

# THE PORTERVILLE Recorder



## Burton School District plans for more arts programs

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### Mentor teacher forms strategic arts committee



#### Oak Grove Elementary's Drama Club

Hector Marquez (top) with Oak Grove Elementary's Drama Club, which he says has been "an integral part of the arts at Burton School District."

When 64 students at Oak Grove Elementary tried-out for the 30 positions available in the Drama Club, mentor teacher Hector Marquez knew something had to be done to incorporate more arts programs at Burton School District.

"It is programs like this Drama Club that have convinced me that we need to offer more arts opportunities to accommodate all the arts for all kids," Marquez said.

During a Creativity at the Core convention this past summer, Marquez said he met a director from the California Alliance for Arts Education, who suggested developing a strategic arts plan.

Marquez said the district has partnered with the California Alliance for Arts Education to come up with a strategic plan to bring more arts options for students.

Marquez gathered a committee of administrators, teachers, community members and students for training sessions Monday and Tuesday to come up with a strategic arts plan.

The California Alliance for Arts Education sent trainer Peggy Burt to help the committee generate focus areas and steps of action to bring its vision of more arts into fruition, Marquez said.

Marquez said the committee developed six focus areas for their strategic arts plan. The first focus area has to do with initiating a cultural shift within the district so it embraces the fine arts and sees the arts as core subjects in education.

The next focus area is developing comprehensive curriculum that integrates the arts into curricular and extra-curricular programs, Marquez said, so that it's during school and after school.

Marquez added the third focus area is developing a network of teachers and mentors who are advocates, as well as practitioners and specialists, who bring their talent into the district.

Another focus area is allowing teachers to grow by providing professional development and other tools for teachers, he said. He said another focus is finding or creating spaces for students to be creative by themselves or with others.

"We also really feel that we need to seek out those relationships with different community members who can provide us with a gallery space or a stage for kids to perform on," Marquez said.

The last focus area, which Marquez said is probably the most important focus area, is creating sustainable funding. He said without funding, there can be no resources for students and teachers.

After the training, Marquez said the teachers gave a lot of positive feedback and were energized and excited about integrating more arts into the curricular day.

"We're just feeling empowered that our voices are being heard and that the dream of having arts programs for students who might not be able to afford them is a complete reality within our district," Marquez said.

Marquez describes the strategic plan as a grassroots effort and intends to present the plan to Superintendent Sharon Kamberg and the school board in hopes of getting them behind the initiative.

Burton would be the first district in Tulare County to pursue a strategic arts plan, Marquez said, and at its completion would be one of the few districts in the Central Valley to have one.

Marquez and the strategic arts committee now has the task of writing, editing and presenting their plan to the superintendent and school board to hopefully get the strategic arts plan going in the next three-five years, Marquez said.

Marquez said he can't express how thrilled he is to work on this plan for getting more arts programs into the district. He said he sees this plan as a seed that can grow into a creative culture in the district and into the community.

"Research tells us that the arts are so critical and so beneficial to kids," Marquez said. "Not only for academic purposes, but also for social and emotional purposes. I believe that through this plan, we can really revolutionize the way we do education in Porterville."

To learn more about the strategic arts plan committee, or to get involved, email Marquez at [hector.marquez@burtonschools.org](mailto:hector.marquez@burtonschools.org).