

The State of Arts Education in Sonoma County Secondary Schools: Analyses of the California Arts Education Data Project

Sonoma County, California

February 2019

Introduction

Big Idea Arts and Education Consulting, www.bigideaconsulting.org, provides this report to the Arts Education Alliance of Sonoma County to inform and refine its efforts to support arts education for all students in the County. The data in this report is taken from the California Arts Education Data Project, a resource provided by Create CA, www.createca.org, a statewide partnership of the California Arts Council, Department of Education, Alliance for the Arts, State PTA and the County Superintendents.

The Data Project, initiated in the fall of 2016, reports enrollment in arts courses (dance, music, theatre, visual arts) for grades 7-12 in California public schools as well as other data provided by the California Department of Education. The Data Project began with enrollment from the 2013-14 school year and now contains data up through the 2016-17 school year. Readers are encouraged to visit the website, <http://www.createca.dreamhosters.com/artsed-dataproject>, where data is presented for the state and counties as well as for each individual district and school.

Although the Data Project is an excellent resource, several issues must be explained to understand the limitations and inherent biases in the system. First, the Data Project does not report on arts education in grades TK-4 and only for grades 5 or 6 when they are included in a middle school. Second, the data for grades 7-12 reflects arts courses taught during the regular school day by an appropriately credentialed instructor. After school arts programs and instruction by non-credentialed teaching artists are not captured by the Data Project. Third, the data from the Arts Education Data Project is self-reported by schools, and since it is a new process, there is a continuing need for clarification and training for district staff who input the arts education data. There have been cases of erroneous data caused by misunderstandings of the new systems.

Finally, the Data Project is color-coded on an arbitrary formula that may be misleading. Enrollment in arts courses is reported as a function of the average enrollment across the state. Schools, districts, counties and specific arts disciplines that are under the state average are color-coded in shades of red with the darkest red being the lowest average enrollment. Those at or above the state average are color coded in shades of blue, with the darkest blue being the highest enrollment. So, if a school of 1,000 students has 100 students enrolled in an arts course (dance, music theatre or visual arts), their enrollment number is 10% and their color code is red.

The fallacy here two-fold, first the comparison of enrollment percentages does not present an accurate picture of arts education within a district or county. For example, if a school district or county has four high schools and two schools have 0% of students enrolled in arts courses, and the other two have 78% enrolled, the district would be at 39% overall, right at the state average and color-coded light blue even though half of their high schools offer no arts courses. This is true of enrollment in specific arts disciplines as well, so that if 39% of a district's students are enrolled in a music class with no dance, theatre or visual arts offered, their color code would still be "in the blue." Second, no matter how high or low the enrollment average goes, the color coding would stay the same. So, if the average enrollment across the state plunged to 10%, schools with 11% arts enrollment would still be in the blue "above average" range. If the average enrollment jumped to 75%, then schools that are currently "in the blue" would be well below average.

The most dangerous misinterpretation of the color coding comes in looking at enrollment in specific arts disciplines. Across the state, dance has the lowest student enrollment at 2% of all students. So, a school with just 4% of students enrolled in dance would appear to be doing well in that area since their color code would be deep blue. This contradiction highlights the disparity in arts enrollment by discipline across the state.

Sonoma County Context

In the 2016-17 school year, 32,953 students attended secondary schools in Sonoma County. Of those students, 13,150 or 40% were enrolled in a dance, music, theatre or visual arts course which is at the state average of 39.0%. In Sonoma County there are more students enrolled in visual art than any other discipline, an average of 20%, which is significantly higher than the state average of 17% while music enrollment is at 11%, significantly lower than the

state average of 14%. Theatre (5%) and dance (4%) are slightly higher than the state averages of 4% for theatre and 2% for dance. The category “other” reflects enrollment in Career Technical Education Courses in the Arts Media Entertainment strand. The state enrollment in these courses was 6% which slightly higher than Sonoma County’s 5% enrollment.

Figure 1 below shows the change between 2013-4 and 2016-17 in arts enrollment for each school district at the secondary level (middle schools and high schools). Though there are individual districts where enrollment has increased and decreased, total enrollment was flat over these four school years. In looking at *Figure 1*, remember that dramatic increases in arts enrollment are likely due to clarifications in the reporting process over time, not to an actual increase in arts enrollment.

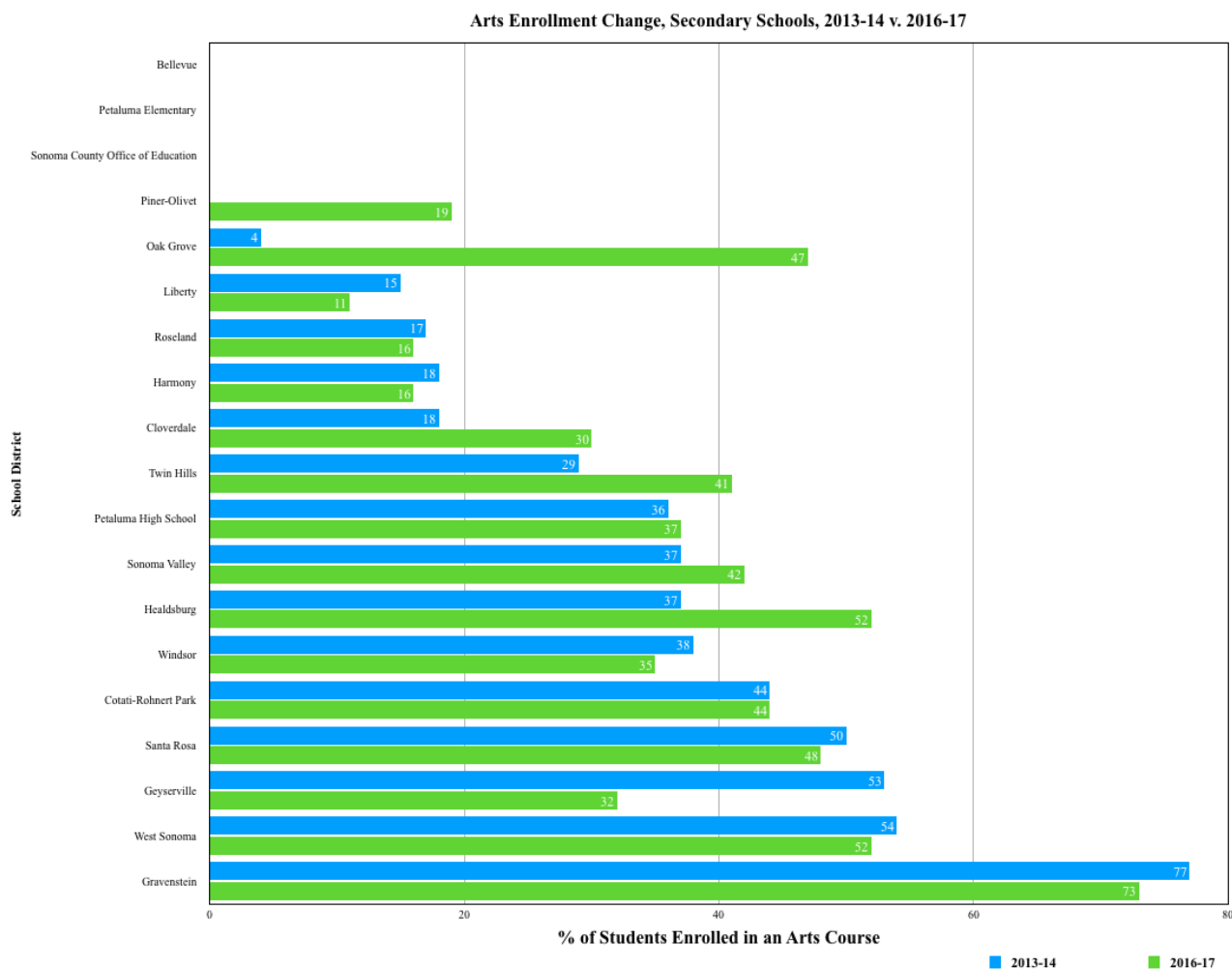


Figure 1

Following is an in-depth analysis of this arts enrollment data with a focus on changes in the landscape in Sonoma County Schools between the baseline year, 2013-14 and the most recent year that data has been reported, 2016-17. 10 key arguments supporting the Arts Education Alliance's work are presented based on the current data.

Key Argument #1

Arts enrollment in Sonoma County is stagnant and lags significantly in comparison to four surrounding counties. Using data from the California Department of Education posted on the California Arts Education Data Project website, <http://www.createca.dreamhosters.com/artsed-dataproject>, arts course enrollment for 2016-17 in Sonoma County in grades 7-12 declined by 72 students since 2013-2014, the first-year data was collected. This represents a slight change of -.20% over four school years. In contrast, however, arts enrollment across the state grew by 3.75% in the same time period. The percentage of Sonoma county students enrolled in arts courses remained nearly the same during this time period.

Closer to home, arts enrollment in Sonoma's four adjacent counties has skyrocketed since the baseline year, 2013-14: 11.30% in Marin County, 16.76% in Napa County, 28.86% in Lake County, and 38.03% in Mendocino County. Three of these counties are currently out-performing Sonoma County in their enrollment percentage for arts courses with only Mendocino slightly trailing and gaining ground over the last four years: Mendocino—38%, Sonoma—40%, Lake—42%, Napa—52% and Marin—55%

These significant differences do not seem to be directly related to median per capita income in the counties which is one indicator of the resources available to schools. The median income per capita in Lake County was \$21,310 (29% lower than state average). By comparison, median income in Sonoma County is \$33,361, 21% higher than in Lake County. However, 42% of Lake County students in grades 7-12 are enrolled in an arts course, 5% higher than in Sonoma County.

In Napa and Sonoma Counties, median incomes are very similar: \$33,361 per capita in Sonoma County compared to \$35,092 in Napa (5% higher). By contrast, the 53% arts enrollment rate in Napa County is 33% higher than in Sonoma County (40% arts enrollment rate). In

addition, 100% of Napa County students in grades 7-12 have access to arts courses vs. 98% in Sonoma County (2% higher).

Marin County has the highest per capita income in the state at \$58,004, 73% higher than in Sonoma County. In Marin, 55% of 7-12 students are enrolled in arts courses vs. 40% in Sonoma County which is a difference of 38%. Similarly, 100% of students in Marin County have access to arts courses vs. 98% in Sonoma County (2% higher). Sonoma and Lake County have the same ratio of arts teachers to students--9 arts teachers for every 1,000 students--which is lower than Mendocino (12), but higher than Marin (7) and Napa (6).

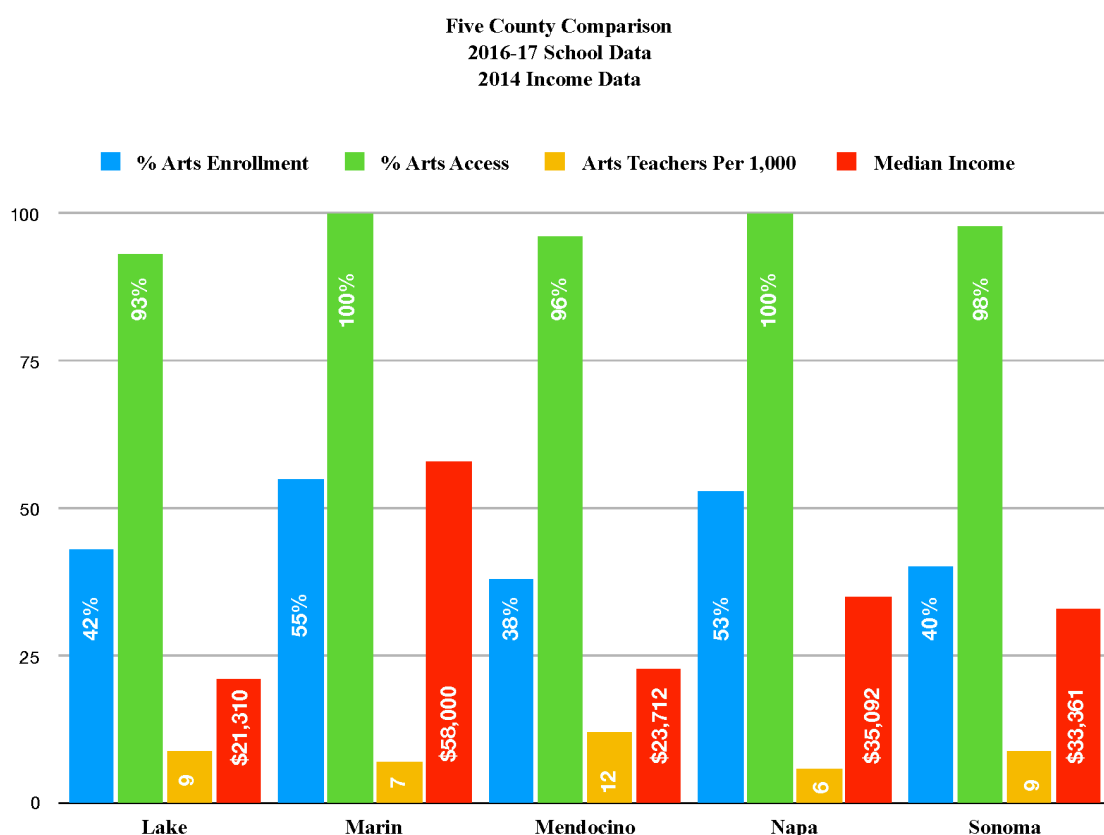
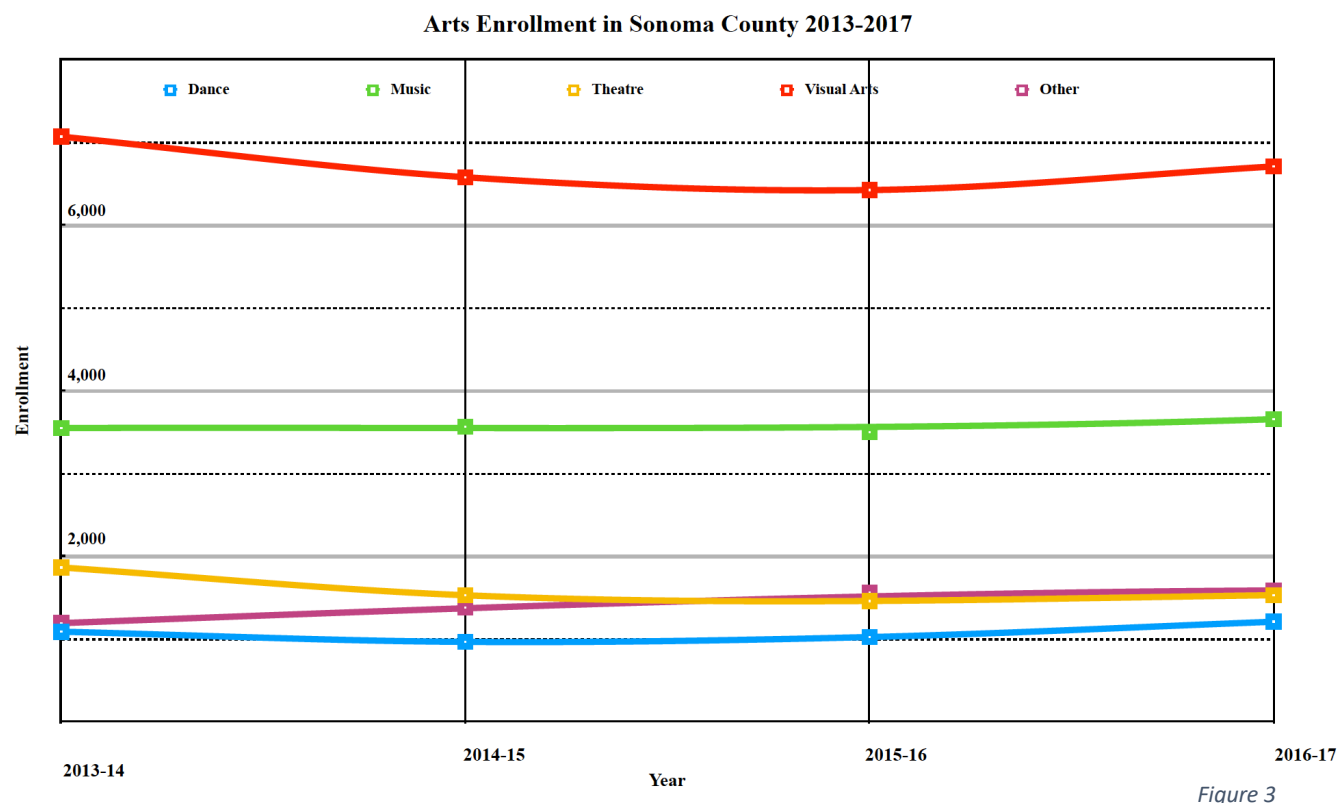


Figure 2

Several trends in arts enrollment are notable over the four school years in Sonoma County from 2013-17. 2015-16 marked the low-point in arts course enrollment, and there was a significant rebound in 2016-17. In 2015-16, arts enrollment had shrunk to 13,973, but grew to 14,696 the following year. Over those four years, enrollment in music and dance grew slightly, but dropped significantly in theatre and visual arts. Enrollment in Career Technical Education (CTE) courses in the Arts Media Entertainment (AME) strand showed the greatest increase of all

courses growing by 395 students (31%). Many districts around the state are re-designating their traditional visual and performing arts (VAPA) courses as CTE courses. For example, at Petaluma High School, enrollment for CTE courses in the AME strand grew by 187% in 2016-17 while enrollments in music (-6%), theatre (50%) and visual arts (56%) all dropped significantly. There are several reasons for this finding: 1) Change in state graduation requirements making CTE an alternative to VAPA courses 2) Easier process to earn a CTE teaching credential for professionals in other fields 3) New state funding for CTE courses. However, since state standards in VAPA and corresponding CTE AME courses are closely aligned, this does not necessarily signal a decline in arts education.

More schools dropped entire arts disciplines than began new programs by a significant margin between 2013 and 2017; 25 courses were dropped and 19 were added, for a net loss of six schools. In middle schools, new arts courses were offered at nine schools (1 Dance, 1 Music, 2 Theatre 5 Visual Arts), but 14 middle schools dropped their arts courses (4 Music, 5 Theatre, 5 Visual Arts). At the high school level, 11 arts courses were discontinued (1 Dance, 3 Music, 3 Theatre, 2 Visual Arts and 2 Other), and 10 were added (3 Music, 2 Theatre, 3 Visual Arts and 2 Other).



Key Argument #2

Although access to arts education in Sonoma County is at about the state average, there remain a number of students at schools with no access to the arts.

At first glance, the access to arts education data in the chart above (Figure 2) may seem to be encouraging for Sonoma County; after all, 98% of students having access to arts education is a good thing, right? However, this percentage is misleading. First, it does not mean that 98% of students are taking an arts course; it simply means that at least one arts course is offered at 98% of the schools in the county. So, a school that offers one arts course, Art History for example, would qualify as having access to the arts even though only one discipline is represented, and in that course, students do not necessarily create artwork themselves.

And what about the remaining 2% of students? Although this relatively low number is at the state average, it is discouraging that nearly all of the schools in the county with no arts courses serve the most vulnerable student populations: at-risk students and students with special needs. In 2016-17, 800 Sonoma County students in grades 7-12 at 14 schools, representing 2.4% of the total school population, had no access to arts education. Of the 12 schools* with no arts courses, four serve special needs students, six are continuation or alternative high schools serving at-risk students, and one is an alternative education charter school also serving at-risk students. The only non-arts school that does not fall into those categories is a dual-enrollment charter school. Although only 2% of the general student body has no access to the arts, this means that 100% of special needs schools and 58% of the alternative or continuation schools lack access to arts education.

*Two schools closed in 2018.

It is unfortunate that these two student groups have virtually no access to arts education, since research shows proven benefits to both. At-risk students who participate in the arts show better academic outcomes than at-risk students with less arts involvement. They earn better grades and have higher rates of college enrollment and attainment. For example, at-risk students with access to the arts in high school were three times more likely than students who lacked those experiences to earn a bachelor's degree. Also, at-risk students who had intensive arts experiences in high school are

more likely to show civic-minded behavior than young adults who did not, with comparatively high levels of volunteering, voting, and engagement with local or school politics.

For special education students, research shows that the arts help with communication and socialization skills. In a recent study, between 77 percent and 84 percent of special education students participating regularly in the arts have made progress in each of the following areas: communication, socialization, compliance with directions, time spent on task, and engagement in school activities. The arts have shown positive effects of meeting student goals for their individualized education programs (IEP).

Key Argument #3

79% of secondary schools in Sonoma County do not provide the comprehensive arts education required by Education Code, and elementary school rates are even worse. As noted above, “access to the arts” as reported by the Arts Education Data Project simply means that at least one arts course is offered at a school and does not mean that a comprehensive arts education is available to students at the school. In fact, state education code requires that all four arts disciplines—dance, music, theatre and visual arts—be offered to all students, but only 13 schools out of 63 (21%) in Sonoma County do so. The other 79% of schools do not offer the required four arts disciplines, and many offer only one or two arts courses. On an encouraging note, the number of schools offering a comprehensive arts education has risen from 9 to 13 since 2013-14, an increase of 44%. However, as noted in the introduction, this number may be skewed since data in the baseline year may not have been completely accurate due to the newness of the process.

Although state level data is not gathered for grades K-6, administrators at ten Sonoma County elementary schools report that only 30% of their students have access to arts education taught by a credentialed arts teacher according to a recent survey by the Arts Education Alliance. The administrators cited funding (60%), time in the school day (20%), adequate arts facilities (60%) and lack of understanding (20%) as reasons for the deficit. Additionally, six district administrators representing six traditional elementary schools and four charter schools reported that 33% of students had access to

arts education taught by a credentialed arts teacher with 50% of students having no access to arts education.

The absence of credentialed arts teachers leaves the burden of arts instruction with classroom teachers and hired teaching artists. Of 121 elementary classroom teachers surveyed, 33% indicated that they never provided arts instruction; 54% said they sometimes taught the arts and 9% frequently taught the arts. (4% of teachers were "not sure.") Of teachers who indicated that they taught the arts "sometimes," 72% said that arts instruction occurred less than one day per week. Classroom teachers also indicated a lack of familiarity with California state arts standards. 40% of teachers are not at all familiar with arts standards, 56% were somewhat familiar and 4% were very familiar. Teachers also indicated that they generally did not write lessons with the arts in mind. 53% of teachers never include the arts in their lesson plans while 36% sometimes do and only 11% always do.

Key Argument #4

Following state trends, access to arts education in Sonoma County is often a matter of race and place with no equity of access for all students, though there are some encouraging exceptions. In California, students of color and those at low Socio-Economic Status (SES) schools have significantly less access to arts education in grades 7-12. For example,

students at schools with a

high rate of Free or

Reduced-Price Lunches

(FRPL) have an arts

enrollment rate 18% lower

than students at low FRPL

schools (36% vs. 44%). In

Sonoma County, that

disparity is even greater:

low SES students have an

arts enrollment rate 35%

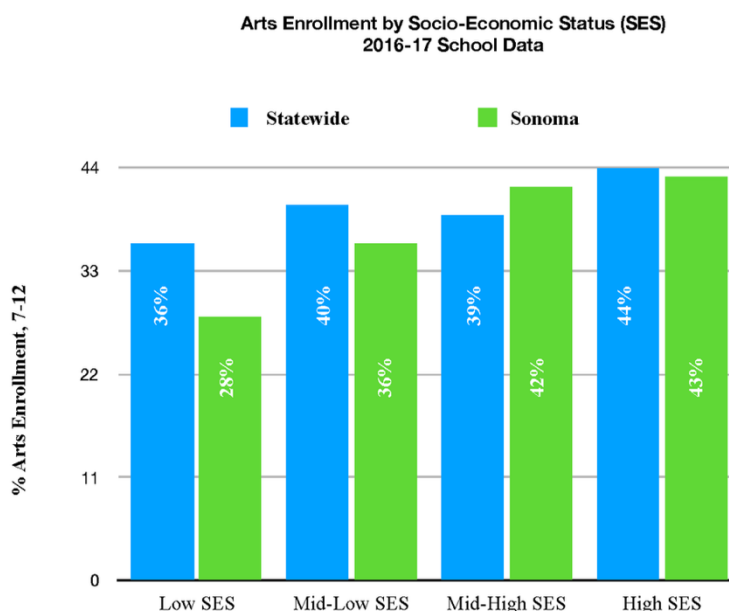


Figure 4

lower than high SES students (28% vs. 43%). Overall, low income students in Sonoma County have an arts enrollment rate 37% lower than low income students around the state.

For example, Roseland Public Schools in Santa Rosa has 1,325 students, 93% Hispanic, in grades 7-12 served by three secondary schools. West Sonoma County Union High School district has an enrollment of 1,944 students, 21% Hispanic, also served by three secondary schools. In Roseland, 87.5% of students qualify for a Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL) compared to 24% of the students in West Sonoma County Union. At Roseland, only 16% of students were enrolled in arts courses while in West Sonoma County Union the arts enrollment was 52% of the student population. This disparity in access to arts education is, unfortunately, not an isolated incident, but the norm around the state and here in Sonoma County.

There are several schools in Sonoma County, though, that are reversing that trend. At Lawrence Cook Middle School, 77% of students qualify for Free or Reduced-Price lunch, far above county and state averages. Yet at Lawrence Cook, 80% of students were enrolled in arts courses as compared to 30% at the other middle schools in the Santa Rosa district. In fact, at Hilliard Comstock Middle School--a school in the same district with virtually the same demographics--only 15% of students were enrolled in arts courses. It would be interesting to learn what practices at Cook have led to this much higher than average enrollment.

There are some other interesting anomalies in Sonoma County. Several lower Socioeconomic Status (SES) schools--based on FRPL enrollment--have higher arts enrollment and, conversely, some higher SES schools have lower arts enrollment. In the following chart (Figure 4), one would expect to find the percentage of arts enrollment and non-FRPL percentage to be roughly equivalent. For example, Gravenstein Union (Hillcrest Middle School) is a high SES district with high arts enrollment while Bellevue Union (Stony Point Academy) is a low SES district with no arts enrollment in grades 7-12. However, in Healdsburg lower SES schools show a much higher arts enrollment than would be predicted.

Conversely, there are a number of districts serving grades 7-12, including several with charter schools, where higher SES schools have lower than expected arts enrollment. For example, in Piner-Olivet Union (served by Northwest Prep Charter and

Piner-Olivet Charter) only 40% of students qualify for a Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (much lower than state average of 59% or the county average of 47%), but only 19% of students in grades 7-12 are enrolled in arts courses, far below the county and state.

From 2014-14 to 2016-17, the highest SES school districts in Sonoma showed little change in arts enrollment over time. Three of the five highest SES showed no significant change; one school district's enrollment went up and the others went down for no net change. It was encouraging though that the five most under-resourced districts showed a net gain in enrollment during the same time period. Three districts went up in enrollment, one went down slightly and the other showed no gain. It would be helpful to explore the change in practice or strategies that led to increased arts enrollment in Cloverdale, Healdsburg and Sonoma Valley.

7-12 Schools 2016-17 Data

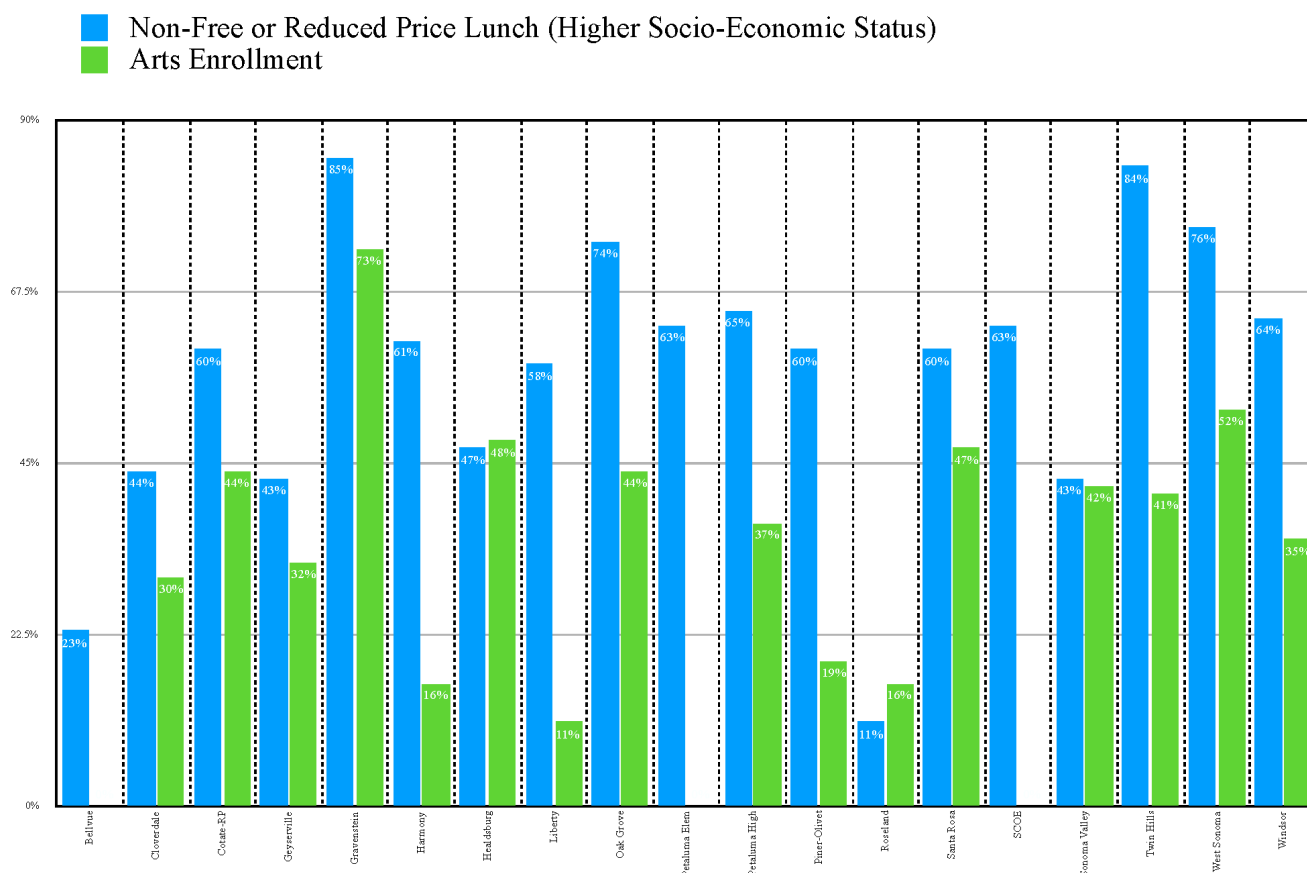


Figure 5

Key Argument #5

Dance and Theatre enrollments lag far behind music and visual arts enrollment throughout the County. While 76% of schools offer visual arts (48/63) and 63% offer music (40/63), only 48% offer theatre (30/63) and scarcely 22% offer dance (14/63). In terms of student enrollment in the arts, 7,263 students (22%) were enrolled in visual arts courses, 4,090 (12%) in music, 1,642 (5%) in theatre, and 1,365 (4%) in dance. So, in Sonoma County, 33% of students are enrolled in either music or visual arts while only 9% are enrolled in theatre or dance—72% lower. It is interesting that in Sonoma County, more students are enrolled in visual arts than is average for the state (22% vs. 17%) while fewer than average are enrolled in music. (12% vs. 14%).

So, why is that enrollment gap important? Dance and theatre education in California, historically the least represented arts disciplines, are on the upswing. One reason for low-enrollment in these two disciplines has been the lack of a teaching credential offered in either subject. That changed in September of 2016 when Governor Brown signed legislation re-instating both credentials after a 46 year wait. Currently, the Department of Education and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing are working to implement the new credential and requisite college preparation requirements.

That means that more Sonoma County students may soon be able to reap the benefits of dance and theatre education. According to multiple studies, dance education has been shown to...

- Increase reading and STEM test scores
- Offer neurological benefits, including persistence at task, memory retention, and making cognitive connections
- Develop social and emotional coping skills, including tolerance, focus, and engagement
- Support integrated teaching practices
- Boost teacher and school morale
- Reduce obesity

Similarly, students involved in drama performance coursework or experience...

- outscored non-arts students on the SAT by an average of 65 points in the verbal component and 34 points in the math component
- improved reading comprehension and communication skills
- improved school attendance and reduced high school dropout rates
- improved self-esteem and self-confidence
- increased levels of empathy and tolerance
- increased motivation and engagement in school

While the importance of Music and Visual Arts education is also supported by strong research, it is important to note that these two neglected arts disciplines offer some unique benefits, especially in the areas of language acquisition and kinesthetic learning.

Key Argument #6

Sonoma County trails the state in preparing students to participate in California's \$406.5B creative economy. Creative industries account for 1 in 10 jobs throughout the state, but students in Sonoma County are 17% less likely than the state average to be enrolled in the AME/CTE courses they need to enter this job market. A high-quality education in the Arts Media and Entertainment (AME) strand of Career Technical Education (CTE) readies students to become employed in one of eleven industry "super sectors," including Digital Media, Architecture/Interior Design and Communication Arts. These "super sectors" are further broken down into 57 subsectors with hundreds of different occupations including the following:

App Developer, \$124K/year

Multimedia Artists and Animators, \$80K/year

Film and Video Editor, \$88K/year

Fabric and Apparel Patternmakers, \$49K/year

Marketing Manager, \$153K/year

However, several schools are beating that trend with AME/CTE course enrollment much higher than the state average. These schools might serve as models for strategies and best practices since they have above average enrollment in CTE courses without a corresponding

drop in traditional arts courses: Windsor High, 9%; Elsie Allen, 11%; El Molino High, 12%; Analy High, 14%; Healdsburg High, 15%; Sonoma Valley High, 15%.

Key Argument #7

There is a great disparity throughout the County in the number of arts teachers provided by schools. The ratio of students to arts teacher is an important indicator of the financial commitment of the district to provide a high-quality arts education. The lower the student-teacher ratio, in general, the more arts teachers are working in the district. It is a given

that a lower student to arts teacher ratio is a positive indicator for arts education. In small schools with one arts teacher per discipline, this often means smaller class sizes and more individual attention for each student. In larger districts, this can mean a greater breadth of arts course offerings. Rather than a single visual art

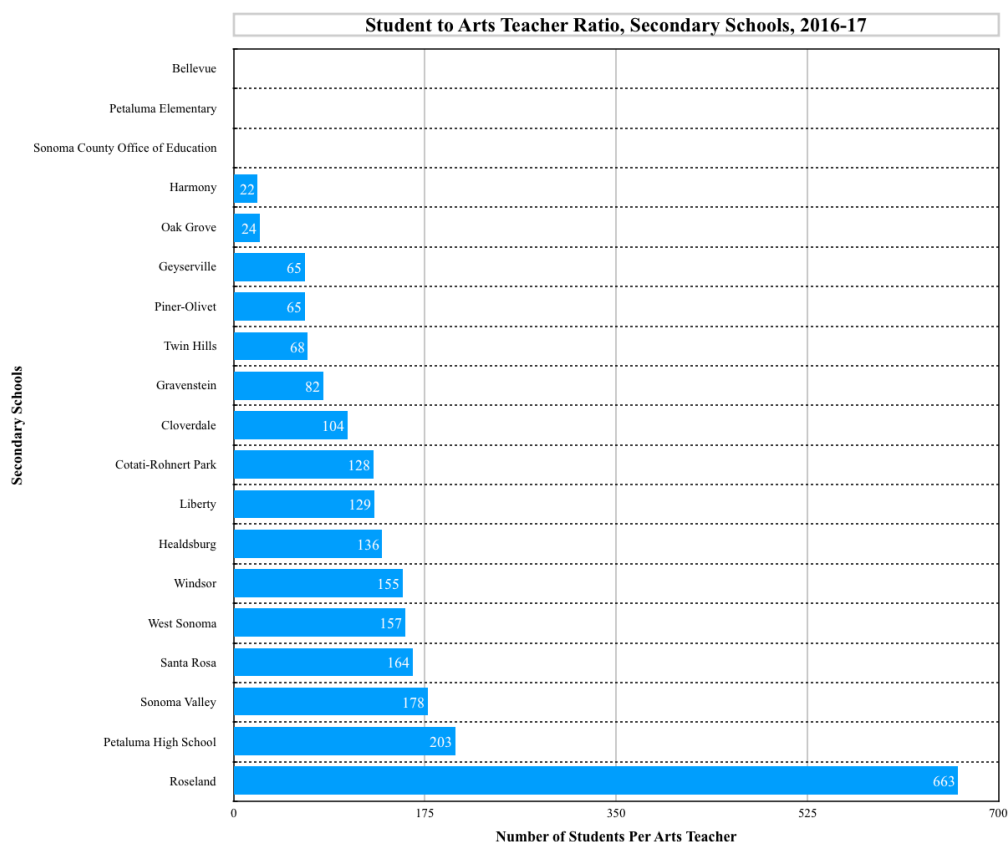


Figure 6

class, a lower student to arts teacher ratio can indicate a series of visual arts courses from beginning to advanced. For example, at Healdsburg High School with a relatively low student to arts teacher ratio, a wide variety of visual arts courses are offered: Art 1, 2, 3, AP Studio Art Drawing, Ceramics 1 and 2, AP Studio Art 2D Design and AP Studio Art 3D Design.

Key Argument #8

Help is needed everywhere; there is no clear relationship between geographic location and arts enrollment. Around the state, arts enrollment is lower in highly rural areas. However, in Sonoma County, some more remote schools have some of the higher enrollment percentages while some more urban areas have lower enrollment scores. The key takeaway is that ALL schools need help to create a high quality, sustainable arts education for students.

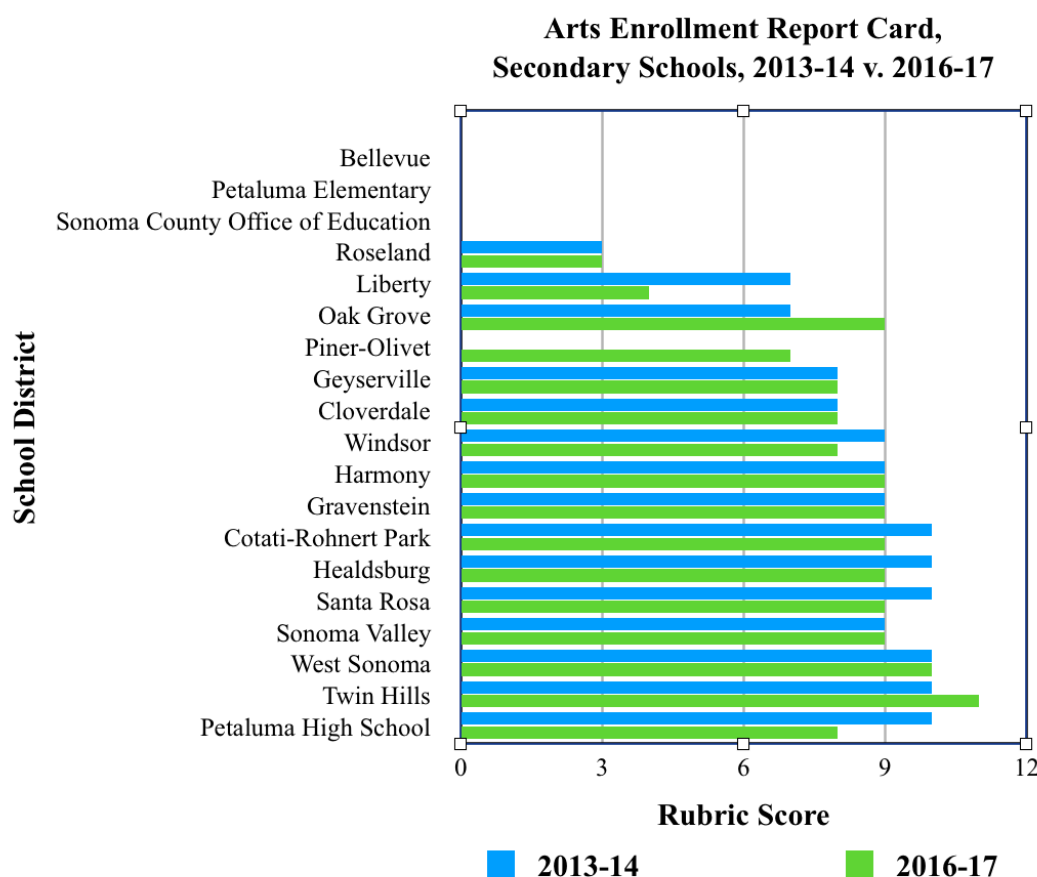
| | Arts Enrollment % | Population |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Bellevue | 0 | Urban |
| Petaluma Elementary | 0 | Urban |
| Sonoma County Office of Education | 0 | Urban |
| Liberty | 11 | Rural |
| Harmony | 16 | Rural |
| Roseland | 16 | Urban |
| Piner-Olivet | 19 | Suburban |
| Cloverdale | 30 | Small town |
| Geyserville | 32 | Small town |
| Windsor | 35 | Small town |
| Petaluma High School | 37 | Urban |
| Twin Hills | 41 | Suburban |
| Sonoma Valley | 42 | Small town |
| Cotati-Rohnert Park | 44 | Urban |
| Oak Grove | 47 | Rural |
| Santa Rosa | 48 | Urban |
| West Sonoma | 52 | Rural |
| Healdsburg | 52 | Small town |
| Gravenstein | 73 | Small town |
| | | |

Figure 7

Key Argument #9

Three important factors can track progress in providing equity and access to high quality arts education across Sonoma County over time. Since the percentage of arts enrollment is not the only important factor, this quantitative rubric looks at three factors: arts enrollment percentage, student to arts teacher ratio and the number of required arts disciplines offered in the district. The table below shows the points assigned to each area and the qualifications for each dimension. The chart following the table compares all local school districts and their total rubric score over time. A score of 12 is the highest possible, indicating that the school is far above average in the quantitative analysis, while a score of 3 indicates that the school is far below average in these arts education indicators.

| Arts Enrollment Rubric | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|------------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|
| Arts Enrollment | Score | Arts Disciplines | Score | Student/Arts Teacher Ratio | Score |
| 1-20% | 1 | 1 | 1 | 200+ | 1 |
| 21-40% | 2 | 2 | 2 | 100-200 | 2 |
| 41-49% | 3 | 3 | 3 | 71-99 | 3 |
| 50%+ | 4 | 4-5 | 4 | 1-70 | 4 |



Key Argument #10

There is widespread support for the arts among educators and community members in Sonoma County and across the nation. According to a recent survey conducted by the Arts Education Alliance and compiled by WestED, 87% of the 339 teachers and administrators surveyed believe that the arts are "important (38%)" or "extremely important (49%)." An additional 12% believe that the arts are "somewhat important" while less than 1% believe that the arts are not important. Of that group, 92% of the administrators believe that the arts are "important (52%)" or "extremely important (40%)." 8% believe that the arts are "somewhat important," and none believe that the arts are not important. 86% of teachers believe that the arts are "important (36%)" or "extremely important (50%)." 13% believe that the arts are "somewhat important," and 1% believe that the arts are not important.

This data is complemented by a 2017 Arts Now survey of 170 parents in the Windsor Unified school district. 100% of respondents agree that it's important for schools to offer a well-rounded education that includes the arts as a core subject for all students. 88% agreed strongly while 12% agreed "somewhat," and none disagreed. Across the nation, a recent Gallup poll indicated that 93% of Americans believe that the arts are a vital part of every child's well-rounded education. In fact, the recently reauthorized Every Student Succeeds Act calls for the arts to be included for all students as part of a well-rounded education and requires that at least 20 percent of Federal Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) funds go to support well-rounded educational opportunities (ESEA section 4107). In fact, improving access to arts and music education is specifically called out in the Overview of Allowable SSAE Program Activities.

Conclusion

Growing arts enrollment in Sonoma County schools is an essential first step in providing equity and access to an arts education for all students. While many other factors impact the quality of that education, it is crucial that the playing field first be leveled for all students. As noted by the California Alliance for Arts Education, "All children deserve an education that inspires them to discover, to engage deeply, to think creatively, to hone their passion and skill, and to apply that skill in the real world. Yet too often factors like a child's skin color or neighborhood can predict their access to even the most basic educational opportunities and

resources. Educational equity—the premise that all children should have fair access to a high-quality education—has become an all-encompassing policy issue in California and the nation.”

Data Sources, accessed December 2017 to November, 2018

- 1) California Arts Education Data Project, <http://www.createca.dreamhosters.com/interactive-dashboard>
- 2) California Department of Education, <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>
- 3) U.S. Census Bureau, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_California_locations_by_income
- 4) 2017 Otis Report on the Creative Economy, <https://www.otis.edu/otis-report-creative-economy>
- 5) Windsor Arts Now survey, 2017
- 6) Arts Education Alliance survey, 2017

Note: This will be updated in the final version. Many new sources were added in this version.