

Chula Vista Elementary School District

Each Child is an Individual of Great Worth

NATIONAL ARTS CONFERENCE TO SPOTLIGHT CHULA VISTA, SAN DIEGO SCHOOLS

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The Chula Vista Elementary School District will be among the featured districts at the first Arts Education Learning Exchange, presented by the California Alliance for Arts Education.

The conference of arts educators and arts organizations takes place March 17-18 and will bring a national focus to CVESD and the San Diego Unified School District. Schools in each district will be featured as a model of excellence in site visitations for conference attendees.

“School leaders recognize that instruction needs to be about more than preparation for standardized tests,” said Dalouge Smith, president and chief executive officer of the San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory (SDYS). “They know arts education is an essential part of a well-rounded curriculum. Chula Vista is setting the example for California and the country on how to equitably restore arts education across an entire school system using the new California Local Control Funding Formula.”

In June 2015, CVESD’s Board of Education committed \$15 million over three years to hire teachers in the Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA). The district designed a framework that uses sequential arts instruction for every student to free classroom teachers for collaboration and planning time. The arts push is part of the District’s Local Control and Accountability Plan for the 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 school years.



This decision was the culmination of a five-year collaboration with the youth symphony designed to rebuild access to music and arts education after a 15-year absence in the district. What started in 2010 as the “Community Opus Project” — after-school music program for 65 third-grade students — evolved into one of the largest and most rapid restorations of arts education in the nation. More than 70 VAPA teachers have been hired since June.

Community Opus drew its inspiration from the *El Sistema* movement in music education and social change that began in Venezuela's most impoverished neighborhoods, and grew into a national youth orchestra program. The program promotes social change by inspiring young people—and their families—through music education. The Arts Exchange will feature a pre-conference workshop on March 16 about El Sistema, where attendees can view Community Opus' Spring Camp in action and interact with teaching artists, parents and students.

SDYS assisted CVESD with that rebuilding of its arts education infrastructure, as well as managing the cultural changes associated with returning arts education to campuses. Smith noted the program builds more than music education.

"It is about music and opportunity," Smith said.

Renowned classical music conductor Gustavo Dudamel grew up in the *El Sistema* program and is now director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. "Music in the neighborhood can have a powerful effect not only on musical development, but on the learning of children and the bringing together of community," Smith added.

That has certainly been true in Chula Vista, where schools experienced a resurgence in attendance at school events. In turn, that has led to more family engagement. "When students perform—mother, father, sister, brother and the *abuelitos* are in the audience," said CVESD Superintendent Francisco Escobedo, Ed.D. "*Families* are on our campus, and, for us, that's the opening act. Their attendance is our window into drawing them into our schools, and letting them know how important they are to our academic programs, our school committees, our mission in educating the whole child."

Escobedo said that CVESD's restoration of the arts can be replicated throughout California and positively impact learning outcomes.

"As part of our initiative to infuse 21st Century skills into our learning outcomes, the arts are a perfect medium to enhance collaboration, creativity, and critical-thinking skills throughout our system," Escobedo said.