

# South Whittier Elementary School District 2023-2028 Strategic Arts Plan



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## Overview

### South Whittier School District

The South Whittier School District holds students and staff to rigorous standards in order to prepare every scholar for 21<sup>st</sup> Century success in college and the workforce, within a safe and supportive environment. Our students are challenged to reach their full potential and develop their curiosity and thirst for discovery. Our district celebrates our families' diverse traditions, cultures, and languages as foundations for learning.

#### **We believe:**

- All students can learn.
- Students learn best when they are engaged in challenging and appropriate learning focused on the core academic subjects of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies integrated with physical education and the fine arts.
- Quality teachers are the single greatest predictor of student success.
- The diversity and uniqueness of each student should be respected.
- Students learn best when families value education, and teach their children to accept increasing responsibility for their own learning.
- Quality education improves the quality of life for students, their families, and the community now and in the future.

#### **District Motto**

*"Success for Every Student"*

### Los Angeles County Department of Arts & Culture - Arts Ed Collective

In 2002, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established the Arts Education Collective to align efforts across the region with the ambitious goal that LA County's 1.5 million public school students receive a well-rounded education that includes the arts. Development of this South Whittier School District strategic plan for arts education was supported by the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture as part of the LA County Arts Education Collective (AEC) to advance the goals of [Arts for All Children, Youth, & Families: Los Angeles County's New Regional Blueprint for Arts Education](#).

AEC strategic planning coaches district teams through a process that centers humanity, collaboration, and equity. All voices are heard and lifted through creative and arts-based team building, visioning, and assessment work to help districts think ambitiously and efficiently plan how to advance their arts education programs from year to year. The aim is to establish an equitable and inclusive planning process for districts to build a strong foundation for trust, efficacy, sustainability, and success!

## Executive Summary

### Background & Rationale

South Whittier School District made the decision to apply for coaching for strategic arts planning in the Spring of 2022 to support district-specific VAPA objectives. The district's prior district arts plan was drafted over a decade ago; as such, it was determined that the timing was right to create a new plan to support evolving needs and programs in a post covid education era. When the district first began working with the Arts Ed Collective, only 7th and 8th graders had access to music education. As our district has begun to expand the arts programming, it is critical for us to make intentional decisions regarding the next steps. Activating this strategic arts plan will help expand enrollment, attendance, and access to the arts for all students within the SWSD community. Strategic efforts now will help SWSD ensure that it lives up to the motto of ensuring "success for every student" by providing equitable, inclusive, and accessible arts learning opportunities for all grade levels.

### Process

In February 2023, the SWSD strategic arts planning team began its first meetings to review arts data, noting trends and insights. Meetings were facilitated by Arts Ed Collective Strategic Planning Coaches Heather Heslup and Sandy Seufert across six 3-hour in-person sessions, using the Technology of Participation facilitation methods. An invitation was sent to principals, parents, teachers, and community members to serve as participants in the strategic planning team to ensure a variety of voices, perspectives, and expertise were included in the process. The SWSD arts planning committee included the insights of ten individuals that committed to at least five out of the six sessions sharing ideas for the development and the advancement of the arts.

Arts Ed Collective Coaches are trained by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) in their Technology of Participation (ToP®) program. The Technology of Participation program activates a powerful collection of structured facilitation methods that transform the way organizations and groups work together. Key to its effectiveness: highly energized and inclusive collaboration that leads to meaningful change. ToP® methods support genuine participation, which leads to long-term commitment and quality outcomes, as well as more effective teamwork. AEC Coaches used the ToP® methods to guide the SWSD Arts Planning Committee through the following strategic planning steps:

- Establish a **Practical Shared Vision** for the strategic advancement of the arts education programs across the district.
- Assess the **Current Reality** through the analysis of the district's internal and external strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth as well as an in-depth comparative analysis of current arts education and metrics in neighboring school districts
- Determine **Strategic Directions** by setting goals and measurable outcomes to guide the work over the next 3-5 years.
- Create a **Phased Action Plan** to support implementation and keep teams on track to meet their strategic arts goals and achieve their shared vision.

## 2023 District Art Planning Committee Members

- Dr. Reanna Mendoza, Ed.D, *Director of Assessment, Accountability, and Parent Engagement*
- Dr. Cheyenne Ramirez, Ed.D, *Instructional Specialist, MTSS*
- Katie Reyes, *Parent*
- James Lee, *Music Teacher*
- Irene Garcia, *Instructional Aide*
- Monique Lopez, *Visual Arts Teacher*
- Melody Gonzalez, *Instructional Aide*
- Dr. George Wheeler, Ph.D, *Associate Professor Composition/Technology- Rio Hondo College*
- Dr. Sheril Carrasco-Tolentino, Ed.D, *TK Teacher*
- Josie Tafoya, *Administrative Secretary, Classified Personnel*

## **Strategic Arts Plan Overview**

### Practical Vision

Through this visioning process, members of the strategic arts planning committee affirmed core values and anchored all the work in **Empathy & Equity**. Moving in alignment with these values, the committee envisions achieving the following in 3-5 years:

1. **Collaborative Family and Community Engagement**
2. **Inclusive and Integrated Arts Curriculum**
3. **Interactive and Collaborative Arts Professional Development**
4. **Empowered & Empathetic District Community**
5. **Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Arts Programming**
6. **Dedicated Arts Program Funding and Coordination**

### Current Reality

An integral part of the strategic planning process included the assessment of the current reality. Using data collected from each school site and county-wide and state comparisons, the district arts committee members conducted a deep analysis of the existing Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities related to the scope of SWSD's arts education program arts as of 2023.

Focus question: What **Strengths** exist within our district that provide momentum toward our vision?

- Two stellar VAPA teachers (Music & Visual Art)
- We offer music and VA across all of our schools
- Supportive leader in the Associate Superintendent, who listens and actively engages the VAPA teachers
- There are already plans to expand the arts program through two new VAPA FTE (teachers and ToSA)
- Strong PLC community/model to build upon with the arts and arts integration
- Dedicated arts committee engaging in strategic arts planning and committed to implementation
- Funds for music and visual art supplies and materials are readily available
- Students are very eager and open to learning and exploring new things
- A humble community that believes in the district as it has been the hub of this community for decades
- Emerging desire to refine educational practices and approaches intentionally
- Teachers are excited that students get to engage in the Arts
- Strategically use planning time to assess data intentionally
- Dedicated staff and teachers who support community advancement; many grew up in South Whittier schools - strong legacy.

Focus Question: What **Challenges**, external or internal, present as roadblocks on the road to our vision?

- Declining student enrollment due to increasing cost of living and slow job market
- Competing district priorities - the arts have been historically undervalued, and spending is often focused on core content
- District and community values general ed content i.e, math, language arts, etc., over supporting the development of essential life skills requiring critical and creative thinking that can be cultivated through arts, home ec, and woodshop.
- No current district arts coordination or dedicated arts coordinator
- Arts programming across schools is inequitable - i.e., some schools don't get music all year, and some grade levels don't get art at all
- Fragmented/inconsistent communication about art initiatives
- Media, Theatre, and dance offerings are missing
- Insecure funding designated for arts programming
- Difficult to recruit quality Arts teachers - all teachers, for that matter
- The hiring process doesn't include questions about a candidate's arts or arts integration interest, capacity, and/or experience
- Very limited community arts partnership for field trips, in-school arts residencies, and/or after-school activities

Focus Question: What **Opportunities** can we leverage/activate to overcome challenges on the journey toward our vision?

- Use the arts in various opportunities to showcase student assets and success.
- Engage community liaisons in arts planning and ongoing implementation
- Expand partnerships with community-based education and arts organizations to fill in media, dance, and theater arts programming gaps
- Engage more media/digital art learning opportunities since students are already using media
- Add discrete arts professional development and art integration strategies to the established PLC planning model
- Introduce dance instruction as a PE alternative
- Assess staff artistic/creative strengths or interests via a survey
- Use arts as a means to increase communication through social media
- Explore community desires and input for culture and arts programming
- Elevate student voice and prompt agency through improv opportunities through dance, acting, and writing (this is aligned with a balanced literacy model)
- Bring more culture into the curriculum

## Strategic Directions: Goals & Measurable Outcomes

These strategic directions serve as broad guideposts on the journey to achieving the vision for arts education. Goals listed within each direction demonstrate specific efforts to be engaged over the next 3-5 years.

<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1: Develop inclusive &amp; culturally relevant VAPA teaching and learning opportunities for staff and students</b>	
<b>GOALS</b>	<b>MEASURABLE OUTCOMES</b>
A. Provide a variety of Supplemental VAPA Opportunities	Each student experiences <u>at least two 2</u> art experiences each year. I.e., arts field trips, arts-focused assemblies, and/or teaching artist residency
B. Develop inclusive and culturally responsive discrete and arts-integrated curriculum	Established Pk-8 Culturally Relevant Curriculum VAPA Map and Arts Integration resource guide
C. Offer constructive and consistent VAPA programs across all grades and students	Revised VAPA class schedule with all students receiving year-round instruction in at least one discipline
D. Develop continuous VAPA professional learning opportunities for all teachers, site and district administrators	Dedicated 4-8 hours of year-round interactive VAPA PD for art teachers, Site Leads and general ed teachers; and 1-2 hours of VAPA workshops for district administrators

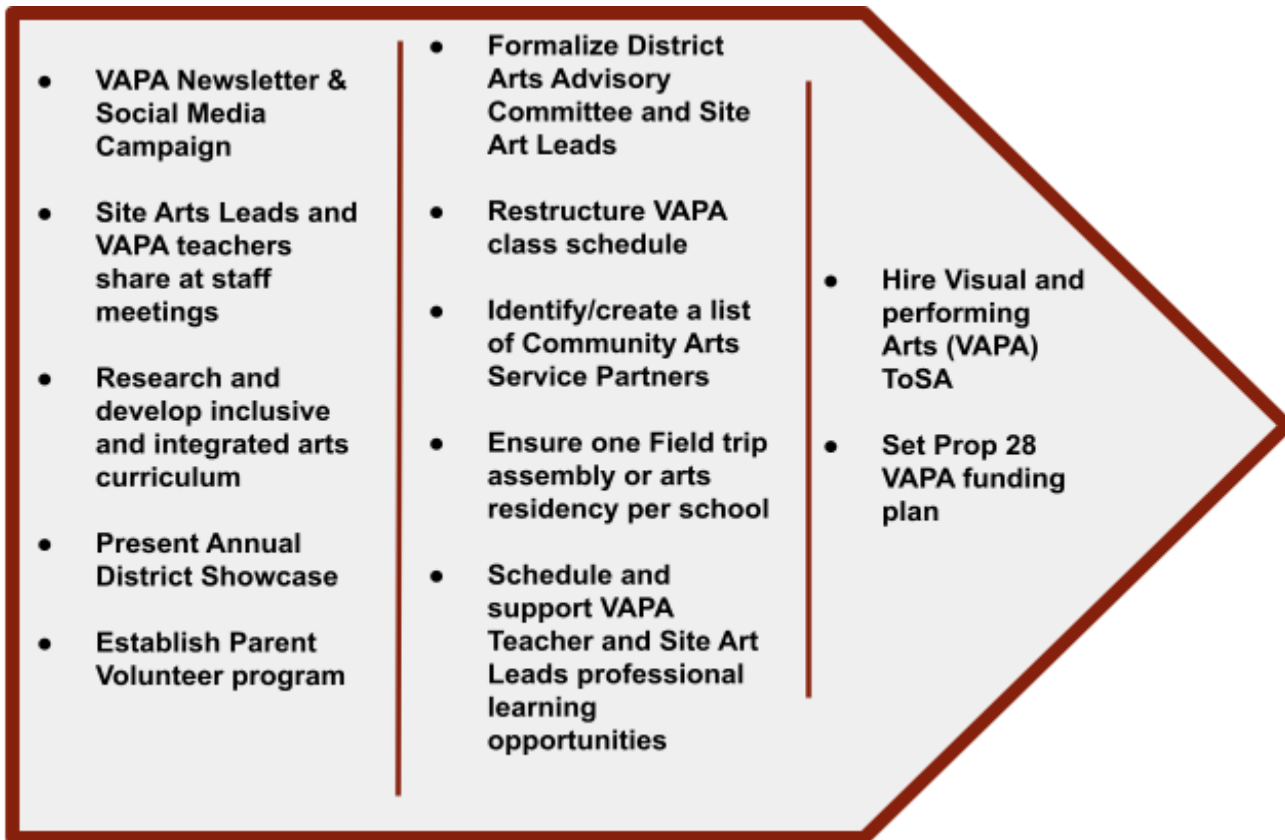
<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2: Cultivate and coordinate district-wide VAPA programs, partnerships, and community engagement</b>	
<b>GOALS</b>	<b>MEASURABLE OUTCOMES</b>
E. Designate personnel for growing and sustaining VAPA programs	Maintained full-time VAPA coordinator position, varied VAPA teachers and established site arts leads that support ongoing district VAPA programs
F. Meaningfully welcome and engage family and community members with District-wide events	Increased family participation and attendance through expanded parent volunteer opportunities
G. Cultivate and Maintain Partnerships with Community Arts Organizations and institutions	Maintained 2-3 partnerships with arts varied community arts organizations, teaching artists and universities

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3:** Design, expand & advocate for VAPA programs through sustainable systems & funding

GOALS	MEASURABLE OUTCOMES
H. Design sustainable systems to support VAPA programming	Aligned Strategic Arts Plan with LCAP; Maintained equitable funding annually to sustain VAPA Staff and Programs
I. Increase visibility and student pride through district-wide VAPA showcases	1-2 annual district-wide scheduled VAPA showcases
J. Establish a detailed VAPA Communication & Marketing Plan	Established online monthly VAPA communications

**Priority Actions**

Upon establishing the above goals and measurable outcomes, the strategic arts planning committee confirmed the actions listed in the priority wedge below. Each item listed is a priority to action to engage over the next two years, *phase one*, of implementation. The items featured in the point are the core actions that will need to take place first, in order for all the following priority actions to be fulfilled successfully.



## LCAP Alignment

The South Whittier School District Strategic Arts Plan aligns with the district LCAP (Local Control Accountability Plan) in significant ways in each of the five LCAP goals. The inclusion and expansion of arts programming, professional learning, partnerships, and family engagement support the overall district goals to provide standards-based learning that draws on best practices and research with the intent to prepare students for 21st-century learning and careers. The Visual and Performing Arts offer specific support for engagement and school climate that enriches students' lives, both on campus and in the community. Please see the detailed alignment below

LCAP GOAL	LCAP ACTIONS	Strategic Arts Plan Direction and Goals	Strategic Arts Plan Actions
<b>1:</b> Create a standards-based learning environment where students feel safe within a strong and positive school culture that is collaborative, unbiased, and inclusive of all student groups.	<b>3:</b> TOSAs	<b>SD 2; Goal E:</b> Designate personnel for growing and sustaining VAPA programs	Hire full time VAPA TOSA  Establish arts leads at each campus to support ongoing district VAPA programs
<b>2:</b> Utilize research-based practices and a cycle of continuous improvement based on data to support a broad course of study, which will prepare students for the 21st-century global market.	<b>8:</b> Visual and Performing Arts	<b>SD 2; Goal G:</b> Cultivate and maintain partnerships with Community Arts Organizations and Institutions	Maintain 2-3 partnerships with varied Community Arts Organizations, teaching artists, and universities
	<b>8:</b> Visual and Performing Arts - Instructional supplies and resources	<b>SD 1; Goal B:</b> Develop inclusive and culturally responsive discrete and arts-integrated curriculum	Create a Pk-8 Culturally Relevant Curriculum VAPA Map and Arts Integration resource guide
<b>3:</b> Provide a strong educator support system for all staff to develop professional efficacy and strong engagement, to ensure a focus on student success, achievement, and empowerment in order for all students to achieve their greatest potential.	<b>2:</b> Professional Development - Certificated for collaboration practices, analyzing data, implementing best practices, reflect on practices	<b>Strategic Direction 1; Goal D:</b> Develop continuous VAPA professional learning opportunities for all teachers, site, and district administrators	Develop dedicated 4-8 hours of year-round interactive VAPA PD for art teachers, Site Leads and general ed teachers; and 1-2 hours of VAPA workshops for district administrators
<b>4:</b> Strengthen communications and facilitate trusting partnerships with parents and community members by providing resources and opportunities for parents' active engagement in their	<b>1:</b> Parent Education Workshops	<b>SD 3; Goal I:</b> Increase visibility and student pride through district-wide VAPA showcases <b>SD 2; Goal F:</b> Welcome and engage family and	Include parent workshops and engagement opportunities at both Open House events and district-wide showcases

child's education.		community members with district-wide events	Increase family participation and attendance through expanded parent volunteer opportunities
	<b>2:</b> Communication to families	<b>SD 3: Goal J:</b> Establish a detailed VAPA Communication and Marketing Plan	Establish online monthly VAPA Communications
<b>5:</b> Provide a comprehensive, multi-tiered system of support within academics, behavior, and social-emotional services to facilitate student success, which includes increased and improved services for all student groups	<b>1:</b> Materials and supplies to improved school climate	<b>SD 1: Goal B:</b> Develop inclusive and culturally responsive discrete and arts-integrated curriculum	Create a Pk-8 Culturally Relevant Curriculum VAPA Map and Arts Integration resource guide



## Appendix

- **Action Plans**
  - [Phase One 2023-2025 \(2 years\)](#)
  - [Phase Two 2026-2028 \(3 years\)](#)
- **Detailed Process Documentation**
  - Practical Vision Workshop: [Team building & Vision Points](#)
  - Current Reality Workshop: [Data Summary](#), [Data Review](#) and [Assessment: Strengths, Challenges & Opportunities](#)
  - Strategic Directions Workshop: [Goals, Objectives, Measurable Outcomes](#)