



# January 2024 CS Advisory Board Meeting

January 10, 2024 5:00 – 6:30 pm

Creative Sonoma

141 Stony Circle Suite 110

Santa Rosa, CA, 95401

# Meeting Book - January 2024 CS Advisory Board Meeting

## Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Agenda
  - a. Agenda Jan 10 for Posting.pdf - 3
3. Approval of November 2023 Minutes
  - a. Minutes - November 2023.pdf - 4
4. Public Comments
5. Administrative Updates  
New Director introduction
6. Committee Reports | Critical Updates
  - a. Nominating Committee
7. Fund Development  
Staff will present status of National Endowment for the Arts grant.
8. -ART BREAK-
9. Program Reports
  - a. Public Art
  - b. Grants Programs and Professional Development
  - c. Arts Education
  - d. Creative Catalysts
10. Board Updates  
Board members will be invited to offer any news and updates.
11. New Business
12. Written Reports
  - a. Jan 2024 Written Report.pdf - 8
13. Press Clips
  - a. Combined Press Clips.pdf - 10
14. Adjourn



**CREATIVE SONOMA ADVISORY BOARD**  
**January 10, 2024: 5:00 – 6:30 pm**  
**Creative Sonoma Office**  
**141 Stony Circle, #110, Santa Rosa**

**Agenda**

*We welcome public comment regarding any subject not on the agenda during the time identified for “Public Comment”. All matters requiring a response will be forwarded to staff. Presentations made under “Public Comment” are normally restricted to three (3) minutes in length per meeting unless the Chair specifically authorizes additional time.*

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the agenda
3. Approval of the minutes from the November 2023 meeting
4. Public Comments (if any)
5. Administrative Updates
  - a. New Director Introduction
6. Fund Development. Staff will present status of National Endowment for the Arts grant.
7. Committee Reports/Critical Updates
  - a. Nominating Committee

**– Art Break –**

8. Program Reports. Staff will provide progress reports on the following areas:
  - a. Public Art
  - b. Grants Programs & Professional Development
  - c. Arts Education
  - d. Creative Catalysts
9. Board Updates. Board members will be invited to offer any news and updates.
10. New Business (if any).

**- ADJOURN -**

Open Meetings: Except as expressly authorized under the Brown Act, all meetings of Creative Sonoma are open to attendance by interested members of the public. Public Comment: Creative Sonoma invites comment from the public on issues under consideration and other issues worthy of consideration. Written comment is preferred in all cases, especially to suggest new issues. Comments should be provided to the Creative Sonoma office at least 10 days before the meeting in order to be distributed to Creative Sonoma Advisory Board Members with agenda materials. Oral comment on a Creative Sonoma agenda topic will be allowed during a 10-minute period at the beginning of the meeting.

Disabled Accommodation: To Request an Accommodation: If you have a disability and require a sign language interpreter, assistive listening device, material in an alternate format, or other accommodation to attend, please contact Samantha Kimpel at 707-565-6134 at least 72 hours prior to the meeting in order to facilitate arrangements for accommodation.

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**CREATIVE SONOMA ADVISORY BOARD**

**1 November 2023**

**Creative Sonoma**

**5:00 – 6:30 pm**

**Minutes**

Unifying Vision: Greater Consequence Through Excellence, Engagement, Equity

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>DISCUSSION NOTES</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<b>Attendance</b>	Present: Gia Baiocchi, O’Meara Cover, Amy Critchett, Erik Castro, Robert Mahar Absent: Alice Sutro, Victor Ferrer, Rani Goyal Staff: Bernadette Marko, Debbie Yarrow, Samantha Kimpel	
<b>Call to Order</b>	<b>Call to Order</b> O’Meara Cover welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 5:02pm.	
<b>Approval of Agenda</b>	<b>Approval of the Meeting Agenda</b> Cover asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was approved.	Motion: Erik Castro Second: Gia Baiocchi Vote: Unanimous
<b>Approval of Minutes</b>	<b>Approval of the September 2023 Minutes</b> Cover asked for a motion to approve the September 2023 minutes. The motion was approved.	Motion: Erik Castro Second: Gia Baiocchi Vote: Unanimous
<b>Public Comments</b>	<b>Public Comments</b> There were no public comments.	
<b>Administrative Updates</b>	<b>Creative Sonoma Director Search</b> Cover reported that a conditional job offer has been made to a candidate for the Creative Sonoma Director position. If accepted the new Director will start in approximately one month.	
<b>Fund Development</b>	Samantha Kimpel reported that we received official notice from the California Arts Council that Creative Sonoma has been awarded \$70,800. These funds will be used to pay for arts education salaries in Q1 of FY2023-24, as well as for programs and services.  We will know the status of a National Endowment for the Arts Grant in November 2023, unless there is a government shutdown. These funds would be used to	

	augment the Arts Impact Grant for Organizations grant.	
<b>Committee Reports/Critical Updates</b>	<p><b>Nominating Committee</b>          Gia Baiocchi reported that the Nominating Committee will meet as soon as the new Director is on board to review new candidates to open board seats. In the meantime, we will continue our efforts with the current candidates on the list. We are looking for candidates in every district except District 1 (Sonoma Valley).</p>	
<b>Program Reports</b>	<p><b>Public Art</b>          Kimpel reported that the Percent for Art Public Art Plan and Policy was slated for presentation to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) on September 19, 2023 but was ultimately not presented due to another board item’s lengthy discussion. The Plan will likely be brought back to the BOS in February 2024. Kristen Madsen has agreed to do the presentation or consult with the new Director on it. The policy will first undergo an Equity Impact Analysis review by the County’s Office of Equity, which will take 6-8 weeks. Ethan Brown talked with the Ad Hoc Committee members and they decided that the Committee did not need to meet again, and will likely disband in early December. In the meantime, we will be creating a one-sheet for the Supervisors that will cover key points of the Plan/Policy. We will also schedule one-on-one meetings with each Supervisor in January 2024.</p> <p>Amy Critchett mentioned that CODAworx is conducting a thorough study of the Impact of Public Art and suggested that we investigate that.</p> <p><b>Fire Memorial Update</b>          Kimpel reported that the Task Force met twice in October, once for a Trauma Informed Care training, and the second for their regular monthly meeting. The Task Force has selected their top five sites and these will be presented to the BOS in early 2024.</p>	
<b>Art Break</b>	Staff showed a video of the first Native American Poet Laureate Joy Harjo reciting one of her poems. Staff also shared the website of IllumiNative, a racial and social justice organization dedicated to increasing the visibility of Native peoples.	
<b>Program Reports cont...</b>	<p><b>Grants</b>          Kimpel reported that we received 48 applications for the Arts Impact Grant for Organizations, including several from first time applicants. Kimpel stated that</p>	

we are always looking for grant reviewers and need three for the Arts Impact Grant applications now, and a few more for the Arts and Cultural Equity Grant review in March of 2024. She asked the board to think about anyone they know that could serve as a grant application reviewer.

**Professional Development**

Kimpel reported that we have still have funds to spend down from the Hewlett Adaptation grant and we are using some of the funds for Professional Development. We've identified Sebastopol Center for the Arts and Raizes Collective as two organizations that will present a slate of Professional Development in collaboration with Creative Sonoma. Some of the workshops will be specific to that organization's audience and some will be for the general public, but all will be for individual artists.

We are contracting with Amy Kweskin of Intersection for the Arts to do a five-part training series with our community-based arts centers on topics such as financial stability, financial operating models and strategic planning. They will also receive some one-on-one coaching.

We are also issuing a grant to the Luther Burbank Center (LBC) so that they can offer stipends to both existing teaching artists to provide in-classroom mentoring, and to prospective teaching artists.

**Arts Education**

Debbie Yarrow reported that because of the funding from Prop 28 there is a need to increase the workforce of arts educators which is why we're partnering with the LBC to get more people trained as a teaching artist. Yarrow has been talking with the Dean of Arts and Humanities at Sonoma State University (SSU) about credentialing programs. SSU offers a Music or Art credential but not Theater or Dance. A think tank comprised of the AEA steering committee, SCOE representatives and SSU representatives will meet in late November to discuss.

There will be an Advocacy and Appreciation night on Saturday, November 4 at Santa Rosa Symphony. Fifteen local arts educators will each bring one of their

	<p>students and be recognized during the concert.</p> <p>We have a partnership with the LBC on the first ever Sonoma County Arts Educator Award. The LBC-funded award will provide funding to the Educator and to the classroom for supplies.</p> <p>Six districts have been awarded an Arts Education Framework Grant, four of which are \$8,000 planning grants (\$2,000 more than the original maximum grant award) and two of which are \$1,500 showcase grants. The increased grant amount will fund more co-facilitators to assist districts in creating an arts education plan.</p>	
<b>Creative Catalysts</b>	<p>Cover reported that the next Creative Catalysts meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 9<sup>th</sup> at The Watershed in Petaluma. We hope to reach and partner with dynamic businesses in the area to discuss how to get more creatives working. The group will be invited to walk to Foundry Wharf to attend the opening of Amy Critchett’s exhibition immediately afterwards.</p>	
<b>New Business</b>	<p>There was no new business.</p> <p>Before closing the meeting, staff acknowledged O’Meara Cover as the outgoing chair of the board and thanked her for her service.</p>	
<b>Meeting Adjourned</b>	<p>With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 6:28pm.</p>	<p>Motion: Gia Baiocchi Second: Erik Castro</p>
<b>Next Scheduled Meeting</b>	<p>Wednesday, January 10, 2024</p>	

**CREATIVE SONOMA ADVISORY BOARD MEETING  
WRITTEN UPDATES  
JANUARY 2024**

**ARTS EDUCATION**

**Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE)**

The new SCOE Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) Coordinator, Nzinga Woods, was featured in the December Arts Education Alliance (AEA) newsletter, and Creative Sonoma pushed out a survey from Nzinga to gather information from VAPA teachers. (There is currently no list of VAPA educators available for across the County.) Debbie has also been working with the new SCOE Director of VAPA, Kate Westrich, and UPK Coordinator, Ryan Kurada, to support arts education activity through SCOE. This is a first for SCOE to initiate in offering arts events and professional development.

**Workforce Development**

In late November, twenty-eight Sonoma State University (SSU) arts and education deans and faculty, North Coast School of Ed, SCOE, and AEA leaders met at SSU to discuss opportunities for partnerships. Results included meetings to discuss an SSU teaching artist certificate, and collaborations between SSU departments and community partners. A core group of representatives will continue meeting to keep these collaborations moving forward.

**Poetry Out Loud**

Creative support is being provided to high schools that are currently participating in this year's Poetry Out Loud program. A representative from each high school will go on the county finals on January 28, 2024 at 2pm on the campus of SSU. The county winner goes to state finals, leading to a national competition with substantial prizes. Creative Sonoma has an active role currently in promoting and supporting logistics of the final event.

**Community Gatherings**

The AEA Steering Committee is planning a Book Club e-meeting on April 9 to discuss the work "Your Brain on Art." The intent is to gather new and current members around collective understandings of the impact of the arts.

**An AEA Mixer** will be held at Mitote on Jan 24 with special guests from the North Coast School of Education to chat about credentialing options.

**GRANT MAKING**

**Arts and Cultural Equity Fellowship Grants**

Our consultant for this program, Kimzin Creative, has created a suite of professional development opportunities for the BIPOC and queer communities in Sonoma County, and we've integrated the ACE Fellows training into that framework. These include a virtual suite of professional development workshops from Oakland-based Zoolabs customized for the ACE Fellows, invitations to Kimzin Creative's Artist Assemblies for BIPOC + Queer artists, and one-on-one consulting at a professional development seminar in January at the Arlene Francis Center called "Get Your MONEY Right" that includes strategic and financial planning.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Upcoming Professional Development Projects

- **Teaching Artists:** We will be funding mentorships for two new teaching artists that participated in a LBC training; our funding will provide stipends for both the existing LBC teaching artists who are willing to mentor the new teaching artists by having them shadow/assist during in their residencies, and stipends for the new teaching artists that participate.
- **Arts Centers:** We have hired the trainer, Amy Kweskin of ArtSightful, for a six-session training for arts centers, and to also form a community of practice among them. We are currently recruiting arts centers and helping them to form their leadership teams that will attend the training. The focus will be on strategic planning, operational structure, and financial sustainability. This will take place during three months in late winter to early spring.

## Giant Steel Sculpture, Huru, Arrives Home In Petaluma

The mayor will be on hand for a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Huru's new long-term home at Petaluma River Park. Help celebrate!



Maggie Fusek, Patch Staff

Posted Thu, Oct 5, 2023 at 9:16 pm PT | Updated Fri, Oct 6, 2023 at 11:48 am PT



A crew completes the installation of the Huru sculpture the week of Oct. 1 at Petaluma River Park. (Photo by Michael Woolsey, courtesy of Petaluma River Park Foundation )



PETALUMA, CA — Petaluma's newest landmark is visible from U.S. Highway 101 and from the D Street drawbridge.

The 38-foot-tall sculpture, Huru, was made in Petaluma during the 1980s and returned home this week after being on exhibit around the country for several years.

A free public welcome event is planned from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 7, at Petaluma River Park to celebrate the homecoming of "Huru." The gargantuan, wind-powered steel sculpture towers above the skyline after it was installed this week at Petaluma River Park on a long-term loan.

As part of Saturday's ceremony, Petaluma Mayor Kevin McDonnell will officiate a ribbon cutting at 10:15 a.m. and will give remarks alongside Petaluma River Park Executive Director Seair Lorentz in honor of the sculpture's new home.

"This is our first piece of public art and it was no small feat," Lorentz said Thursday in an interview with Patch.

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Bringing the sculpture home was one of the early inspirations for turning 24 undeveloped acres of the McNear Peninsula into the Petaluma River Park, Lorentz told Patch.

When world-renowned sculptor Mark di Suvero was creating Huru during the 1980s in Petaluma, Lowell McKegney was his right-hand man. McKegney worked alongside di Suvero to complete the sculpture and in turn, di Suvero gifted it to McKegney.

Since Lowell McKegney's death in 2011, his wife has sought a more permanent home for the sculpture that most recently was on exhibit at Crissy Field in San Francisco, near the iconic Golden Gate Bridge.

Fast forward to this week, when a six-person team worked to install the monumental piece of art.

Funds for having it hauled to the park, assembled by professional welders, and erected with a 70-ton crane were donated entirely by community members, Lorentz said. **Grants from Creative Sonoma** and The National Endowment for the Arts also helped, she said.

**What To Know**

The McKegneys' daughter, Katy, will be on hand for Saturday's ceremony. Staff and volunteers will also be on hand to answer questions about Huru and the River Park.

Petaluma Arts Center is coordinating a children's craft for Saturday's family-friendly event.

Lorentz hopes community members take the time to attend and learn more about the Petaluma River Park Foundation's mission for the park which is to connect community, art and nature.

The foundation is a nonprofit organization that privately owns the park and is leading the planning, design and construction. The foundation has engaged the community in a co-creation process to design the new state-of-the-art waterfront park — sparking a sense of pride and ownership and building community at its deepest level, Lorentz said.

"Petaluma River Park aims to build a vibrant, welcoming park that fosters a love for nature, sparks creativity, and unifies the community for future generations," Lorentz said. "Huru's new home helps support that mission by providing Sonoma County and Petaluma with world-class art set in nature and easily accessible to all Sonoma County residents."

### **Where To Park**

Parking for the event is at the parking lot for Steamer Landing Park off East D Street and Copeland Street. It is about a half-mile walk from the parking lot to the event; therefore, organizers suggest guests arrive early. Golf carts will be available to help transport guests to the event and then back to their cars afterward.

# \$9.5 million in funding to support arts education in Sonoma County is on its way

Prop 28 was overwhelmingly passed by California voters last year. The funding will support the arts in school, both creating new programs and financially supporting staffing needs. | 3



SLIDE 1 OF 4  
Art teacher Linus Lancaster demonstrates the use of a pottery wheel during a ceramics class at Healdsburg High School in Healdsburg, Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2023. (Christopher Chung / The Press Democrat)

[ADRIANA GUTIERREZ](#)

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT  
November 8, 2023, 5:18PM

Students around Sonoma County with hopes to tap dance, star in a musical or try their hand at the visual arts may finally have the opportunity to do so next school year, when major state funding for arts education becomes available in districts across the county.

California education code has long required public schools to provide a diverse and robust art education, but given tight district budgets, schools have a history of cutting out sections of their art programs to stay afloat.

This will soon be rectified when \$9.5 million is divided between Sonoma County’s 40 districts next year through Prop 28, which will funnel 1% of the state’s public education budget directly into the arts.

The funding requires that districts must create entirely new programs, filling gaps in what has been lost over the years.

“We have strong visual arts and music programs at the junior high and high school, but there is currently no dance or theater, which is something that needs to be addressed,” said Linus Lancaster, who is leading the writing process for the in the Healdsburg Unified School District’s arts plan.

After Prop 28 was overwhelmingly passed by California voters last year, teachers and administrators with arts backgrounds like Lancaster began the task of putting together strategic plans.

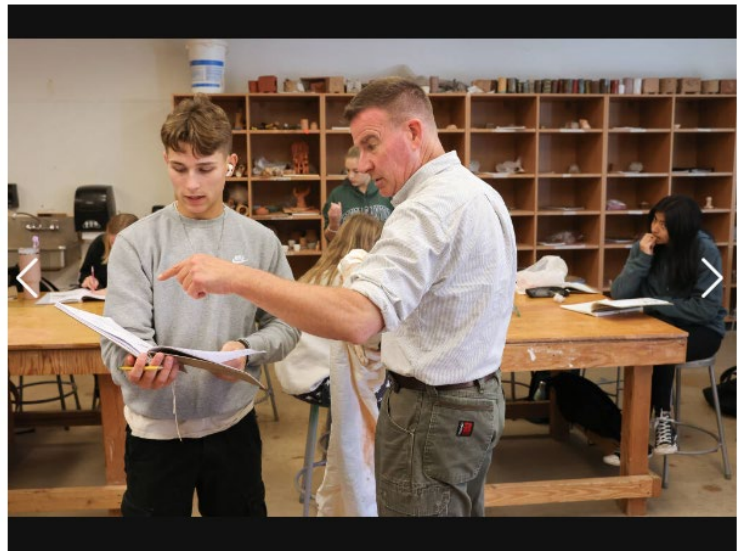
Healdsburg Unified is making strides with their plan, in part due to a planning grant provided by Creative Sonoma, a subset of the county’s economic board that is working to make sure Sonoma County schools are prepared for the incoming funding.

“We have 40 different school districts ... one size does not fit all,” said Debbie Yarrow, arts education manager at Creative Sonoma. “We pulled out a pretty simple template of the ideas and strategies so a school district can gather a leadership team, sit down and say: ‘what is in place (and) what are we missing?’”

It’s a huge undertaking to develop brand-new classes in just a few months, Yarrow said, which is why Creative Sonoma offers an \$8,000 planning grant to offer more support to district leadership that needs the extra support.

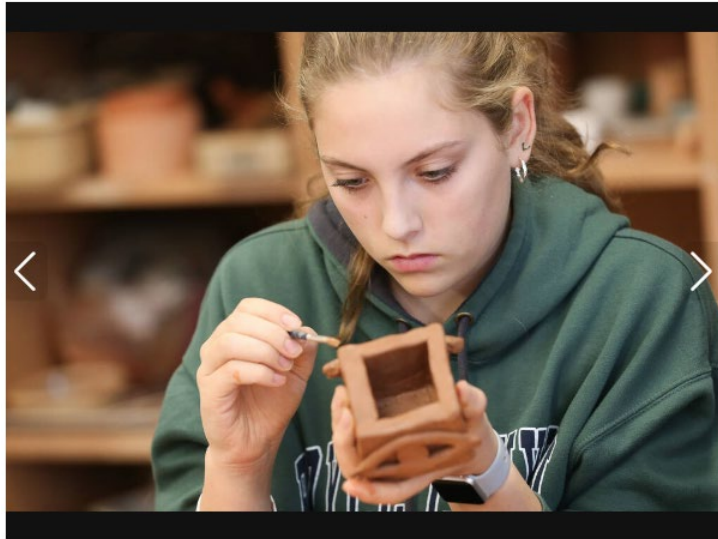
Thirteen schools have committed to finish a strategic arts plan by the end of the school year.

Yarrow urged the districts who have yet to begin planning to reach out to Creative Sonoma, which is still offering grants to help kick-start the process and financially boost teachers and faculty who spend additional time working on the project.



SLIDE 2 OF 4

Art teacher Linus Lancaster, right, checks a sketch by Wyatt Dugan during a ceramics class at Healdsburg High School in Healdsburg, Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2023. (Christopher Chung / The Press Democrat)



SLIDE 3 OF 4

Ashley Jenkins works on her slab piece during a ceramics class at Healdsburg High School in Healdsburg, Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2023. (Christopher Chung / The Press Democrat)

“I have always wished we had a more integrated, district wide arts program,” Lancaster said. “Creative Sonoma has already provided a lot of valuable assistance, and the grant will help ensure a more effective effort by providing release time for the writing group and more.”

In addition to creating opportunities for theater and dance classes at the secondary level, Lancaster hopes the funding can support a new credentialed art teacher for the district’s two elementary schools.

Currently, elementary students at the two Healdsburg Elementary campuses get two

hours per week rotating between music, visual arts and dance classes with visiting teachers.

Lancaster said they are hoping to hire a teacher with a wide range of expertise to offer more arts opportunities, but finding that teacher may be difficult.

“It’s not easy to find art teachers these days because the lack of jobs has been discouraging people from pursuing art credentials,” Lancaster said.

Amid a countywide teacher shortage — with teachers leaving because of low pay and teaching conditions — Prop 28 has required a significant amount of funding be used for staffing.



SLIDE 4 OF 4

Yanet Pacheco works on a base for her lamp during a ceramics class at Healdsburg High School in Healdsburg, Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2023. (Christopher Chung / The Press Democrat)

Schools must spend 80% of the money on teachers and aides who will keep these new programs afloat. The other 20% of funding is meant for training, supplies, materials and community partnerships.

“For artists in the community, teaching hasn’t been lucrative in the past,” Yarrow said. “All of a sudden, there’s a demand. So we’re looking at ways to help artists shift into (teaching) to supplement their income, and also share their art.”

Nzinga Woods, visual and performing arts coordinator at the Sonoma County Office of Education, said the county

office is working with Santa Rosa Junior College and Sonoma State University to create pathways for those studying art to become credentialed teachers.

She thinks much of the problem with schools who are lacking entire programs often stem from a staffing need, both in teachers applying in the arts and districts being able to support their salaries.

“I think we have a lot of artists out there, whether they are musicians, theater practitioners or dancers, who don’t know that they can be educators,” Woods said.

Elizabeth Robertson, the district arts coordinator for Windsor Unified School District, has plans to increase entry level arts courses at the high school level, creating more access for upperclassmen to try new courses.

Currently, Windsor’s high school students have options to take introductory arts courses in their first two years, but by the time they are juniors or seniors, the only arts classes available are advanced courses.

Adding more entry level classes for upperclassmen to enroll in will allow for students to not be boxed into pursuing only one form of art, Robertson said.

“For instance, the student could say they want to take visual arts in their freshman year but then decided they wanted to take a dance class in their junior year. They could do that,” Robertson said.

She hopes to increase access at Windsor Middle School as well.

“Our middle school is underserved,” Robertson said. “For the most part we only currently have a music program ... we have some digital media, we have a little bit of theater, but it’s not across the board and it's not available to every grade level.”

With a significant amount of the Prop 28 funding meant to support new teachers who will sustain an increase in courses, Robertson is confident that the district can both supplement the extra classes and allow for new, diverse courses.

“One example of a particular course could be looking at the function of arts in society, and how different cultures approach the arts and then having students explore their own backgrounds and creating personalized artwork,” Robertson said.

In her five years as an art teacher in Windsor, Robertson has seen the positive influence arts education has had on her students, and hopes there will be more reach once access is expanded.

“The arts are one way for students to process their personal emotions,” she said. “With social emotional learning, we focus on ‘talk to us, tell us what you’re thinking, tell us what you’re feeling ...’ With the arts we can show.”

“That's really powerful, especially not just for students who are native English speakers, but that's really powerful for students where they're multilingual learners and they're able to express their thoughts, ideas, independently of good developing language skills.”

Both she and Lancaster said they’ve had ideas for years on how to implement more options for their students to explore the arts, but Prop 28 is now the propeller to push Sonoma County districts toward rebuilding their arts departments.

“We hope it will help foster some degree of culture shift toward a more transdisciplinary, creative approach to education in the district,” Lancaster said. “Having dedicated resources and a support structure in place makes a big difference.”

*Report For America corps member Adriana Gutierrez covers education and child welfare issues for The Press Democrat. Reach her at [Adriana.Gutierrez@PressDemocrat.com](mailto:Adriana.Gutierrez@PressDemocrat.com)*



## Old Adobe School District receives \$8,000 Creative Sonoma grant

Money will help district to expand access to arts programs through master plan development. |



Kids at play at Loma Vista Immersion Academy, one of the Old Adobe District schools to benefit from a new arts grant announced this week. (Tyler W. Chartier photo)

### ARGUS-COURIER STAFF

November 10, 2023

A total of \$35,000 in arts grants have been awarded to six Sonoma County school districts, included Petaluma's Old Adobe.

The grants, distributed by **Creative Sonoma**, a program of the Sonoma County Economic Development Board, are intended to help the schools create a district-wide strategic arts plan.

"There is significant evidence indicating that an arts-rich education improves student outcomes," said Sonoma County Supervisor Chris Coursey, in a media release distributed last week. "These grants offer access to both funding and professional services to help school districts be intentional about incorporating arts into their student's curriculum and overall school experience."

Grantees receive \$8,000 to write up a customized arts plan with the help of a district leadership team and arts education consultants.

The plans will help the schools be prepared for the arts education funding that is coming in 2024, following passage of Proposition 28, passed by voters in 2022 to invest in arts and music education throughout the state.

## Sonoma Valley school board eyes plan to boost K-12 arts education by \$500,000 annually

“The plan recognizes the crucial role in overall student development and preparing students for diverse and creative career paths in the future,” Trustee John Kelly said. |



SLIDE 1 OF 6  
Sam Mishra works on a musical number during a rehearsal for a Video Arts 2 class in the TV studio at the Sonoma Valley High School on Broadway on Friday, Sept. 16, 2022. (Robbi Pengelly/Index-Tribune)

### [DANIEL JOHNSON](#)

INDEX-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

November 24, 2023, 8:55AM

The Sonoma Valley Unified School District is considering the implementation of an ambitious five-year plan that would enhance K-12 arts education largely through \$500,000 in annual state funding.

[Creative Bridges](#), a Sonoma Valley coalition of organizations dedicated to improving arts education for all K-12 youth, presented the [Strategic Arts Education Plan](#) at the district’s board of trustees meeting Nov. 9. The plan would utilize the “forever” annual

funding of \$500,000 that the district will receive from [Proposition 28](#), which California voters approved Nov. 8, 2022, to boost arts education in K-12 schools.

The plan’s goal is to provide every Sonoma Valley K-12 student with a vibrant, culturally relevant, sequential, standards-based visual and performing arts education. An emphasis would be placed on providing equal access to the arts for all students.

“We are encouraging the board and administration to begin soon to do their own district strategic planning process regarding this very challenging issue,” said Connie Schlelein, co-chair of Creative Bridges, who along with co-chair Cheryl Coldiron delivered the presentation. “Solving that will unlock the instructional class time challenges that the arts as well as many other subjects face for every child.”

Jeanette Rodriguez-Chien, superintendent of Sonoma Valley Unified School District, said the plan’s inclusive and collaborative approach allows for deeper buy-in and coherence.

“Creative Bridges has taken a collective impact approach to developing the strategic plan — meaning that instead of having one organization coordinate and develop a plan, they have brought together many organizations in Sonoma to do this work,” she said.

The more than 40 organizations represent an alliance of Sonoma Valley arts education advocates, including nonprofit organizations, community members, parents, students, school district teachers and administrators, and city and county government officials.

Celeste Winders, a member of the Sonoma Valley Unified School District Board of Trustees, said the large-scale collaboration distinguishes it from other plans to develop arts offerings in the district.

“For so long in Sonoma Valley, organizations have existed in narrow silos, making an organized, collaborative effort challenging,” she said. “This plan addresses that challenge head-on and brings together many arts organizations into an organized plan that delivers so many arts opportunities directly into the classrooms to ensure each and every student has equal access to these opportunities.”

Trustee Troy Knox added, “Prior to the development of this plan, the vibrant creativity of our artistic community was not yet reflective of our educational programming. If we are able to introduce the arts to students early on in their education, provide them with engaging arts experiences and instruction, and enable them to follow their artistic passions throughout their educational careers, can you imagine how much more enriched our community will be?”

The Strategic Arts Education Plan could consist of the 10 steps developed and suggested by Creative Bridges and Sonoma Valley Unified School District and funded by [Creative Sonoma](#), a nonprofit organization that provides programs and services to enhance creativity in Sonoma County.

The first step is to develop a sequential, culturally relevant TK-12 California Visual & Performing Arts standards-based curriculum for all students. This would consist of seven elements:

- Provide equity in VAPA instruction for all TK-12 students in the visual and performing arts.
- Design TK-12 VAPA scope and sequence for all arts disciplines, starting with elementary to secondary school.
- Align VAPA courses with California VAPA standards-based curriculum.
- Develop, pilot and implement TK-12 benchmarks and assessments.
- Align VAPA standards with the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning competencies to provide creative expression and healthy self-exploration to guide the curricular and lesson design.
- Integrate VAPA curriculum with other core subjects to strengthen comprehensive education for all K-8 children and in electives for student in grades 8-12.
- Community art providers align programs with VAPA standards.

“We hope that through the implementation of the strategic arts plan, we provide a robust arts program for all our students,” Chien said. “We would love to see our band, dance and performing arts program expand; we want to see credentialed arts teachers providing instruction at the elementary grades and build a pathway for students to grow their skills; and we want our students to have internship opportunities and supports so that they may enter careers in the arts if they so choose.

“We ultimately want to see our students have fun and create.”

Trustee John Kelly said the plan represents a significant effort by the school district and Creative Bridges to enhance arts education.

“The plan recognizes the crucial role in overall student development and preparing students for diverse and creative career paths in the future,” he said. “The collaborative and comprehensive approach of the plan reflects an understanding that arts education is not just an enrichment activity, but a fundamental component of a well-rounded education.”

Anne Ching, president of the district’s board, added, “We know from the research that the arts benefits brain development, improves critical thinking and develops skills for problem-solving. It also sparks joy for learning and is a critical tool for social-emotional healing because students have another channel for self-expression.

“I believe that investment in the arts has the potential to mitigate chronic absenteeism and help students recover academically from the pandemic.”

She said implementing the Strategic Arts Education Plan would require a major reform of the master schedule, though.

“We don’t have enough time in the school day to offer consistent music and arts classes,” Ching said.

The plan is scheduled to be presented to the school board for possible approval at its meeting Dec. 14.

Reach the reporter, Dan Johnson, at [daniel.johnson@sonomanews.com](mailto:daniel.johnson@sonomanews.com).

### **Strategic Arts Education Plan**

Creative Bridges and Sonoma Valley Unified School District provided a draft suggesting that the Strategic Arts Education Plan take the following steps in implementing the five-year Strategic Arts Education Plan.

1. Develop a sequential, culturally relevant TK-12 California visual and performing arts (VAPA) standards-based curriculum for all students.
2. Recruit, hire, support and retain credentialed VAPA specialized K-12 teaching staff.
3. Hire a VAPA district leader, such as a VAPA Teacher on Special Assignment to implement the Strategic Arts Education Plan.
4. Develop the VAPA team, representing all arts disciplines and grade levels, to assist the VAPA leader in implementing the Strategic Arts Education Plan, including, when appropriate, community partners.
5. Develop and implement a continuing education program for VAPA staff and elementary educators, guided by the Strategic Visual and Performing Arts Plan.
6. Improve VAPA rooms and facilities so that they are high-quality, safe and up to date, with comprehensive equipment and storage at every K-12 school site.
7. Achieve student equity in arts education through master schedule reform.
8. Implement a data collection system, including elements of “Portrait of a Graduate,” to measure the effects of the visual and performing arts instruction.
9. Expand partnership involvement and advocacy with parents and community arts education leaders by creating a hub of community arts education advocates.
10. Provide multitiered sustainable funding for the district.



## Nominate the 'Arts Educator of the Year'

Posted on December 8, 2023 by Sonoma Valley Sun



The inaugural Sonoma County Arts Educator of the Year Award recognizes significant contributions to arts education.

This new award seeks to honor professional arts educators working with the K-12 population over an extended period of time including, but not limited to, arts and classroom teachers who teach visual art, music, drama, dance, or multimedia arts.

Candidates must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Demonstrated Leadership
- Commitment to Equity
- Arts Education Champion
- Mentorship

The award recipient will receive a \$500 honoraria and a \$500 gift card to a local arts store for classroom supplies. **This award is presented by Luther Burbank Center for the Arts and Creative Sonoma.**

Deadline for **nominations** is January 12, 2024.

*Related: Sonoma Valley School District endorses **expanded arts curriculum**.*

## Sonoma County arts educator of the year application open to recognize mentorship, commitment to equity

The recipient of the Arts Educator of the Year Award will receive a \$500 honorarium and a \$500 gift card to a local arts store for classroom supplies. |



SLIDE 1 OF 3

Music instructor Andrew Deveny helps Irvin Cruz, 11, find the fingering for a D chord in a beginning guitar class in the Roseland Music Academy after-school program at Roseland elementary school, Monday Jan. 31, 2022. (John Burgess / The Press Democrat file)

### [ADRIANA GUTIERREZ](#)

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

January 4, 2024, 12:21PM

Across Sonoma County, K-12 students are discovering their passions in the arts, through music, dance, drama and more. At the front of the classroom, teachers encourage creative expression, provide mentorship and broaden their students' understanding of arts culture.

For the first time ever, two local organizations have created an Arts Educator of the Year Award to recognize those teachers.

The Luther Burbank Center for the Arts has partnered with **Creative Sonoma**, a county agency that promotes funding for local arts programs and educators.

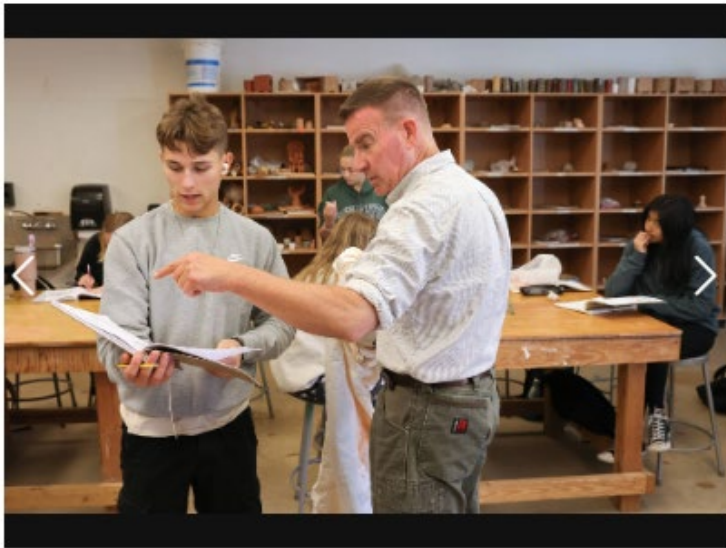
"We serve 50,000 students a year through 26 programs, but at the same time, our reach only extends so far," said Ashleigh Worley, the director of Education and Community Engagement

at the Luther Burbank Center. “We did not want the reach of this award to be limited by those in our circle. We want it to be as equitable and open as possible.”

**Debbie Yarrow**, an arts education manager at **Creative Sonoma**, said it was an easy “yes” when it came to getting involved.

“I’m super excited about this award because I think it expands and really elevates our recognition for education, specifically in the arts,” she said. “We’re trying to make sure all folks hear about this. And we’re really excited to see those nominations coming in.”

**Yarrow**’s team is in charge of sorting through the community’s nominations, which can also be submitted by the educators themselves. Deadline is Jan. 12. Once finalists are selected by a panel of three out-of-county arts leaders, the educator of the year will be announced in late February.



SLIDE 2 OF 3  
Art teacher Linus Lancaster, right, checks a sketch by Wyatt Dugan during a ceramics class at Healdsburg High School in Healdsburg, Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2023. (Christopher Chung / The Press Democrat file)

Choosing panelists who are not from Sonoma County will ensure the process is fair, **Yarrow** said. The panelist will include at least one longtime credentialed teacher, and one artist in residence, which describes non-credentialed teachers who bring their specialized skill set to teach students.

“We will certainly include diversity within that panel, so we have representation of various communities,” **Yarrow** said.

The award recipient will receive a \$500 honorarium and a \$500 gift card to a local arts store for classroom supplies. They’ll also be honored at a Sonoma County Arts Education Alliance event this spring.

Daniels Chapel of Roses, a Santa Rosa funeral home, is the award’s financial sponsor.

While the Sonoma County Office of Education recognizes one teacher a year, the applicants come from all areas of teaching. Last year’s teacher of the year was [Meaghan King, a special-education teacher](#) in the Santa Rosa City Schools district.

This arts-specific award will help recognize a unique subset of the county’s educators, Worley said.

“You can love your math teacher and appreciate your English teacher, but nothing really opens you up and gives you a different perspective of the world like arts,” said Worley, who taught middle and high school English and drama before working with the Luther Burbank Center.

“Our art teachers have this huge opportunity and responsibility to help us shape and mold the next generation and any opportunity we can to uplift them and celebrate the work they do is one we want to take,” she said.

Yarrow said the award couldn't have come at a better time, given the lack of arts programs across the state, and nearly \$10 million in [incoming Proposition 28 funding](#) to support the creation of new programs and the addition of more teachers across the county's 40 school districts.

“We will need so many more teachers coming into the system, and at the same time, this award acknowledges those who have served students for years and have grown and become experts in their field,” she said. “They've given back to students and helped them see themselves in a different way.”

Nominations can be submitted directly through the [Luther Burbank Center website](#), and the application portal will close Jan. 12.



SLIDE 3 OF 3

In partnership with Colors of Spanish, a program founded by Guadalupe Tausch, right, McDowell Elementary students will learn in Spanish through play, music and art. Teacher McKenzie Anderson, left, works with Tausch in her kindergarten class in Petaluma, Wednesday, Aug. 17, 2022. (CRISSY PASCUAL / PETALUMA ARGUS-COURIER file)