficiency in the VPA standards. These goals are achieved through a combination of teacher professional development and teacher and student participation in a 16-week in-class instructional program provided by ECT.

While agreeing on the overarching purpose, the various partners emphasized somewhat different Beyond Borders goals. According to ECT's Executive Artistic Director, “The in-school component of Beyond Borders is about reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It is a focused curriculum utilizing theatre as an educational tool that supports achievement of higher levels of literacy and language familiarity among participating students.” Additionally, he says, a major purpose of in-school instruction “is to legitimize theatre as a methodical way to learn language arts, and shift the way teachers see theatre from enriching and entertaining to a powerful learning experience and tool that builds students' multiple intelligences.” Similarly, the school principal described the goals of the program as “helping English learners to become proficient readers and writers of English through theatre arts” and “to achieve proficiency on the visual and performing arts standards and framework.”

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<sup>9</sup> Additional Beyond Borders programs are offered in numerous southern California schools on a contract basis and are not part of the SBCSS-ECT federally funded partnership described in this report.

Leaders at SBCSS and RUSD shared comments suggesting that arts are valued as a vehicle to learn other academic skills and thus a key purpose of Beyond Borders is to support the district's ELL population to develop stronger English language skills. According to the RUSD administrator, "To say we are doing visual and performing arts instruction articulated [for] K-12 would not be true. I always think of art as connecting to something else—getting students to approach school in a more successful way." According to a partner at SBCSS, although the project "looks on the surface like an artists-in-the-classroom program," it also is about building teacher capacity. Although increased teacher capacity to provide integrated arts instruction is a primary goal of the SBCSS-ECT Beyond Borders grant, few participants identified goals in this area.

Other goals mentioned by various participants include increased student attendance, improved self-confidence, better acting skills, increased student engagement, higher homework completion rates, increased collaborative skills, better vocabulary and writing skills, improved public speaking abilities, and increased facility using formal English.

### **Partnership Activities**

The SBCSS-ECT Beyond Borders program provides students in the one elementary school included in our case study with access to 64 hours of classroom-based theatre and literacy instruction, which also is intended to serve as a practicum for participating teachers. Instruction is provided by a male and female pair of professional ECT actors who speak English and Spanish and reflect the students' cultural backgrounds. The actors travel to RUSD twice weekly for 16 weeks to offer 2 hours of instruction per visit in collaboration with the classroom teacher. During the 2007–08 school year, approximately 60 fourth-grade students (two classrooms) participated in Beyond Borders.

Students break into three groups and the ECT actors and the classroom teacher rotate between groups. Groups cowrite scripts, codevelop dramatic scenes, and share their work with students in other groups at the end of each session. This in-classroom work with ECT actors results in fully developed scripts and student productions for student, teacher, and parent audiences.

Classroom teachers reported that they continue Beyond Borders' methodology during additional class time. One participating teacher shared, "Every story or play the students read or write [with the ECT actors], we analyze using literary elements [during additional class time], including character development, setting, problem resolution, protagonist, antagonist, plot, climax, and rising and descending action."

In addition to the in-class instruction offered by ECT actors in collaboration with participating teachers, the SBCSS-ECT Beyond Borders design includes intensive teacher professional development opportunities that are intended to build a cadre of teachers trained to offer high-quality arts integrated instruction. The grant that funded Beyond Borders stipulated that teachers who had ECT actors providing instruction in their classrooms were to attend intensive professional development workshops to "build a foundation of knowledge in the state visual and performing arts, English language arts, and English language development standards, and instructional strategies for providing arts-integrated language arts instruction." To build schoolwide capacity to deliver standards-based arts instruction and sustain the role of theatre arts in academic programs, these teachers were then to share what they learned (both through observation of actors in their classrooms and through the workshops) during 15 to 30 minute presentations to their colleagues during monthly faculty meetings. A participating teacher explained how the process works: "I've pulled the visual and performing arts and English language development standards to show how the two are integrated." The teacher hopes that as a result, other teachers at her school "will see Readers' Theatre in a new light" and thus provide higher quality integrated arts instruction to more students. Participating teachers attended three Beyond Borders professional development workshops during their first year of participation in the program and four workshops during the second year; they offered presentations to their colleagues only during the second year.

## **Use of Visual and Performing Arts Standards**

Although the Beyond Borders curriculum has always focused on the integration of theatre and language arts instruction, over the course of RUSD's participation, ECT employed the expertise of a San Bernardino State University professor and a former teacher to revise the in-school curriculum to more closely align with the state's visual and performing arts, English language arts, and English language development standards standards. According to a participating teacher, the revised curriculum "was more specific, organized by week, by lesson, by objective, and by standard." Similarly, a participating ECT actor said, "You can literally look at one of the exercises we do and see the standards that pertain to it: it is all written out explicitly in the current curriculum." Example objectives and standards include voice control and projection, movement on a stage, body control, writing and reading skills, development of oral language, learning about story components, and basic choreography. The curriculum is sequential within the 16-week session.

All ECT actors receive a minimum of 40 hours of training on the curriculum, including learning games and exercises used in the classroom, playwriting techniques, how to teach playwriting and acting, and classroom management skills. RUSD teachers and ECT actors are aware of the visual and performing arts standards. One participating teacher attributed her knowledge of the visual and performing arts standards entirely to her participation in Beyond Borders stating, "Learning about visual and performing arts standards was 100% a result of my participation in Beyond Borders. I would have never touched the arts standards without it."

Participating teachers administer a pre- and postassessment using a rubric to test students' ability to write a script and produce a play, and this information is used in determining their English-language arts grade. Although teachers and artists alike identified using student performances as an informal method to assess student learning in the arts, students are not given a formal grade for their participation in the program beyond "a check or minus for visual and performing arts on their report cards." While increasing student English literacy skills is a key objective of the Beyond Borders grant, there is no formal monitoring of student progress in this area.

Although there is an external evaluation of the SBCSS-ECT Beyond Border program conducted by an evaluator from Loyola University, there is no formal assessment of teacher learning and capacity to deliver integrated arts instruction. ECT does, however, use an end-of-session evaluation form to measure teacher and artist satisfaction with the in-school component.

## **Logistics**

SBCSS applied for the grant to bring Beyond Borders to county schools and oversees implementation of the program and grant deliverables. The county coordinator communicates with participating schools, districts, and ECT regarding scheduling for the in-school instruction for students. She also develops and provides all teacher professional development workshops, sometimes in collaboration with the external consultant from San Bernardino State University. Additionally, at the beginning of the 2007–08 school year, the county coordinator met with principals at all participating schools to talk about the professional development component of the program and to attain their consent to provide 15 to 30 minutes for participating teachers to share their learning with their colleagues at monthly faculty meeting. She also presented at a staff meeting so that the whole faculty "would be aware of the program, of what participating teachers would be learning, and to set the stage for those teachers for when they had to present to their peers."

According to ECT's program manager, "It's up to SBCSS to make sure that the grant is rolling out correctly, and it's up to us to do our job, which is to teach the children to the best of our ability." ECT developed the language arts-theatre curriculum, hires and trains teaching artists, and provides the in-school instruction.

The teachers participating in Beyond Borders during the 2007–08 school year were present to observe and learn while ECT actors take primary responsibility for providing instruction to their classes. Teachers participated in activities, lead student groups, and help with classroom management. They also tied in arts lessons to other ongoing classroom activities and shared their experience and knowledge with their colleagues during faculty meetings. The Beyond Borders program at the school we visited was also strongly supported by the Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA), who generally provides instructional coaching and reading strategies for teachers working with English learners and other at-risk students. The TOSA sees herself as a teacher leader and as a liaison between SBCSS, the district, school, and participating Beyond Borders teachers. The TOSA attends Beyond Borders professional development trainings alongside participating teachers.

The principal (with assistance from the TOSA) is responsible for integrating Beyond Borders into the English language development piece of the school’s Reading First program. The Principal (with assistance from the TOSA) also selects participating teachers, schedules the in-school instruction, ensures time on faculty meeting agendas for teachers to share what they have learned, and finds substitutes to cover teachers’ classrooms when they are participating in professional development. The principal and the TOSA also cover Beyond Borders teachers’ classes when needed. She also “regularly visit[s] each of the involved classrooms during in-school instruction and attend[s] all the performances—not only to show support but also so I know what students are learning.”

### **Funding**

The SBCSS-ECT Beyond Borders program is nearly fully funded by a 3-year U.S. Department of Education grant. Grant funds are intended to cover the costs of personnel, including the county coordinator and the external consultant from San Bernardino State University, teacher stipends, professional development materials and office supplies, and an external evaluation. The grant also covers 100% of the contractual fee charged by ECT to provide the in-school arts instruction component of the project, including artist salaries, travel, and basic program resources. ECT management noted that the program absorbed significant costs related to the curriculum revision, including supplementing costs for hiring two consultant curriculum specialists. Participating districts pay for substitutes to cover teachers’ time while they are participating in Beyond Borders professional development, as well as indirect costs related to scheduling, attending meetings, and paperwork related to the Beyond Borders program.

At the time of our site visit, SBCSS was unsure if it would reapply for federal funds for the project in the coming year. SBCSS leadership was certain, however, that without a similar level of funding from the federal government or other external source in the coming years, they would be unable to continue their work with ECT and the Beyond Borders program in its current form. Because of budget shortfalls, RUSD did not expect to put district resources into arts education.

## **ROBLA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

In 2005, the Robla Elementary School District (RSD) in Sacramento began a partnership with the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission (SMAC) with the goal of providing arts instruction, aligned with the district's Open Court language arts curriculum, to all students in RSD's five elementary schools within 3 years. RSD is located in suburban Sacramento and serves approximately 1,980 students in five K-6 elementary schools and one preschool. In 2007–08, the largest student subpopulation enrolled in the district was Latino (approximately 37%). ELL comprised approximately 45% of the district's total enrollment, with the large majority being Spanish speakers. A significant percentage of students came from poor families—with 84% of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

SMAC is a public agency, funded by the City and County of Sacramento. Their mission entails “Advancing Community through Arts and Culture” and their portfolio includes providing resources to “support and increase regional arts education activities” (SMAC, 2009). SMAC's arts education program includes a Model Arts Program<sup>10</sup> currently implemented in two school districts, including RSD. In Robla, the program involves employing teaching artists to provide visual arts and theatre instruction.

### **Purpose and Goals**

In the summer 2005, SMAC's arts education coordinator began to “enunciate a vision for a model school district,” which she hoped would lead to deeper, more systemic effects than had previous partnerships with individual schools. In order to determine financial feasibility of the model as well as to earn buy-in from all participants, SMAC employed a scale-up approach. The idea was that a district would gradually implement the program, beginning with a small group of schools and eventually involving all of the district schools.

When SMAC began spreading the word that it would embark on its arts education outreach work in the Sacramento area, an RSD principal responded. The principal, SMAC's arts education coordinator, and the RSD superintendent discussed taking the Model Arts Program template and customizing it for RSD by aligning it with the district's Open Court language arts curriculum. After a codesigned proposal was approved by the district and SMAC, the first two elementary schools received funds for 2005-06 to implement the program, which over the next 2 years expanded to include the remaining three elementary schools in RSD.

According to SMAC's arts education coordinator, the primary goal of the Model Arts Program was to provide sequential, standards-based visual and performing arts education for the underserved populations of lower performing schools. Additionally, SMAC sought to demonstrate that arts instruction need not take away from instruction mandated by school improvement plans if the arts curriculum is used to elaborate on schoolwide learning goals, and develop a model for replication in other schools and districts. SMAC's teaching artists emphasized the goal of expanding on the skills taught through core content instruction. A principal described the goals as increasing student exposure to the arts, improving student attendance, and enabling teachers to see their students successfully perform in a different learning context.

District administrators identified increasing student achievement as an important goal of the partnership—their main foci being their school improvement programs and Open Court curriculum. Although the program's goals varied according to the perspectives of different interviewees, the consensus was that the partnership enabled districtwide access to sequential, standards-based arts instruction to all of RSD's K-6 students. In that sense, the partnership filled an important gap in the district's instructional program. As a district staff member noted, prior to their partnership with SMAC, “We didn't have an art program. So in the absence of nothing, [we have] this.” The district does employ one, full-time music teacher who

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<sup>10</sup> SMAC's Model Arts Program is distinct from the state's Model Arts Program supported through the state Arts Work Grant Program from 1998 through 2004.

provides music instruction, built around the Open Court curriculum, at each school once a week for thirty minutes in grades K-3, and leads a voluntary, extracurricular choir once a week for grades 4-6.

There were no goals focused on formal capacity building or professional development for classroom teachers in RSD's implementation of the SMAC Model Arts Program.

### **Partnership Activities**

The SMAC Model Arts Program in RSD provides visual arts and theatre instruction to approximately 400 students per school, spread out among 15 to 21 classrooms and teachers. Students receive 8 weeks of visual arts instruction and 8 weeks of theatre instruction for 1 hour per week, totaling 16 hours of arts instruction per year. Instruction in visual arts and theatre is unrelated and the two 8-week sessions do not occur in any particular order. The instruction is provided by two theatre artists and three visual artists who work with RSD.

Arts instruction and activities include voice projection, body movement, gesturing games, creative storytelling, drawing, painting, and familiarizing students with artistic elements ranging from different tools and media, to concepts of line, color, shape, form, and texture. Artists select themes or stories for their lessons based on where the classroom teachers are with the Open Court curriculum. Because the activities are integrated with the Open Court curriculum, arts instruction takes place during the instructional block set aside for English language arts. There is, however, no formal collaboration between the SMAC teaching artists and classroom teachers in the delivery of instruction. Classroom teachers see their role in the activities as primarily classroom managers and reported no changes in their own instructional practice due to involvement in the Model Arts Program.

### **Use of Visual and Performing Arts Standards**

In the beginning of the school year, SMAC provides one day of training to the artists on lesson planning based on the Understanding By Design model, the visual and performing arts standards, and classroom management strategies. Some of the Model Arts Program teaching artists also attend SMAC's Artist Residency Institute. The Institute is a 2-day workshop, developed by SMAC to help build and retain local artist capacity; it covers content similar to the general Model Arts Program training. Throughout the school year, there are artist team meetings or subject-specific team meetings during which artists may do demonstration lessons, discuss their lesson planning processes, or attend special speaker presentations from organizations like the Sierra North Arts Project or the Sacramento County Office of Education. Particular to RSD's partnership implementation, the district provides its own Open Court orientation for classroom teachers before the school year begins, and the Model Arts Program artists attend. Based on the combination of district- and SMAC-provided training, SMAC artists then develop their curriculum, mapping it to fit the goals and objectives of both SMAC and RSD.

SMAC's teaching artists are responsible for determining which arts standards to address and then developing lesson plans that they then turn in to SMAC's arts education coordinator for review of standards alignment. The arts education coordinator described the curriculum development process as "synergistic" and remarked that lesson plans can differ as much as do the individual artists. However, SMAC maintains some consistency across its curriculum in that the sequential arts instruction builds on itself year to year by aligning with the appropriate grade-level visual and performing arts standards. Lessons also are adapted to fit with the Open Court learning objectives by incorporating vocabulary words, story lines, historical references, or other aspects of the curriculum. While an artist may cover a particular set of visual and performing arts standards within an eight-week session, he or she will tie each arts lesson to whichever Open Court story or theme is being covered at the time, adjusting as needed.

SMAC's Model Arts partnership with RSD does not include any formal assessment of student learning. The district report card has a single combined grade for music, arts, and physical education, but it is a grade based on participation, and not on progress towards standards. To gather feedback on the program,

SMAC conducts a number of surveys: for classroom teachers to reflect on their experience with the teaching artists and the arts instruction; for parents and students to share their opinion of the program; and for artists to evaluate their own experience in the classrooms. SMAC also attempts to gather and analyze outcome data from the schools: one effort involved videotaped interviews with about 50 to 60 students reflecting on their arts learning. However, at the time of our visit, there was no systematic data collection system in place.

### **Logistics**

SMAC's arts education coordinator and two program assistants were the primary staff running SMAC's Arts Education Program, including the Model Arts Program, grants, and other artist residencies and community partnerships. The arts education coordinator was described by interviewees at the district and schools as the "brain" and "engine" behind SMAC's partnership with RSD. Currently, she recruits and hires artists, organizes and delivers ongoing professional development for the artists, oversees SMAC's fiscal contributions to the program each year, and works with school principals regarding scheduling concerns or any other issues that may arise.

RSD's superintendent supported SMAC's idea of a districtwide partnership from its beginning, advocating for wider breadth of implementation beyond individual schools and helping to set the tone for districtwide involvement over time. The district provides financial support for the partnership, as was determined by SMAC's original contract for the Model Arts Program, and provides an Open Court orientation at the beginning of each year for the teaching artists. Principals of all participating schools are instrumental in determining site-level fiscal contributions and in scheduling the artists' visits to the schools. Principals meet with artists at the beginning of each year to map out availability for 8-week sessions at each school, and they coordinate with each other throughout the year to rearrange schedules as needed. Principals also provide informal feedback to the district regarding the partnership's progress and its ongoing alignment with Open Court.

Artists are responsible for taking their SMAC-provided training on the visual and performing arts standards and district-provided training on Open Court curriculum and applying it to their development of lesson plans. Pending SMAC's approval, artists then implement their lessons in the classrooms, while classroom teachers oversee classroom management and keep track of alignment with their Open Court objectives. In support of the latter task, teachers provide artists with Open Court core curriculum outlines and standards at the beginning of the year, as well as with rough Open Court schedules built on a SMAC-provided template, anticipating where they will expect to be in the Open Court curriculum each month.

### **Funding**

The funding model for SMAC's Model Arts Program spans 3 years, with SMAC carrying the bulk of the funding initially, gradually decreasing its contributions until the district and schools take on full financial responsibility in the fourth year of the partnership. As part of SMAC's aim to build buy-in from all participating schools, the gradual element of the funding model also gave stakeholders some time to get comfortable with the short and longer-term financial implications of their participation. SMAC covered approximately two-thirds of direct costs, such as artist fees, training, and arts supplies, in Years 1 and 2, and approximately 38% of direct costs in Year 3. In 2007–08, the program's direct costs amounted to approximately \$67,000. In Year 4, SMAC offered a reduced level of services (i.e., less training and supervision since the teaching artists had gained experience with the program), and the schools and district covered payments to teaching artists and costs for all supplies.

SMAC pays the salaries for its arts education coordinator and program assistant, but their salaries are not calculated into the cost of the RSD's Model Arts Program. Other indirect costs for SMAC consist primarily of the space for artist training and meetings. For the district, they consist of the space and facilities for teaching, and planning time for principals to meet and coordinate the program schedules. The schools generally do not have dedicated areas for Model Arts classes, which are typically conducted in a

regular classroom or the school cafeteria. Additional district costs are minimal, including the time spent figuring out the budget, as well as any informal conversations with school principals.

The future of the Model Arts Program in RSD is uncertain because the district is unsure as to whether they will have sufficient funds to cover the costs of the program. As the community does not play any substantive role in advocating for or funding the partnership, the district is considering other funding options. It is also unclear whether the current level of artist training, lesson development, and ongoing professional development could continue and remain under the purview and financial responsibility of SMAC, or whether additional responsibility would be shifted to the district and schools.

# PARTNERSHIP GOALS AND DESIGN

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The circumstances leading to the development of partnerships among districts, schools, and arts organizations are as diverse as the communities and populations they serve. Although each partnership examined in this study is situated in a unique context and has a unique history, a few common themes regarding goals and design can be distilled. Overall, the case study partnerships had in common that they were initiated based on a desire to provide students with a richer and more engaging educational experience than they would have otherwise received. Partnerships developed to fill gaps in the education schools and districts were providing and to connect students with the real work of artists.

## **Partnerships were initiated by diverse stakeholders—including parents, artists, arts administrators, and educators—and motives were similarly diverse.**

A variety of interested parties with diverse motives initiated the case study partnerships and provided the initial sparks to develop them. In one case, concerned parents and community residents who strongly advocated for the continuation of in-school arts education initiated the partnership when budget cuts threatened the district’s arts program. While reflecting on the history of this partnership, staff at the parent-led education foundation said, “I think the arts had always been part of the fabric [in this community], and it’s always been an expectation. Our kids were used to getting [arts education in school], and we wanted to sustain it. Parents have always been very supportive in that.”

Artists and arts organization staff initiated other case study partnerships. Some of the arts organizations had specific social justice and education focused missions that motivated the development of partnerships with local communities. For example, one arts organization director described the partnership as a key strategy to “educate students about their cultural past and liberate them,” while a director of another arts organization described the impetus behind a different partnership as “a way to provide arts instruction to students in a way to help them transform the way they look at their experience and transform the conditions that oppress them.” This arts organization director also said that the partnership is one of the ways that the organization “gives back” to their host community. In yet another case, a newly hired and motivated staff person at a local arts organization personally reached out to districts and schools to offer support and services. She said that she wanted to build partnerships with broader impact and therefore wanted to develop districtwide programs that “built capacity at many levels” and to overcome challenges, such as lack of funding and instructional time. One of the principals this staff person reached out to said, “If [the arts organization staff] had not approached the school, there probably would not be arts instruction here.”

School district or county office of education administrators provided the impetus for other partnerships. In some cases, they wrote grants to secure funds; in others, they set long-range and strategic goals for arts education and then oversaw the development and maintenance of partnerships. Again, educators cited many different reasons for initiating partnerships. For example, one principal explained that, given the rarity of arts education programs in public schools, maintaining the partnership and the provision of a theatre arts program in his school attracts parents who might otherwise choose to send their children to charter schools. Others viewed partnerships as a means of enriching students’ academic experiences and creating alternative points of entry for learning.

## **Partnerships aimed to meet numerous and varied goals.**

Overall, we found that school- and district-based educators were more likely to identify partnership goals related to increased engagement, enjoyment of the learning process, and developing skills that would

ultimately increase school and life success, while educators based at arts organizations were more likely to mention partnership goals related to the art form itself and art appreciation. Both identified the arts as a point of entry for learning, a way of helping students to develop the discipline and habits of mind that will support their arts learning and transfer to other non-arts areas. For example, teachers often cited goals such as increased engagement, confidence, and achievement that will transfer to subjects. A teacher at one case study site said, “It builds self-confidence and familiarity with art concepts that can help students succeed in school.” Likewise, a leader at an arts organization said, “For me, I think in terms of not only exposing kids to the arts. I really think we’re teaching life skills through dance, I mean they’re learning self-respect, discipline, how to work in a group, how to build confidence, how to take risks in a class, how to try something out and fail and fail again [and learn that] it will be okay.” School and district-based educators also seemed to be reacting to a narrowing of the curriculum in their schools. For example, one district leader offered, “In school all day we’re focusing on reading and math and reading and math and reading and math, and so for those children who may not be talented in those areas, its gives them another place where they can see their talents and then fulfill their abilities and skills through that. It’s very motivating for students.” A school principal in another site said that he was interested in establishing an arts education partnership because he “felt like we’ve been focused on academics for so long that maybe there was something we could do with [the partner] to enrich our students’ education. I hoped to increase attendance by having something fun for the children to do here.” Interestingly, different perspectives did not appear to negatively affect collaboration or implementation—perhaps because, despite variation regarding specific learning goals, there was also a great deal of consensus about the value of arts education.

**Most partnerships filled a gap in arts education caused by insufficient funding and created educational opportunities that students would otherwise not receive.**

All of the partnerships are situated within the funding landscape that developed in the aftermath of California’s Proposition 13, an initiative passed by California voters in 1978 which lowered and capped property tax rates, and thus decreased state revenues, resulting in budget cuts for school districts. This caused school districts across the state to reduce or cut entirely funding for arts programs (Bodilly and Augustine, 2008). District support and resources for arts education have been further threatened in recent years as a result of state and federal policies such as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) that have increased test-based accountability and had the unintended consequence of narrowing curriculum to the detriment of arts instruction (Center on Education Policy, 2008).

In this context, the case study partnerships fill gaps in districts’ arts education programs and provide arts education programs for students who otherwise would not receive such services. For example, one partnership was established in 1981 to provide fee-for-service arts instruction after budget cuts caused the district to eliminate all arts programming that was previously provided by credentialed district arts teachers. While sharing about the success of this partnership that brings sequential standards-based instruction to all students in two disciplines, a district leader said, “I can’t think of any other school that has an arts program like this one since pre-Prop 13 days.” An artist in this partnership said that the partnership provides “the arts education that otherwise wouldn’t be available to these kids. Without [the partnership], these arts activities wouldn’t be happening in these schools.”

In some cases, instruction provided via partnerships serves as the *sole* arts program, while other partnerships *supplement* district or school arts education programs by providing instruction that adds to existing district- and school-run programs. In one case study site, school district staff widely considered the arts instruction offered through the partnership as the arts portion of the district’s overall academic program. A visual artist participating in this partnership said, “I see [this partnership] as doing a huge service, and it’s providing something that for most of the students would not exist otherwise.... What they’re doing is quite incredible and is filling a huge need.” In another case, the school district offered no substantive arts education to students before the development of the partnership. A district administrator noted, “This partnership is our arts instruction.... We’re a high-poverty, underperforming, needy district,

and [the partnership provides] an opportunity to integrate arts into our program and support achievement.”

In other case study sites, where districts do offer some arts instruction, partnerships extend their capacity to provide specialty or additional arts education services that supplement district-run programs. For example, in districts that provide a sequential standards-based arts education, the partnership enhances the foundational program by increasing students’ access to “real-life” artists and more diverse art forms. Referring to a partnership that provided students with exposure to Flamenco dance instruction, a district dance specialist said, “What a great thing [it is] when a Flamenco artist can come and work with the kids, and they can begin to see [how] what they’re learning with their district dance teacher dovetails [with other dance forms]. [The partnership provides] real world validation of what they are learning in school.” In other sites, where districts were able to provide limited music and/or visual arts instruction during the school day, partnerships provide students with exposure to standards-based instruction in additional arts disciplines.

**Case study partnerships ranged from simple transactions—in which arts organizations are providers of arts instruction and schools are consumers—to joint ventures.**

Research literature (Remer, 1996; Rowe, Castaneda, Kaganoff, & Robyn, 2004) identifies two major types of arts education partnerships: simple transactions and joint ventures. Simple transactions are described as partnerships where “an artist or arts organization offers an arts program for a school’s students, and the school purchases the program” (Rowe et al., p. 8). These are often relationships in which the school does not participate meaningfully in the design of the arts program, and the arts program is often provided as a set service package to the schools with little adaptation based on the school’s specific needs and with little collaboration after the initial contract is set. In contrast, joint ventures are described as partnerships where a school and arts organization work together to define students’ needs and to design an arts education program to meet those needs, often requiring ongoing collaboration to collectively develop the curriculum and refine program services.

Some of the case study partnerships included in our study more closely resemble simple transactions, while others are closer to joint ventures. In most cases, the relationship between the arts organization and district leaders was primarily about the transaction. That is, the district interacted with the arts organization primarily around the level of service provided, funding, and other contract-related issues. However, even in the most simple transactions—where the district or school purchased a predetermined instructional package from the arts organization that was largely developed by the arts organization without school or district input—the instructional program was typically developed based on years of experience working with local schools. In other cases, arts organizations tailored their instructional program to meet specific district or school needs. For example, at one site, the partner arts organization and district worked together to align the arts programming with the district’s required Open Court curriculum. To do so, teaching artists attended an Open Court orientation and worked with classroom teachers to coordinate arts lessons with specific components of the Open Court curriculum. Across the partnerships, coordination among teaching artists and classroom teachers was the norm. To the extent that these relationships involved more substantive interaction, about curriculum, teaching, and learning, they reflect the notion of joint venture at the school and classroom level.

In some sites, joint ventures at all levels of the system were the goal. Achieving the level of collaboration necessary to achieve joint venture status, however, was sometimes made difficult because of the time it required and staff turnover at the schools, districts, and among teaching artists. One case study site was engaged in a countywide joint venture that was embarked on to build the capacity of schools, districts, and arts organizations (see profile of Alameda County’s arts education initiative).

**The Alameda County Office of Education's Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership  
Focuses on Professional Development in Support of Systemic Change**

The Alameda County Office of Education's Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership brings together the 18 school districts in Alameda County with a range of arts organizations and institutes of higher education to build the knowledge and skills of school and district leaders, arts and generalist teachers, and teaching artists. As an Arts Learning Anchor District, Emery Unified School District was identified to serve as a model of arts learning—a district where community arts providers and arts coaches work together with school and district leaders and teachers to integrate arts learning into the district's core curriculum. The Alliance connects Emery teachers with arts educators through summer institute workshops that focus on arts integration. For example, through the Alliance, generalist teachers have the opportunity to attend dance workshops offered by Luna Kids Dance, theatre courses with Opera Piccola, and visual arts programs with the Museum of Children's Art (MOCHA). At the same time, school and district leaders participate in county-sponsored professional development, and district arts coaches work on site with educators at all levels of the system. Teaching artists have opportunities to participate in an annual teaching artist institute that is presented by the Alameda County Office of Education, the California College of Arts, and the Alameda County Arts Commission. The purpose of the multilevel, comprehensive approach to professional development is to create systemic change that will transform schools through the arts.

# PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

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Most partnerships were established to provide arts education that students otherwise would not receive. As a result, most of the partnerships involved direct instruction and experiences for students. To varying degrees, partnerships also involved activities aimed at building classroom teachers' capacity to provide arts instruction. The content and goals of the instruction for students varied widely across the case study sites, ranging from exposure to an arts form to the provision of a sequential course of study. Where partnerships included a teacher professional-development component, the goals and methods were equally diverse. In this section, we discuss each type of partnership activity in turn.

## INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS

The VPA standards for California public schools identifies students' expected competencies—what they should know and be able to do—in dance, theatre, music, and the visual arts each year they are in school. The standards specify that each child should participate in dance, theatre, music, and the visual arts as performers and creators, and that they should read about, research, and reflect on the arts from different times and traditions. The standards apply to all students and are sequential in nature, building on the knowledge and skills students gained in earlier grades. Compliance with arts standards, like standards for other disciplines, is not mandated by the state. Despite the fact that we sought to examine partnerships that were supporting standards-aligned instruction, we found that the instructional programs we studied varied substantially, particularly with respect to the content emphasis and the duration and intensity of students' arts experiences. From the perspective of the arts organization, determining the instructional package for students often involves some trade-offs in terms of how many students are reached and the depth of experience provided. From the school and district perspective, there can be some tension regarding the amount of time that is made available for arts instruction and the cost of the partnership activities.

### **Partnerships provided students with an array of arts learning experiences ranging from exposure to a sequential course of study.**

All partnerships increased students' access to arts education. The content of their arts learning experiences varied widely, with some partnerships providing students with more intense exposure and instructional content than others. At one end of the spectrum, a partnership provided twice yearly trips to a museum during which students were guided through the exhibits by teaching artists. These visits were intended to familiarize students with museums, promote their appreciation for art, and enhance their critical thinking and expressive skills through guided observations and structured group discussions. At the other end of the spectrum, some partnerships provided weekly arts lessons in multiple disciplines during the school day. In a couple sites, students were expected to build their arts skills over consecutive years. The most common type of arts experience provided by partnerships, however, fell somewhere in between the two ends of this spectrum and can most accurately be described as an in-depth arts learning experience. (See examples on next page for more concrete descriptions of this range.)

### Examples of Partnerships at Different Places Along the Continuum of Programs

**The Los Angeles Philharmonic Association provides Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) students with exposure to the arts.** Classrooms that partner with the LA Philharmonic Association receive four in-classroom visits from teaching artists: three to prepare elementary students for their upcoming visit to a live LA Philharmonic concert and one to debrief after the concert. During these classroom visits, teaching artists teach students about the orchestra with a focus on classical repertoire. Artists work together with classroom teachers to integrate lessons about the orchestra with the general curriculum. All participating students attend a school day concert at the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

**The California Dance Institute (CDI) offers participating LAUSD students an in-depth arts learning experience.** Partnering with CDI involves a ballet-oriented dance program designed for elementary school children that delivers consistent, structured arts learning experiences by professional artists. Two CDI dance teachers, one master teacher and one assistant, and a pianist visit the participating school weekly for 20 weeks to provide structured dance classes with live piano accompaniment. Participating students (generally fourth and fifth graders) gain a basic understanding of the fundamentals of movement, rhythm, music, and choreography. Each weekly session follows a basic template including warm-up, call-and-response activities, and practice of dance steps. The weekly classes culminate in a set of performances in which the students showcase their accomplishments with their families, schoolmates, and the public at their school site.

**The Community School of Music and Art (CSMA) delivers sequential courses of study to Mountain View students.** As a result of the district's partnership with CSMA, all first- to fifth-grade students participate in a sequential standards-based course of study in both music and visual arts. Although the course of study varies by grade level, students generally receive approximately 22 weekly music lessons and 17 weekly visual arts lessons. All lessons are guided by a curriculum that is directly aligned with California's visual and performing arts standards and include learning goals that are sequential from year to year, building on skills taught in the previous grade level. Music programs include a choral performance at Mountain View's Shoreline Amphitheatre as well as performances at individual school sites and CSMA's Tateuchi Hall. Visual arts programs include community shows such as an annual exhibition at the Mountain View City Hall Rotunda as well as shows representing all children in the program during their open house event at the individual school sites and at CSMA's Finn Center.

Most partnerships involved in-depth arts learning experiences in which teaching artists provided students with a series of classes over the course of a couple months or longer. Exhibit 2 illustrates the range in the intensity and duration of these types of partnerships. In some cases, in-depth experiences were production based—for example, students worked together with teaching artists to produce their own opera, theatre, or dance productions. For students, these in-depth experiences often were one-time program offerings that developed their knowledge, skills, and competencies in a particular arts discipline at a particular grade-level.

**Exhibit 2**  
**Intensity and Duration of Instructional Time with Students,**  
**Among Partnerships Providing an In-Depth Arts Learning Experience**

Arts Organization / School District	Dell'Arte / Blue Lake	Kala Art Institute / Emery	Los Angeles Opera / Los Angeles	California Dance Institute / Los Angeles	East LA Classic Theatre / Rialto	Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission / Robla
Number of Weeks	17	8 to 12	8	20	16	8
Hours per Week	2	1	1	1	4	1 (visual art) 1 (theatre)

Note: These numbers, both the number of weeks and the hours per week, can vary by school and grade level. For example, Dell'Arte spends more time (either more weeks or more hours per week) with sixth- and eighth-grade students and the numbers presented here are for kindergarteners.

**Partner organizations ensured alignment of arts instruction with visual and performing arts standards through artists training and curricular guidance.**

All case study sites aligned their instruction with California's standards for their respective arts disciplines. A common method for aligning arts instruction with the standards included training for teaching artists. Across the sites, professional development for teaching artists was the responsibility of arts organizations, and most arts organizations provided in-depth training and orientation at the beginning of the school year and then supplemented this training with additional artist team meetings. Some training included an explicit review of the VPA standards; more often, if the program curriculum was aligned with the VPA standards, artists indirectly received training. One arts organization provided 40 hours of training to all newly hired teaching artists that included walking them through the complete curriculum, including the specific standards attached to each lesson. The arts organization leader said that during the training, new artists "learn games and arts education exercises, how to teach playwriting and acting, and classroom management skills." Some arts organizations provided more frequent opportunities for training than others, with one arts partner organization holding weekly formal meetings with teaching artists to discuss upcoming arts lessons, review curricula, and resolve any issues that artists may be facing. Another arts organization reported providing additional training "as needed," such as when the curriculum is revised or teaching artists make specific requests.

Other ways that arts organizations supported the professional development of teaching artists and increased artists' ability to align arts instruction activities with the arts standards included the provision of detailed curricula and lesson guides or methods for submission and approval of artist-developed lesson plans to ensure that they are standards-based. In one case, a district reviewed arts instructional packages to ensure alignment with the arts standards before approving arts organizations as potential partners. In nearly all cases, the responsibility for standards alignment fell to arts organizations rather than to districts or schools. An arts organization director in one site said, "[Teaching artists] are teaching the standards because that's what our curriculum is delivering. One difference between our program and those that just hire an artist to come in to the classroom is that our curriculum is standards-based and meets the *VPA Framework*." A teaching artist in another site shared, "You can literally look at one of the exercises we do and see the standards that they pertain to—it's all written out explicitly in the current curriculum." In many cases, although the curricula and lesson plans may include instruction directed toward meeting specific VPA standards, teaching artists' time with students may be too limited for students to reach many standards. Commenting on this dilemma, one arts organization director said, "The [state] visual and performing arts standards are written as if you have all the students all the time, all year. But really, we

don't see the students all that much. On paper and in our curriculum guide, the standards look great. They are laid out as if they are sequential. But [in the school when we implement the program], they are not. It is impossible [to meet standards] given the time we are there." A district arts coordinator concurred, describing the goals of teaching artists vis-a-vis arts teachers: "They provide an alternative view to a main concept. That's how I see their work... They do wonderful, wonderful work, but our people [district arts teachers] are the ones there who are making sure that the kids are using that vocabulary and are achieving proficiency in a content area."

**Partner organizations sometimes integrated their arts curriculum with other core-subject curricula to support students' educational experience.**

In addition to aligning their instruction with the VPA standards, partner organizations also sometimes integrated their arts programming with other core subject curriculum to support students' learning of additional academic concepts. In some cases, alignment of arts instruction with other subject areas was done intentionally and explicitly. In one site, for example, arts instruction was aligned with the language arts curriculum for English learners in a particular grade level. In this case, teaching artists used theatre to build children's English language skills. This integration fulfilled the arts organization's mission to "provide comprehensive literacy instruction and engaging adaptations of theatrical masterpieces to disadvantaged youth and minority communities," while simultaneously capitalizing on instructional time made available by teaching skills related to both the visual and performing arts and English language development standards. A principal at this site explained that the integration of the theatre arts program into the English language development piece of her Reading First grant supported her school's participation in the partnership: "I massage it in a little bit so that it works in there. The program was brought to the school under the umbrella of working with our ELL students."

In other cases, arts organizations had to adjust their goals to align with district or school academic priorities. For example, in order to work with the district and deliver arts instruction, one arts organization was required to integrate their arts education program with the district's adopted English-language arts curriculum. This integration allowed the district to fit arts education into a school day that was already filled with mandatory instructional minutes in reading and math. According to a participating principal, "We don't want to let go of instructional minutes in English language arts and math, so we needed the art and drama to fit into the standards the teachers were already working on." A participating teacher described the goals of this partnership as "seeing how we can tie our standards in with the two arts that we've selected—the performing and visual arts—and how to expose our children to arts at the elementary level, always incorporating our standards—a broad spectrum, the English language arts standards, the math standards, and the visual and performing arts standards—and to try to coordinate the three of them together." The director of the partnership for the arts organization explained, "We have an obligation to meet the visual and performing arts standards as well as attempt to relate that experience in the classroom with something in the [district's adopted curriculum]." In another site, the arts organization provided theatre-based instruction that was designed to meet the requirements of specific curricular units such as the annual California History Day project, which is a performance-based academic endeavor that supports the history-social science and English-language arts curriculum.

For other partnerships, alignment of arts instruction with other non-visual and performing arts standards occurred more informally. For example, teaching artists and teachers may communicate informally about upcoming classroom units and teaching artists may incorporate core subject concepts into their planned arts lessons. During one case study site visit, we observed a teaching artist incorporating history and social studies concepts into her drawing lesson on lines and shading by asking children to create sketches of California missions. An artist at another case study site shared that she "specifically looks for linkages between drama and language arts, history, and social studies" and connects her lessons wherever possible, often asking teachers to tell her what stories the children are reading or what vocabulary words they are learning.

### **Partnerships typically provided arts instruction in select disciplines to select grade levels.**

Few partnerships served an entire school population. Because serving all students in a school is costly and time consuming, partnership services often were focused on a single grade level or set of classrooms. In no cases, however, were students selected to participate based on student auditions or individual ability to rent instruments or purchase materials. Rather, decisions regarding the selection of students to be served were based on available district or school budgets, arts organization capacity, or teacher interest. In one of the longstanding partnerships examined, partnership services varied in terms of the number of classrooms served and length of programming provided from year to year depending on available funding, with the most interested teachers receiving services each year. In other cases, partnership services were provided to select groups of students by design. That is, some partnership services were specifically developed for students of certain ages or to increase students' abilities in particular academic areas (e.g., English language skills). In one case study site, teachers selected partner arts programs from a menu of services offered by arts organizations included in the district's approved network. In this way, only those students in classrooms with teachers who initiated participation were exposed to partnership-provided arts instruction.

Just as schools may not have had adequate funds or instructional time available to allow arts organizations to serve all students, some partner arts organizations may not have had the organizational capacity to serve all students in a school. Likewise, because most partner organizations focused on one arts discipline, they tended to provide instruction in one discipline only; while some integrated two disciplines (e.g., music and theatre), no partnerships provided instruction in all four content areas. Because in most cases only select grade levels or classrooms were served, and because arts partners often provided instruction in only one or two disciplines, the arts instruction provided through the partnerships did not fill the gap between what schools and district tend to provide and what is required to meet the state arts standards.

### **TEACHER CAPACITY BUILDING**

In California, the success of districts, schools, and arts organizations in the delivery of standards-based arts instruction to students relies heavily on the capacity of classroom teachers. In the initial *An Unfinished Canvas* study, we found that a key barrier to arts instruction at the elementary level is the limited arts-related knowledge and skill of classroom teachers. Although partnering with arts organizations with well-prepared teaching artist staff is one means to provide quality arts instruction to students, developing the knowledge and skills of classroom teachers may leave schools with institutionalized in-school expertise after partnership activities end. To support teachers and ensure a lasting impact, some partnerships included work with teachers that aimed to help them develop the expertise necessary to incorporate the arts into daily instruction.

### **Partnerships ranged from those providing no formal teacher professional development opportunities to those that explicitly emphasized a teacher capacity-building component.**

The degree to which partnerships focused on teacher capacity building varied substantially across the sites. Since many of the partnerships were transactional in nature—that is, school districts contracted with arts organizations primarily to provide arts instruction to students—building classroom teachers' capacity to provide arts instruction was often not a focus. As a result, in many sites, teachers' learning came mostly from informal observations of teaching artists in their classrooms. In all cases, teachers were required to remain in the classroom while teaching artists conducted their lessons. The teachers' presence often resulted in some informal crossover of skills. In one site, the district administrator felt that simple exposure to teaching artists in the classroom made his teachers "more well-rounded." In another case, when asked about the benefits of the partnership, a teacher said, "I think my teaching is positively influenced. I am willing to take more risks now. I have learned songs and activities from the artists that I

use when she is not there.” Another teacher offered, “Everything the artists do is new learning for me—the movement, blocking, language, how kids move on the stage, how to make scripts more interesting.” Some teachers also shared that they learn from their partner artists during informal conversations before and after arts classes.

In a few partnerships, professional development for classroom teachers was an explicit objective. In these cases, however, emphasis on building the capacity of teachers varied, often depending on arts organizations’, districts’, and schools’ priorities. Some arts organizations, for example, focused the majority of their resources on developing teachers’ capacity to effectively integrate the arts into their classrooms, while others provided a few hours of professional development to acquaint teachers with basic arts concepts and standards for a particular discipline. Still other partnerships offered teacher-artist collaborative planning meetings to review lesson plans or students’ learning, or they provided teachers with print resources for incorporating the arts in the classroom on their own.

In two sites with long-standing partnerships, arts organizations offered professional development opportunities for teachers in the past, but no longer do so. In both cases, arts organization directors and teachers alike noted that teachers’ low attendance was the main reason for discontinuing these services.

In one site, the school district required all arts organizations that wished to partner with schools as part of the district’s arts network to include an explicit teacher professional development component in their service delivery package. Still, emphasis on teacher capacity building varied, even within this network (see Exhibit 3).

**Exhibit 3**  
**Formal Teacher Professional Development,**  
**Among Selected Partnerships Providing Professional Development to LAUSD Teachers**

Museum of Contemporary Art / Los Angeles	Los Angeles Opera / Los Angeles	California Dance Institute / Los Angeles
Up to to 37 hours, including a 4-day summer institute and two half day pre-visit workshops.	One 2.5- hour in-service.	Three 1 hour sessions.

Source: Arts Community Partnership Network 2008–09 Profiles.

Some arts organization within this network offered teachers intensive, multiday professional development workshops (see profile of MOCA’s work with teachers), while other arts organizations in the network provided teachers with a short orientation to their program and arts content or with companion binders including auxiliary information. A district arts teacher at this site explained that requiring each arts organization to include a teacher capacity-building component served as a method “to help the teachers be a part of the arts education process, however they can do it. [It is the district’s way of] helping them to find ways that they can take what we do and translate it into their classroom, to take an art concept and find ways to use that as a vehicle [to teach additional concepts].”

### Example of an Arts Organization that Emphasizes Teacher Professional Development

The Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art's Contemporary Art Start program works to increase teacher comfort, literacy, and sense of ownership of the material before teachers visit the museum with their students. Teachers participate in up to 37 hours of professional development, including a 4-day Summer Institute of contemporary art immersion, focused on teaching and creating connections with other subject areas and visiting artists' studios; two half-day Pre-Visit Workshops in the fall and spring during which teachers preview the exhibition, discuss curricular connections, and learn a hands-on related art activity; and collaborative planning meetings. Teachers can earn two salary points for participation, and museum membership is offered as an additional incentive for participating teachers and principals.

In another site, grant funding for the project required an explicit focus on teacher professional development. In this case, the overarching goal of the grant was to increase English learners' achievement through teacher professional development in, and expanded provision of, standards-based theatre arts instruction. The partnership was designed to couple the in-class theatre arts instruction (provided by teaching artists) with intensive professional development workshops for classroom teachers. The goal was to build the capacity of a team of teacher leaders in participating schools who would then train additional teachers at their school sites and thus build schoolwide capacity to provide standards-based and integrated arts instruction in their classrooms.

#### **Motivating teachers to participate in professional development required principal leadership and efforts to offset the cost of participation.**

For those partnerships that included professional development opportunities or attempted to build teachers' capacity to deliver arts instruction, teacher engagement varied widely. Although one arts partner included in our study noted having waiting lists for their professional development offerings, most failed to garner a sufficient level of teacher participation to effectively or continuously offer a capacity-building component. The partnership with a waiting list for professional development opportunities offered training during the summer—when teachers may have more time than during the school year—and provided official verification of training that positively affected their salaries, a strong motivator. Some teachers were not able to participate in partnership-sponsored professional development because their schools were unable to find or pay for substitute coverage to release teachers during the school day, and they were unable to pay teachers for time they may spend outside of the school day (i.e., after school, on weekends, or in the summer). Reflecting on the challenges of implementing intensive professional development, one county-level administrator noted that providing this piece of the partnership's services was “an ongoing problem” and that “there is no way to ensure that teachers will show up for professional development days.” She offered that to increase teacher participation in capacity-building opportunities “we need to pay stipends in addition to release time.”

Another partnership that involved substantial professional development for teachers also included work with school and district leaders, as a leader of an arts organization explained, “to help them understand how the arts are vehicles for accomplishing their goals.” This focus on developing the capacity of school and district leaders helps to ensure teacher participation. However, as the principal of a partner school described, motivating teachers to participate is still a challenge. She reported that the teachers who participated initially were “teachers who were interested, volunteered, and wanted to grow in their own professional development.” She planned to require additional teachers to participate in the subsequent trainings, but noted that while “a lot of them know it's good, they don't want to spend the time.”

**Teacher participation in capacity building for arts education varied widely due to multiple factors, including conflicting school and district priorities and lack of time.**

We observed several factors that negatively affected teachers' engagement and participation in capacity building for arts education. These included dependence on teaching artists, lack of interest and motivation, and conflicting school and district priorities.

The arts partnerships and the resulting reliance of schools and teachers on external providers for arts education may partly explain low levels of participation in professional development. Ironically, it seems that in some cases, the better or more thorough the arts organization services are, the more comfortable teachers are with leaving all the arts instruction to artists alone, and the less motivated they are to invest in professional development to learn to provide arts instruction. For example, staff at one arts organization acknowledged, "Teachers really depend on us for arts education. Lots of them don't have the knowledge, and even those who do don't take the time because we're doing it for them." Similarly, one principal stated that she does not expect her teachers to change their instruction since the arts organization's partnering staff is well-equipped and paid to provide those services. Another principal illustrated the tension around teacher professional development in her comments. She said, "I'm not necessarily in favor of having the teachers have the skill set. Classroom teachers either love art, or they don't. If they don't, then their class won't get it from someone who has the right skill set. I think when it comes to a community artist, they're the right people to teach the children." She then went on to say that she believes in integrated arts instruction, provided by classroom teachers: "I do believe in that. If there's a coach or someone to help them get to that point. If there's a structure where people can provide that training to classroom teachers, but the teachers who aren't comfortable with that won't implement the good ideas. They may need the extra support. I'm okay with that if there's the right structures in place and the right staff development out there."

Personal interest and motivation also played a part in teachers' investment in arts-related professional development, both formal and informal. Across sites, teaching artists reported a range of teacher involvement in informal capacity building—where teachers learn by personal participation in and observation of teaching artists' work with students—from teachers who are highly engaged and involved to those who were described as reticent. Some teachers participated in arts instruction with students or helped teaching artists direct small-group work, while other teachers did not participate at all and instead used the time as unofficial 'preparation' time for their other lessons. Interviewed teachers and teaching artists across case study sites suggested that participation in informal capacity building in the classroom, as well as formal professional development opportunities, is hindered by teachers' lack of comfort or interest in particular arts disciplines. Some teachers shared that they were initially uncomfortable practicing theatre or dance skills with their students as this was something they had not done previously. A district administrator at one site reported that the professional development opportunities seem more successful with some art disciplines than others, offering that classroom teachers are often more comfortable with visual arts than with dance, for example. One teacher shared that generally those teachers who are interested in building their arts knowledge and skill are "open-minded types that can handle the mess, lack of structure, and moving things around." In another site, a teacher reflected on her own inhibitions as a barrier to participation in professional development opportunities. She shared that although there used to be a formal teacher professional development component of the partnership at her school, she was glad that it was discontinued because even though "it was beneficial, I was uncomfortable [doing the activities]."

Another barrier to teachers' participation in professional development was a lack of time due to competing school and district priorities. Teachers often lacked time for the professional development and instructional planning necessary to deliver quality arts instruction. A principal at one site noted that because her school was in a Reading First district and because of other grants the school had, teachers were already required to participate in a substantial amount of professional development and were stretched thin. Teachers shared that they have many responsibilities including lesson planning and

grading, and that they often do not have sufficient time to participate in additional trainings. A district administrator in another site discussed how, in light of increased accountability pressures in reading and math, adding requirements for participation in arts training was often “asking too much” of teachers. A district administrator in another site echoed this challenge stating, “When you look at the emphasis on results—teachers are required to do everything now,... you just cannot put one more thing on the teachers’ plates. They cannot meet these standards, too. It’s just another thing that they have to do.”

The difficulties of motivating teachers to participate in professional development were exemplified by the grant-funded partnership described earlier that was designed to train a cadre of teachers who would then share their knowledge with colleagues at their school sites. Because of staff turnover at the organization overseeing the grant and a variety of other factors, the professional development component of this partnership was not immediately implemented when the partnership began, and subsequent communication about the professional development component was not effective. When the professional development component came to the forefront of the partnership work, during the second of the project’s 3 years, the county-level administrator explained that teachers were “overwhelmed by it,” whereas before they were “happy to participate.” She clarified that teachers were more willing to participate when the partnership appeared to be an artists-in-the-classroom program that did not demand additional teacher time for capacity building outside of the school day. In fact, some schools and teachers who initially agreed to participate in this program discontinued their participation after learning about the additional capacity-building requirements. Most participating teachers interviewed agreed that delivery of arts instruction to students in their classrooms was more appealing than were the requirements for participation in professional development workshops or sharing their learning with colleagues.



## FUNDING

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Our initial *An Unfinished Canvas* report detailed the reality of competing demands for limited education funding and documented the effects of instability in state funds for schools in general and arts education in particular. We also reported that many districts respond to constrained resources by raising funds from private sources to support arts education. Likewise, districts look to partnerships with arts organizations as a means of providing arts education. However, funding for partnership work is affected by similar resource constraints. Like arts education at the elementary level in general, districts rarely spend general education funds on arts partnerships. Instead, partnerships often rely on private sources of funds, which puts them in a vulnerable position and raises questions about sustainability.

### **Nearly all partnerships relied on private sources of funding.**

Each of the six case study sites relied, in some part, on grants, private contributions, and/or in-kind support to maintain their arts education partnerships, and very few partnerships were backed by significant contributions from districts' general funds. Sources of funding ranged from community-based education foundations and parcel taxes to state and federal grants and contributions from city government to in-kind contributions from arts organizations that are supported by private foundations, corporations, and individual donors. In most cases, partnerships were supported by piecing together resources from multiple sources. Overall, this reliance on "soft" funding placed partnerships in a precarious position with respect to sustainability.

At one end of the spectrum, a site relied entirely on a one-time federal grant to support their partnership work. As of spring 2008, education administrators at this site had no specific plans for how to continue the arts education work after grant funding ended. At other sites, grants from businesses and private foundations supported partnership work. In one case, an arts organization director explained that he and his staff are continuously writing grants, ranging from amounts as small as \$500 from local businesses to much larger sums from more established foundations that support the arts. While grants always play some part in funding his organization's work with schools, the level of instruction provided to students depends entirely on their success in grant writing year to year.

One site, where leaders thought proactively about a sustainable funding strategy, employed a plan delineating funding contributions from the arts organization, school district, and participating schools in which financial responsibility for the program slowly shifts from the arts organization to the district and schools over a 4-year period. This strategy appeared to be working, with the district providing increasing levels of funding each year, supplemented by schools' contributing increasing amounts from their discretionary funds. At the time of our site visit, the district had committed funding for at least one additional year of the partnership. Although the partnership had no concrete plans for funding after the additional year, district staff stated that they planned to reach out to the community for additional funding.

In the competition for limited resources, districts rarely decided to spend general funds on arts partnerships. A district business officer at one site explicitly stated that he did not consider general funds to be a viable source of support for partnership services: "We're doing every thing we can now with our general funds and are scraping to cover special education. There isn't much money left to put into enrichment programs." Likewise, a district superintendent at another site shared that he could not see using district funds to support the partnership. Although he shared his personal belief in the ability of arts education to strengthen students' learning, he stated that "that's just not how the [district's] money is going to be spent," and furthermore, it is "unlikely that the district would have participated [in the partnership] were it to have caused the district to incur any direct costs." This superintendent's comment

raises questions about district buy-in when participating in a partnership that does not require cofunding. In another site, in which an arts partner shared that they could afford to provide their services for free (thanks to their own successful fundraising), a leader at the arts organization explained:

We have found that when you give it away totally for free, the administration has no respect for it, and we have a much harder time ... if they feel that they're paying for it ... it strangely enough raises the importance in the minds of a lot of administrators who otherwise would discount it.

While general funds are typically viewed as a more stable source of funds, in one of our case study sites where general funds had historically supported partnership work, arts education and partnerships in particular were still subject to budget cuts. During our site visit in spring 2008, a district leader noted that the school board had always supported funding for the arts: "Even though superintendents came and went and would propose reductions, they were always reversed by the Board." Nonetheless, the district recently (January 2009) proposed suspending the arts partnership program because of a spending freeze related to expected cuts in state funds.

### **Distributed funding can help sustain a partnership.**

Those partnerships backed by multiple and varied funding partners appeared to be more stable than those dependent on one or a very few funding sources. For example, the partnership that relied entirely on federal grant money will most likely be discontinued at the end of the grant period. In contrast, the most longstanding partnerships included in our study had more complex and pooled funding sources. Over the course of its 28-year history, one partnership had received funds from a variety of players including city government, a parent-led local education foundation, the arts organization, the district (via a local community parcel tax), and participating schools. In interviews, representatives from many of these organizations noted that although the specific percentage of funding provided by each partner may change from year to year, overall funding was fairly stable. Historically, in any given year, if one partner is unable to contribute at the expected level, the other funders have always been able to cover remaining costs. A leader at the arts organization explained: "Some years the district has fallen short, so we have plugged in a little more to keep it balanced. Each of the partners has adjusted a little through the years to maintain stability. Also, parents have a say and a stake, and they have saved our program a couple times throughout the years." In this case, parents originally financed the arts program through a newly developed and parent-run education foundation and later spurred larger community and public support for the program via a parcel tax that currently funds much of the district contribution to the partnership.

Likewise, both distributed funding sources and flexibility among partners helped another partnership to exist throughout the years. At this site, district and arts organization administrators shared that partnership services were modified each year (typically affecting the reach of the program in terms of number of students served and amount of instruction provided) to reflect available funding. Over the years, funding for this partnership's work was pooled across multiple sources including district general funds, school categorical funds, parent fundraising, local business contributions, California Arts Council grants, and time volunteered by teaching artists. According to the district superintendent, "We have done everything under the sun to keep this program, even with funding cuts. In the past we have paid as much as \$15,000 [to the arts organization for their services]. Right now, with funding cuts we're down to paying \$5,000." He explained how the district and the arts organization negotiate the partnership activities based on available resources, "Each year, I sit down with [the arts organization director] to work out the hours that they are willing to give us for the X amount of dollars that I have that year." This site is interesting in that it demonstrates that even though the district has not specifically earmarked continuing funds for the arts partnership, community support and organizational commitment have maintained the work for more than 20 years.

**Delivering arts instruction through partnerships may cost districts less, often at the expense of arts organizations and artists.**

Relying on teaching artists to provide arts instruction often costs districts far less than would be incurred if districts and schools were to employ their own arts education staff and arts teachers. In most cases, the combination of wages and benefits paid to teaching artists who provide services through partnerships appeared to be much lower than the wages and benefit costs of credentialed teachers. Teaching artists often worked part-time, causing them to be paid based on an hourly basis that often does not include paid time for preparation or employee benefits such as health insurance, sick leave, or paid time off. In other cases, teaching artists were salaried employees (of arts organizations) with full benefits. In these cases, the cost to the school can be higher, or the arts organization relies on external funds to offset the cost of the partnership. For example, in one case, an established arts organization charged schools just \$1,000 for a program that costs \$15,000 to deliver.

Arts organizations noted that they often have difficulty finding and retaining qualified staff due to low compensation and challenging working conditions (e.g., the need to travel among schools and poorly equipped facilities). While the compensation arrangements and working conditions varied across our case study sites, in nearly all cases, teaching artists traveled to more than one school site and made do with subpar facilities. For example, one teaching artist described how she worked at five schools each week, spending 2 hours a day at each one. She was paid by the hour for her work, a total of 10 hours a week. While she spent 45 minutes with the students during each visit, she was paid for an hour to allow time for set up and clean up and some travel. The set up and clean up was particularly time-consuming. As she explained, “The biggest part of my day is setting up and taking down the room, and the kids don’t get to play as much as they would like because they’re helping with the set up and take down.” She added, “It would be nice if there was a music room.”



# ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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While the California visual and performing arts standards identify expected competencies, compliance with the standards is not mandatory, nor are expectations for assessing student progress toward standards clearly defined. In our initial *An Unfinished Canvas* report, we described accountability practices in the arts as uneven. We found that where accountability mechanisms exist, they are rarely based on assessments of student learning in the arts. In fact, student assessment in the arts tends to be based on participation and effort rather than performance or progress. Our examination of arts partnerships yielded similar findings. In this study, we found that assessment of student learning in the arts is limited. Instead, the emphasis of assessment tended to be on group performances and exhibitions as well as perceptions of satisfaction with the program.

## **Few partnerships involved systematic assessment of student learning in the arts.**

Given the overall lack of accountability for the provision of arts instruction, combined with the fact that philosophies concerning the appropriateness of assessing arts learning are diverse, finding that few partnerships in our study systematically assessed student learning in the arts did not come as a surprise. School and arts organization administrators, teachers, and teaching artists alike often cited culminating performances as useful methods of assessing student learning in music, theatre, and dance, while exhibits were mentioned as a means to measure students' learning in the visual arts. For example, the director of an arts organization at one site said that the end of year performance was a "big factor in how we assess student learning in the arts." However, analytic tools that would support assessment of progress towards learning goals, such as rubrics defining levels of performance, were rarely if ever in use.

In cases where there was an attempt to systematically assess student learning, the assessment typically focused on one aspect of student learning. For example, in one site, students who participated in theatre classes were given pre- and posttests to assess their ability to write a play; however, student progress was measured against English-language arts, rather than visual and performing arts, standards. In another site, fourth- and fifth-grade students who participated in music classes took a "paper and pencil" test of their knowledge related to the visual and performing arts standards.

In another site, where the arts organization was interested in assessing student learning in the arts, the directors asked their teaching artists to assess the learning of the class as a whole, for specific units. Assessment information is not shared with participating schools; instead it is used by the arts organization as a self-assessment of their curriculum and teaching artists. A director at this arts organization shared her philosophy regarding assessment of arts learning, stating, "I reject the concept that a student can fill in a bubble to assess their musical knowledge. Those types of assessment just take such a small piece [of what a student knows]. I want to assess if they can match pitch, keep a beat, [make an] emotional connection." Like a teacher at another site, she was not aware of existing tools that measure student learning in the arts. With regard to assessment, the teacher said, "There is no standardized assessment out there to help us see the progress that a student has made through [this arts education program]." A district administrator at yet another case study site also commented on the philosophical and methodological difficulties of assessing student learning in the arts, noting that "there are so many variables involved in whether or not a kid is succeeding that it's going to make it very difficult." One difficulty is that arts instruction is typically not sequential. For example, in a reference to benchmarking student progress towards the standards in the absence of a sequential course of study, a district administrator noted: "If a 10th grader shows up at a high school who has never had dance education and suddenly wants to take a dance class, should they be assessed with the kindergarten standards or the 10th-grade standards?"

Although most districts participating in our study did include space on report cards for the arts, none provided a grade based on progress toward visual and performing arts standards. In most cases, grades were based on participation and effort, and teachers evaluated students without seeking input from teaching artists. For example, at one site, the district report card includes a line for a combined grade in music, arts, and physical education that is completed by students' classroom teachers and is not based on any consultation with the teaching artists—who, at this site, provide instruction in two arts disciplines. Similarly, in another site, students are given only a “check or minus,” based on participation, for their visual and performing arts grade. When asked about the assessment process, a teacher at this site added, “I have yet to give anyone a minus.”

**Evaluation of partnership services was often based on inputs (e.g., attendance, satisfaction) rather than outcomes (e.g., arts learning).**

As described, most partnerships lacked formal student assessment components. We did not observe any systematic attempts to collect or analyze outcome data related to student learning in the arts. Correspondingly, most district and school administrators interviewed shared that they did not require formal documentation of partnership outcomes based on student learning. In fact, most districts and schools viewed public performances and exhibitions of student work as satisfactory assessment of partnership services. We heard many comments similar to those shared by a teaching artist at one site: “The thing about music and [visual] art is that you can assess the strength of the program by looking at the final product.” Not even the sites that included a formal external evaluation of partnership services based evaluations of partnership success on student learning outcomes. An arts organization administrator at one of these sites explained: “Very little data [documenting students' arts learning] has been collected and no evidence correlating the partnership with school outcomes has been documented.” He went on to say that, although the external evaluation does count contacts the teaching artists have with students and teachers, “there is no documentation as to what was learned through the visits.”

The most common approach to evaluation based partnership success on contract fulfillment, including documentation of promised inputs—such as the number of students served and hours spent in classrooms—and production of final performances or exhibitions. When asked how the district evaluates partnership successes in delivering arts education, one district administrator echoed the responses of many: “We certainly can speak to the outcome of the [arts] program in terms of how many students served, how much money spent, frequency of attendance—stuff like that, we can certainly do. But if you're asking me if we are able to talk about whether or not kids learned better, well, do we do that in the arts at all?”

Measures of participants' satisfaction with the program were also common. For example, most arts organizations requested that partner school principals and participating teachers and artists complete end-of-program evaluation forms that “tell us about their experience with the kids and what they feel went on.” An arts organization at one site surveyed parents about their perceptions of their child's arts education experience. Another means of assessing satisfaction was through the marketplace. A district administrator at a site that maintains a list of approved arts organizations for schools to partner with shared that they can evaluate the success of a particular arts organization by whether schools continue to partner with them in subsequent years. Given that this model is essentially market-driven, where schools' demand for arts education drives which arts organizations are selected from the approved menu, the results of competition and the frequency of requests for particular arts organizations' services is considered a strong indicator of success.

## LESSONS LEARNED

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In our previous *An Unfinished Canvas* reports, we documented the uneven arts capacity of California schools and districts (see Woodworth, et al., 2007, 2009). To understand the potential for arts partnerships to increase schools' capacity and facilitate the delivery of arts instruction to California students, we set out to learn about the nature of partnerships between school districts and arts organizations. After examining six diverse sites, we found that when schools and districts partner with arts organizations, they create opportunities for students to engage in a range of arts learning experiences. We also learned that these partnerships can be a strong supplement to district programs, but do not substitute for foundational programs when it comes to the provision of sequential standards-based arts instruction. Likewise, we observed that while the case study partnerships may have lasting effects on participating students, their long-term impact on the capacity of school and districts to provide arts instruction is likely to be limited.

### **Partnerships can enable student access to a wider variety of rich and authentic arts learning experiences than the school or district can offer on its own.**

In the context of constrained education funding and competing demands on limited instructional time, partnerships among districts, schools, and arts organizations provide students with access to arts instruction they would not otherwise receive. Through partnerships, students at each of our case study sites had opportunities to work with professional teaching artists—masters in fields as varied as opera, ballet, physical theatre, and contemporary art—and to experience art-making first hand. Teaching artists share a passion for their art form while maintaining a commitment to their partnership work. Partnerships give students the benefit of exposure to authentic arts learning experiences, often reflecting diverse cultural traditions, and an opportunity for applied study. In this sense, arts partnerships provide students with rich educational experiences.

### **Partnerships can supplement, but do not substitute for, foundational arts education programs offered by schools and districts.**

The *VPA Framework* advises that partnerships among school districts, schools, and arts organizations are most successful when they are embedded within a comprehensive, articulated program of arts education. We found that most partnerships were designed to supplement foundational, district-run arts programs, even in cases where district-run programs were virtually nonexistent. None of the partner organizations provided arts instruction in all four visual and performing arts disciplines, nor did they provide instruction to the entire student body in a sequential manner. Even in the case of the long-standing partnership providing sequential standard-based arts instruction in two disciplines, district and arts-organization staff commented that that such a program ideally would be housed within the district and schools. Across case study sites, however, district and school administrators reported that foundational arts programs, designed to provide sequential standards-based instruction in all four arts disciplines, are not currently feasible given the fiscal climate. As a result, rather than supplementing foundational programs, some schools and districts are relying on outside teaching artists as the sole or primary providers of arts instruction.

### **While partnerships can have a lasting impact on participating students, this approach may not build long-term district or school capacity for arts instruction.**

Although some arts partnerships included a commitment to building classroom teacher capacity to deliver arts instruction, this was not the intended outcome of many partnerships. In sites where partnerships did not include intensive professional development for teachers, most districts and schools were not developing their own capacity to provide arts instruction. Even in the case study sites where there was an

explicit focus on professional development for classroom teachers, the participants faced substantial challenges in their efforts to deliver arts instruction. Ultimately, maximizing and sustaining the benefits of partnership work involves countering constraining factors, such as accountability pressures and insufficient time during the school day, competing demands for teachers' time and attention, and lack of support for teachers in their efforts to provide arts instruction.

**Although each partnership has its unique strengths and challenges, themes emerged that suggest common steps that arts organizations, schools, and districts might take to improve the quality and stability of their partnerships.**

Each with its own strengths, the six case study sites revealed some specific practices that others engaged in partnership work may benefit from considering.

- ◆ **Assess school and district needs.** To ensure that arts organizations have a clear understanding of how the services they provide fit in with the goals of schools and districts, educators at arts organizations should work with school and district staff to conduct a needs assessment as part of their program development and periodic review process. Some schools and districts may have done this work and developed an arts education plan, but many have not. Assessing school and district needs will help ensure that arts organizations provide services that benefit students and strategically supplement school and district arts instruction. An assessment might also include an examination of teacher professional development needs—potentially identifying services that lead to a longer term impact through building teacher capacity.
- ◆ **Establish clear learning goals and assess progress towards those goals.** School and district educators and arts providers should work together to ensure that instructional programs have clear learning goals. Based on these learning goals, educators involved in partnerships should explore ways to appropriately and meaningfully assess partnership outcomes. Because assessment of student learning in the arts is an area for growth and development—and because assessment and data collection can be costly and time consuming—local educators should share knowledge, including assessment tools and strategies. Candidates to lead this work and establish such knowledge sharing networks include local arts commissions, alliances of arts organizations, and county offices of education. A first step might involve examining existing assessment and evaluation practices and gathering assessment tools.
- ◆ **Explore embedded professional development for classroom teachers.** The fact that teachers remain in the classroom with teaching artists creates an opportunity for professional development that should be cultivated by the partners. While expecting teaching artists to play the role of coach may not be appropriate or practical in all contexts, it is an approach to professional development that may prove more workable than professional development models based on teacher participation in traditional workshops outside of the school day. By finding ways to increase teacher professional development, partnerships may ensure a more lasting impact on school and district capacity.
- ◆ **Share responsibility for funding.** Although diversifying the sources of funds does not immunize partnerships from increasingly tight budgets for education and the arts, sharing responsibility for funding can help expand the sense of mutual ownership and, therefore, ensure more allies—and options—when budgets are being cut.

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