

## Humboldt County schools just below state arts education average



According to California Arts Education Data Project information, just 35 percent of Humboldt County's elementary, middle and high school students are enrolled in art classes, a bit below the state average of 38 percent. Shaun Walker — The Times-Standard FILE

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The California Arts Education Data Project compiled arts education statistics from the California Department of Education and posted those figures online, which show Humboldt County schools are below the state average for access to arts education.

All the data is available for public viewing at [createca.dreamhosters.com/artsed-dataproject/](http://createca.dreamhosters.com/artsed-dataproject/).

In Humboldt County, 35 percent of students in elementary, middle and high schools are enrolled in arts classes while that figure is 38 percent at the state level.

Humboldt County Office of Education visual and performing arts learning specialist Stacy Young said she hopes the availability of this data spurs a movement for more art classes in local schools.

“Yeah we’re below the average, but we have such a different situation in our rural county,” she said.

Some local music instructors teach classes at multiple schools, Young said.

The standard is for students to get taught either dance, drama, music or visual arts — known in the project as the Required 4 — weekly. But only 4 percent of local students have access to this level of arts learning compared with 26 percent across the state.

Research shows that kids that study arts do better in their other studies, Young said.

“It’s really engaging and for some students, it’s the only reason they go to school,” she said. “It helps students study what makes them human.”

Young isn’t the only one that wants this data to be used to increase arts instruction access in California.

“When we’ve released statewide reports or similar reports in other states it usually leads to changes ... and great participation in the arts,” Quadrant Research CEO Bob Morrison said.

Quadrant Research was a research partner in the project. They gathered the data from the California Department of Education, analyzed it and helped get it online in a format anyone can navigate and understand.

“People will know what arts education looks like in their district,” Morrison said. “It’s amazing what happens when you free information to the public.”

Create California chair elect Craig Cheslog said his organization was a cosponsor of the project. He said making this information available will help address challenges each individual county or district faces.

“To address challenges, you have to know where things stand,” Cheslog said.

Some of the local challenges might be addressed and identified at Jan. 6 event in the Sequoia Conference Center in Eureka when the California Arts Alliance and the California Department of Education comes to Humboldt County to discuss how arts education can be increased in this rural area through business and community partners, Young said.

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