

Creativity in education is serious business

By Garry T. Eagles and Chris Hartley

POSTED: 12/15/16, 11:25 PM PST | UPDATED: ON 12/15/2016

In high school, many of us were probably more concerned with sports or our social lives, but today, students are already focused on careers and their future. In order to employ students from Humboldt, in Humboldt, we need to ensure that they are ready for the creative economy that awaits them here.

According to findings from the California Department of Education's Arts Ed Data Project, students in rural areas are less likely to participate in the arts than their peers in other locales. In addition, students in schools that are eligible for Title I funding or with high percentages of free and reduced lunch recipients may also have fewer opportunities to participate in arts education. Despite this, we can say that Humboldt County schools are setting an example for exemplary arts education all schools in the state would be proud to duplicate. The Humboldt County Office of Education, Northern Humboldt Union High School District (NHUHSD) and others are working hard to reverse these statistics by ensuring more students in our county have access to high quality arts experiences.

Creativity in education is serious business. The creative economy is one of the largest business sectors in California and projected to grow faster than any other sector. Here in Humboldt, where entrepreneurship, innovation, and authenticity reign, the workforce needs to be ready to face the need for high-skilled 21st century jobs. Creativity is one of our country's foremost assets and is undeniably important to our region's economic growth. It consists of creative professions and enterprises that take powerful, original ideas and transforms them into practical and well-designed goods, often inspiring us with their artistry. Our students will be ready.

Thanks to several model programs, including the NHUHSD Arcata Arts Institute and STEAM education in our Innovation Design Institute, our students will be well prepared for the future. Through a robust creative arts education, they will develop the 21st - Century skills, knowledge and practical experience employers are looking for. Our students become optimists and makers, experimenters and learners, while empathizing and iterating, looking for inspiration in unexpected places, examining their cultural and historical contexts. Our students learn how to work as part of a team to solve problems, build relationships, and complete complex projects.

We are proud of our work here, and this month, we will be sharing our success in Career Technical Education and the Visual and Performing Arts, including the implementation of Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs), at a statewide summit focusing on our programs and model curriculum.

This region-wide conference, presented by the California Alliance for Arts Education as part of their ARTS NOW CA campaign, will provide an opportunity to share with others in this region our strategies and resources for bringing creative education to rural school districts.

School leaders, teachers, and community partners in Northern Humboldt USD and other local districts will share how we have increased opportunities for creative and relevant learning experiences through collaboration, partnerships within Humboldt's creative economy and programs that engage local artists and arts organizations in classrooms.

Educators in Humboldt County have built a foundation for creative education and are committed to preparing our students to play roles in our creative economy. Many of our high school graduates are thriving in successful creative careers as architects, designers, marketing professionals, curators and educators at companies like Adobe, Apple, Carbon Five, JC Penney and many more locally. Many give back to our programs via mentoring, consulting and more.

We are Humboldt-proud and looking forward to sharing our advancements with our colleagues throughout the region.

To get more involved, go to <http://www.artsed411.org/artsnow>.

Garry T. Eagles, Ph.D., is superintendent of the Humboldt County Office of Education. Chris Hartley, Ed.D, is superintendent of Northern Humboldt Union High School District.