

SUBJECT: Open Letter and 2014-2017 Local Control Accountability Plan Proposal
TO: Board and Administration of Santa Barbara Unified School District
FROM: Participants in the Santa Barbara County Alliance for Arts Education
DATE: May 27, 2014

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Board and Administration,

On May 9, 2014 over 80 leaders from across our community came together in an unprecedented gathering to advance arts in education in our public schools. The meeting was co-hosted by the Santa Barbara County Arts Commission, the Santa Barbara Education Foundation, The Arts Fund, and the Santa Barbara Bowl Foundation. This was the inaugural meeting of what we are here to introduce tonight -- the new Santa Barbara County Alliance for Arts Education. We are parents, educators, community leaders, non-profits, business people, foundations, public servants and entrepreneurs who are committed to the District's vision statement of excellence in public education- "every child, every chance, every day." We stand here tonight united for a common goal.

We believe that to provide consistent quality, access and equity in public education in Santa Barbara, we must look carefully at how a comprehensive arts education curriculum can be designed and delivered. How can we work together to guarantee what all of our children need and deserve, "every art, at every grade, in every school"?

The SBUSD made an excellent start in 2011-2012 by commissioning a thorough study of instructional arts offerings at all grade levels. The study confirmed that there was a lot to be proud of in the District when it came to arts education. There were models of in-school instruction, after-school enrichment, and some exceptional opportunities for exposure to world-class arts and culture programs. This array of arts offerings was made possible by a combination of District resources, parent fundraising, local philanthropy, non-profit generosity, and volunteerism.

However, the District study also made it clear there was no consistency between grade levels, schools and art forms. The study revealed a pattern of great disparity in arts education offerings for our youngest students running contrary to our shared vision of consistent quality, access and equity across the District. Two years later, the inequities and gaps at the elementary grades persist and are also present at the junior and senior high school levels. Something has to change.

We have studied the current draft of the District's Local Control Accountability Plan for 2014-2017 (LCAP). We note the District's awareness of deficiencies in current arts education offerings and applaud the generally stated goals of "increased student enrollment and participation in the visual and performing arts." We also note that the District plans to complete the Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) Strategic Plan in year one, but that no expenditures are allocated for same, nor are additional goals stated for subsequent years. As members of the community who are invested in the success of the arts in schools, we would like to see the District take a more proactive position on these items.

In order to accelerate the District's plans and to gain immediate benefits for current students, we respectfully propose the addition of a dedicated VAPA coordinator in "Section 3: Actions, Services and Expenditures." Our group, the Santa Barbara County Alliance for Arts Education, stands ready to engage with the District to ensure that access to community resources and multi-year funding is available for this essential position.

Now is the time to make bold choices. The District's long-term arts education vision is established. The LCAP provides a unique three year opportunity to make real progress toward its arts education goals. Your commitment to move this forward and our commitment to offer supplemental funding removes many of the obstacles we have faced in the past. Let's create a new VAPA Coordinator position now. And let's make good on our promise of more and better arts education opportunities for every child in Santa Barbara.

Thank you.