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## Bringing Arts Education Home – San Diego Style

POSTED BY [VICTORIA SAUNDERS](#) ON JUNE - 10 - 2011

Just as I'm preparing for a convention session about how attendees can create their own local arts education advocacy networks based on a model we've been using in San Diego and throughout California, I get word from a key district decision maker about their need for some information that may help them take some critical steps to avoid big cuts to the visual and performing arts department budget.



Victoria Plettner-Saunders

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Tweet

This is a milestone for our newly formed San Diego Alliance for Arts Education. We are being recognized by district decision makers for our ability to help them make more informed decisions to keep arts education in San Diego schools. While we're not out of the woods yet, I certainly feel a victory for the role that the Alliance's carefully planned advocacy is playing.

But this spring they finally reached the point of despair, in which decisions about the arts are being made in relation to cuts in school nurses, police, and programs for pregnant students and English Language Learners to name only a few. Instead of demanding our piece of the pie and ignoring the needs of other equally as important programs, we've simply said, we understand that cuts have to be made, but let's talk about how they are made so that the department has control over the implementation of its own curriculum.

We're fortunate to have a supportive school board, but we believe support goes both ways.

The Alliance's number one governing value has always been about creating relationships with decision makers and the second is "seek first to understand, then be understood." With those philosophies we've engaged the board and administration in conversations throughout the year, not just at the 11th hour; we've held receptions to welcome new school board members and new top administration; we've gotten behind school board candidates who support arts education; and we phone banked for a parcel tax measure that would have added additional funds to the District's budget. All of those efforts in this year alone have put us where we are today.

Another year gone and we're still battling the budget, but this time we're on the same battlefield as

the board, side by side. Once more unto the breach dear friends, once more!

For more information about how you can create an advocacy network in your community, hear more of the story and learn a few tricks of the trade, come to the Convention's ["Bringing Arts Education Home: Creating Local Action through Local Dialogue"](#) session or check out a new feature for 2011 – [Convention On-Demand](#).