



## Arts education gets a boost

*O.C. groups come together to make sure visual and performing arts programs remain part of the curriculum in public schools.*



Albert Einstein began learning the violin at an early age. Steven Spielberg played the clarinet in his high school band. Rahm Emanuel studied ballet throughout his college years.

All have stated that studying the arts played a significant role in their lives, but budget cuts and a lack of funding in school districts often leave visual and performing arts programs struggling to remain a part of the curriculum in public schools.

The Orange County Department of Education and the nonprofit organization Arts Orange County believe in the importance of arts in the curriculum and have taken large strides toward funding, protecting and preserving arts education countywide.

The watchword “articulation” was introduced to the school districts in 2006 through Arts Advantage, a Department of Education program focused solely on supporting arts education. Articulation is the process in which Orange County arts teachers from all grade levels come together three to five times a year to make informed decisions about improving and implementing a sequential arts curriculum for all students.

“With articulation, every ninth-grade music teacher will know what specific areas of music their incoming freshmen are educated in,” said Pat Wayne, director of programs and education at Arts Orange County.

By implementing articulation among arts teachers, students are assured an equal opportunity to learn and experience the arts using the same curriculum standards across the district.

The Irvine, Santa Ana and Saddleback Valley unified school districts have enthusiastically embraced articulation. Newport-Mesa Unified School District and Anaheim Union High School District are beginning their work this year.

Accomplishing articulation takes a lot of work from the participating arts teachers. “Teachers have been working on assessment, creating rubrics, gathering and collecting evidence, analyzing the data, and then planning instruction based on the data or evidence,” said Roxanna Owings, Santa Ana Unified’s director of curriculum and special projects.

Local arts alliances to support arts education curriculum and programs have also been developed through Arts Advantage. These alliances include parents, students, teachers and other members of the public who have volunteered to develop and fund art programs. Organizations that have paired up with the alliances to provide grants to Orange County school districts include the Boeing Co. and California Alliance for Arts Education.

“The first year of this articulation, we received a \$50,000 grant for the arts,” Owings said. “That funding ended last year. We are in the final months of our \$10,000 grant from Boeing.”

The articulation method also integrates community programs that will support and strengthen arts classes. Santa Ana High School dance instructor Barbara Noel, for example, had instructors and students from Santa Ana College come out to lecture and demonstrate for her dancers.

The Saddleback Valley Unified School District arts programs received grants from Arts Advantage, Boeing and the Orange County Arts Education Collaborative Fund. These funds have helped provide substitutes to allow teachers to participate in articulation, as well as provided stipends for teachers to support articulation in their school.

“We believe (the articulation) approach will result in creative school communities with highly motivated and achieving students,” said Kathy Dick, Saddleback Valley assistant superintendent. “In addition, we believe a systematic, substantive and sequential visual and performing arts curriculum develops ways of thinking, questioning, expressing and learning that complement learning in other core subjects.”

The Anaheim Union High School District has also received support and funds from Arts Advantage alliance groups and the Arts Education Collaborative Fund, which has assisted in several countywide arts programs.

“(Anaheim Union) has received two of these grants, one for professional development and the other to support the purchase of some of the equipment needed to upgrade the Digital Arts Career Technical Education Pathway at Cypress High School,” said Susan Stocks, the district’s director of special programs.

The grant will also support a director’s workshop at the Chance Theater in Anaheim in March, all in hopes of strengthening articulation in the district.

“(At this workshop), teachers will hone their skills in the areas of character development, textual interpretation, stage pictures and blocking, creating rehearsal schedules, set and costume design, and the mechanics of direction,” Stocks said.

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