

## The Five R's: Artists, parents unite!

Roberto M. Robledorrobledo@thecalifornian.com 9:18 a.m. PST February 6, 2015

The dark ages of music and the arts in the public schools are coming to an end — if you want to paint a new scenario.

That is because a renaissance in revenue is taking place. Unless you've been holed up in a dungeon somewhere, you know that the state has handed the fiscal reins to the local school board.

It is unprecedented. The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) is totally driven by local priorities. Yes, local people are deciding how to spend millions of dollars in state education money. You want music, band, art, theater integrated into your neighborhood school curriculum? Here is the chance. Just come up with a brilliant plan that makes sense to learning in the 21st century.

Salinas schools with sizable enrollments of underserved children are in line for the bigger chunk of the new funding. And they will be closely monitored to see how they use their Local Control Accountability Plan, or LCAPs in improving learning and academic outcomes of students.

Used well, the arts can be part of the process. Imagine: no more cakewalks or candy sales or other time-consuming fundraisers to fund an art or music teacher. They're financed by the LCFF. The fundraiser can go toward other fun stuff.

I sat in on a webinar Thursday meant to inform and empower parents, artists and their ilk about the LCAP and the arts.

Of about 80 people tuned in, 60 percent were parents and others interested in learning how to use the arts in the schools. Though the webinar was big on background and short on strategy, anyone listening should have come away with an understanding of the new LCAP and the opportunity to inject it with the arts.

Begin with this question: How can the arts be a strategy for accomplishing the district's LCAP goals? Then review the LCAP, gather supporters, meet with school leaders, impress the school board with a plan and join your district LCAP committee.

No time to waste. The next LCAP update/changes for all districts is due in June.

Online: California Alliance for Arts Education: <http://www.artsed411.org/>

**Heads up, teachers:** Regular readers of The Californian saw this week how teachers at Boronda Meadows School are inspiring their students to read — by doing something dumb or daring. Andrea Tucci ate a bowl's worth of broccoli, her least favorite vegetable, after her class reached a new reading level. The story of her raw courage would have stayed at school had a colleague — Ana Burlison — not contacted us to share the fun. (Ana, call us when that male teacher dons a tutu.) Word to the wise: Teachers are using silly and serious but mostly inventive ways to engage kids in learning. So pick up the phone, educators, call us and share your creativity with the rest of Salinas.

**Why Salinas should care:** It's a local fact: Only one-third of third-graders in Monterey County read at grade level. Reading proficiency can fade from there unless it is a priority. Here's why: According to the One World Literacy Foundation, two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of fourth grade will end up in jail or on welfare. More than 70 percent of the inmates in the U.S. cannot read above a fourth-grade level. Making strong readers of our children can keep them in school, or at least raise their self esteem.

**Fountain of ideas:** Ran into Alfred Diaz-Infante in downtown Salinas on Tuesday. He's the CEO of CHISPA housing, and community advocate extraordinaire. He was on his way to yet another board meeting where he volunteers his expertise, vision for Salinas and community caring. Among others, he sits on the directing board of YoSal, Youth Orchestra of Salinas. Right there on the sidewalk, Alfred ticked off a list of community and cultural story ideas that the local media could tackle and use to broaden their reach — constructively — into the hearts and minds of Salinas. Thank you, sir. Stay tuned.

The Five R's — Readin', Ritin', 'Rithmetic, Roberto Robledo — is a weekly column by The Salinas Californian's education and youth affairs reporter. Follow him on Twitter @robledo\_salnews #salinas.