

# SPARK

ASCEND

(A School Cultivating Excellence, Nurturing Diversity)

...is an arts integrated public school in Alameda County. Since it was founded in 2001, this school has inspired and informed the Alameda County Office of Education's Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership (Alliance for ALL). The Alliance for ALL mobilizes teachers, schools, school districts, education, arts, civic and community leaders around the shared vision that **Art IS Education** – music, drama, dance and visual, media and literary arts are essential to a high quality education for every child in every school every day.



art **is** education

a project of alameda county office of education

[www.artiseducation.org](http://www.artiseducation.org)



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# ALAMEDA COUNTY ALLIANCE FOR ARTS LEARNING LEADERSHIP BELIEF STATEMENTS

## Values of Education

We believe that the core value and purpose of the educational system is to build a healthy and equitable society. Education endeavors to do this by creating and providing equitable opportunities for students to become healthy, knowledgeable citizens—conscious, informed, respectful, and engaged—prepared to deal with and influence change, and to contribute to a diverse, interdependent community. Schools provide learning environments for students to develop tools and life skills to dispel ignorance, to see what is, and to imagine what's possible. These tools and skills will allow them to realize their potential and that of their community and society.

## Values of the Arts

We further believe that access to and practice in the arts for every child, every day, is essential to the accomplishment of this endeavor. Equitable classrooms use artistic disciplines to ensure that every child has the opportunity to practice critical thinking, acquire knowledge in a meaningful way, discover and express their own experiences, investigate creative ideas, make new connections for themselves and others, and learn the value of collaboration, interdependence, and compassion. Students with these tools and life skills are capable of dispelling ignorance, imagining what's possible, and realizing their potential and that of their community and society.

These belief statements were drafted through a consensus process of the Alameda County Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership to engage the broader community in an ongoing conversation about the value of the arts in a complete and meaningful education for every child.

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## STORY PROFILE

ASCEND school is a unique K-8 school located in the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland in Alameda County. It is one of a growing number of small and autonomous schools in the Oakland Unified School District in Alameda County. The school is an arts-integrated, Expeditionary Learning school that prioritizes family and community partnerships. *Arts integration* means that students participate in instruction with objectives in an art form and another content area – for example math, English, or history – and another content area taught by art teachers, artists and/or classroom teachers. The goal is to enhance learning in both the art form and the other content areas.

Founded in 2001 with fewer than 100 students in Kindergarten, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, today the school has 268 students, and is successful on many levels, including student performance, teacher professional development, and parental and community involvement. SPARK witnesses many of these successes, following the threads of arts learning that weave a rich educational experience at this exceptional school as they finally transition from temporary classrooms to a new building.

The number one priority at ASCEND is student literacy – teaching students to be fluent and comfortable with the written and spoken word, technology, contemporary culture, history, media, mathematics, science, the arts, and the environment. The inquiry-based model employed throughout the school curricula pushes students and teachers alike to grow and change, maximizing student performance and providing valuable professional development and personal growth for teachers.

One example of this learning is showcased in the SPARK story when 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Katherine Sugeyasu and music teacher Sara Wilner teach students a Jewish song as part of their study of

religion. By studying, memorizing and playing this traditional song, the students understand many aspects of Jewish culture from beliefs stated in the lyrics, to the role of music in religious and community life. And, they understand it from experience, not simply from study of historical description. This integrated learning experience was developed by the two lead teachers who jointly developed the lesson – ensuring that the academic and artistic integrity are retained, and providing valuable professional development for one another in the process.

ASCEND is one of 16 “anchor schools” in a larger initiative spearheaded by the County Office of Education (ACOE) – the first phase of implementation of a new, county-wide strategic plan that will provide equitable classrooms through arts learning for every child, in every school, every day.

ASCEND is a local model – schools and projects like it exist in all 18 districts in Alameda County. It is also exemplary of a national movement in which schools all over the US in rural, suburban and urban communities are addressing seemingly ever-increasing problems with solutions that put a more holistic approach to student learning at the center despite the conflicting mandates from the state and federal education systems requiring increased standardized testing and fewer resources.



Students at ASCEND School doing a lesson on the xylophone in their class. Still image from SPARK story, March 2006.

In their mission and philosophical approach, these schools are actively responding to a growing body of research that continues to reveal the critical importance of arts study and learning on growth and development for all students throughout their education and lives.

## CONTEXT

In 2004, the Alameda County Office of Education embarked upon a strategic planning process to ensure that every student has access to learning in and through the arts as a central and essential component of a complete and meaningful education. The plan builds upon six years of work by the Alameda County Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership (Alliance for ALL), a broad-based coalition of educators, parents, businesses, and community members formed in 1999 by then incoming County Superintendent Sheila Jordan.

Collaborating for more than a year, the Alliance produced a detailed three-year strategic plan that positions the arts as a critical tool for learning. The plan, "Revitalizing Classrooms Through Arts Learning: Impacting the Culture of Teaching" (see **RESOURCES**) was launched in the 2005-06 school year with a focus on 16 "arts learning anchor schools" in the Berkeley, Oakland and Emery school districts.

The plan responds directly to the narrowing of curriculum in K-12 classrooms and the advent of technical, scripted teaching approaches that flatten the learning environment. The arts are a central strategy of revitalization for instruction, classroom engagement and meaningful learning. Equitable districts, schools and classrooms address language, race, culture and the diverse learning styles of Alameda County students by creating multiple entry points for students to engage with learning and demonstrate what they know and are able to do. Through a values-based conversation among members of the Strategic Planning Leadership Council, *four Key Questions* were developed that

spanned the length and scope of the strategic planning process. These questions guided the planning process and are a foundation for the Plan, representing the **four focus areas** for change.

The SPARK story makes visible the core beliefs and key principals of the ACOE strategic plan – arts integration across the curriculum, participation in arts activities on a daily basis for all students, professional development for teachers, and participation of the community.

### ALAMEDA COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN

#### FOUR KEY QUESTIONS - FOCUS AREAS FOR CHANGE

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*How do we impact the culture of teaching for improved learning in and through the arts?*

**professional teaching and learning community**

*How do we communicate effectively with broad audiences about the essential role of the arts in learning?*

**communication for motivating change**

*How do we secure appropriate resources for high quality education that is inclusive of the arts and distributed equitably?*

**resources**

*How do we create a shared vision, with coherent policies that support the individual and common goals of implementers (teachers, education administrators, artists and students) and stakeholders (parents, civic and business leaders, and community members)?*

**policy**

## GET INVOLVED

**Monthly Meetings:** Join an Alliance meeting on the first Tuesday of every month from 4–5:30pm at the Oakland Museum of California. These meetings are devoted to information exchange and presentations exploring arts learning best practices and an opportunity for you to share your program events, network with like-minded arts education professionals, and hear about the innovative work that is happening in the county.

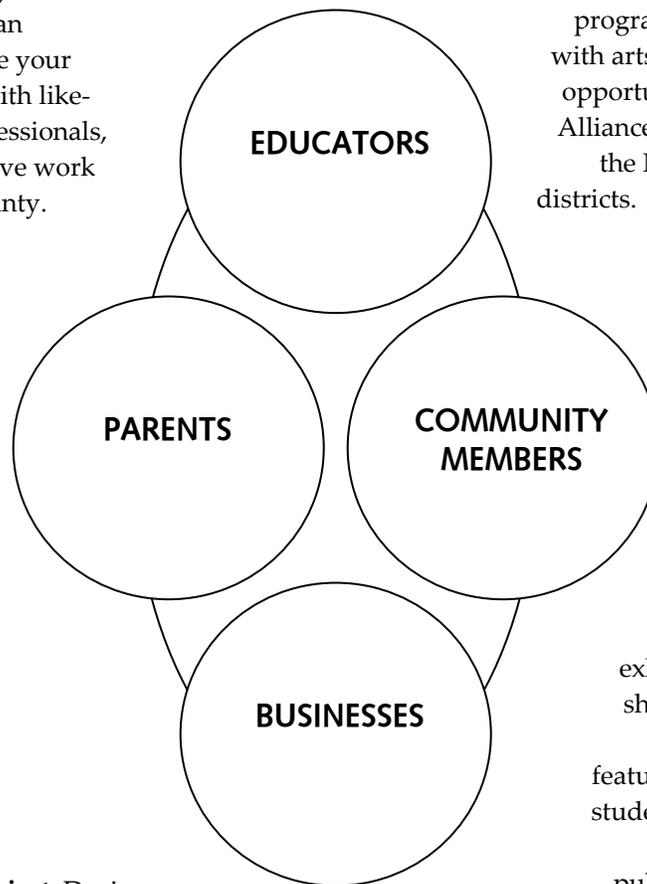
Other ways of participating include offering to present a particularly successful aspect of your work with students, bringing friends to the meetings with you, and communicating the work of the Alliance to the school faculty, district or arts organizations with which you work. [Meeting information available here.](#)

**“Creating Public Value” Project:** During difficult economic times, advancement for arts learning is more critical than ever. The Alliance presents a grass-roots advancement campaign aimed at creating public value for arts learning in schools in order to spur long-term change in funding and community support. For a fuller explanation of the public Value project, [click here.](#)

**Arts Learning Galleries:** The Alliance presents student artwork year-round in two galleries devoted to showcasing the artwork of Alameda County youth. To find out more about this exciting opportunity to exhibit your student artwork to an audience of thousands, visit the [galleries.](#)

**MAP District Network:** The Alliance works with nine school districts in Alameda County currently in a state-wide network of districts assessing and advancing arts learning in their districts.

MAP districts create arts teams, programming plans and collaborate with arts organizations to expand arts opportunities in their districts. A key Alliance goal for 2003-04 is to expand the MAP network to all 18 county districts. [Find out more about MAP by clicking here.](#)



**“Art IS Education” Project:** Every year in March, the Alliance presents an impressive event presenting and advocating for arts learning in Alameda County. Alliance members present art exhibits and performances of all shapes and sizes at schools, city halls, libraries and businesses featuring artwork by thousands of students. Bring your student work out of the classroom and into public view by creating an event for your community. [Click here for more information about Art IS Education.](#)

## RESOURCES

Alameda County Office of Education  
Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership  
313 West Winton Avenue  
Hayward, CA 94544

Art IS Education  
Hotline & Voicemail - (510) 670-4186  
<http://www.artiseducation.org>

### ABOUT ASCEND

"Smaller and Better - The Newest Downsizing  
Trend: Shrinking Schools So Kids Succeed"  
Anna Mulrine  
US News & World Report - 6/10/02  
[http://www.usnews.com/usnews/culture/articles/020610/archive\\_021600.htm](http://www.usnews.com/usnews/culture/articles/020610/archive_021600.htm)

"Small Schools"  
Oakland Community Organizations Brochure  
<http://tlc.ousd.k12.ca.us/~ascend/aboutascend/article/ocobrochure/ocobrochure.html>

"Big Movement for Small Schools"  
Melia Franklin  
Children's Advocate  
Action Alliance for Children  
<http://216.173.248.173/news/1101sce.htm> (English)  
<http://216.173.248.173/news/1101scs.htm> (Spanish)

"Oakland's Community Propels Change for Equity:  
The Small Schools Initiative's"  
Jill Davidson  
CES (Coalition of Essential Schools)  
[http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces\\_res/267](http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/267)

"Thinking Small"  
Stacy A. Teicher  
Christian Science Monitor  
November 27, 2001  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2001/1127/p12s1-lecs.html>

### TELEVISION & FILM RESOURCES IN THE ARTS

Arts Literacy for A Changing America. 1998 [VHS]  
A recorded teleconference between the US  
Department of Education and the Arts Education  
Partnership on arts literacy. Copies are available for  
\$7 from the Council of Chief State School Officers  
Publications Office, One Massachusetts Avenue,  
NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20001-1431, Attn:  
Arts Literacy Video. <http://aep-arts.org/Publications&Resources.html>

Arts Education: Improving Students' Academic  
Performance, Education News, US Department of  
Education. On-line streaming, broadcast, and  
purchase information available at the US  
Department of Education Web site at  
<http://registerevent.ed.gov/downlink/event-flyer.asp?intEventID=183>

The Arts and Children, 1996 [VHS] Produced by the  
National Assembly of State Arts Agencies  
promoting inclusion of the arts as a core content area  
in state and local curricula. - <http://www.nasaa-arts.org/publications/arts.shtml#artsandchildren>

Learner.org - The Annenberg Foundation and CPB  
collaborative project offering a range of videos for  
the arts classroom for teachers, leaders and students.  
<http://www.learner.org/channel/libraries/artsineveryclassroom/index.html>

Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston  
<http://www.icaboston.org/home/media>

SPARK (KQED)  
<http://www.kqed.org/spark>

PBS  
<http://www.pbs.org>

Art21 – *Art in the Twenty-first Century*  
The contemporary visual arts series of PBS  
<http://www.art21.org>

Egg  
contemporary visual arts series on PBS  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/egg/index.html>

### **ARTS EDUCATION WEB SITES**

American Association of Museums  
<http://www.aam-us.org/>

Art IS Education  
<http://www.artiseducation.org>

ArtLex – An on-line art vocabulary lexicon -  
<http://www.artlex.com>

ArtsEdge  
<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org>

ArtsEdNet  
<http://www.getty.edu/artsednet/home.html>  
Arts in Every Classroom  
<http://www.learner.org/channel/libraries/artsin.every.classroom>

Association for the Advancement of Arts Education  
<http://www.aaae.org>

California Alliance for Arts  
<http://www.artsed411.org>

California Assembly of Local Arts Agencies  
<http://www.calaa.net>

California Department of Education  
Visual & Performing Arts Education  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/shsd/arts>

California's Local Arts Education Program  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/shsd/arts/laep.htm>

National Art Education Association (NAEA)  
<http://www.naea-reston.org/membership.html>

National Conference of State Legislatures – Arts  
education policies in the United States -

<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/arts/artsed/artedhome.htm>

National Endowment for the Arts –  
<http://www.arts.gov>

Scholastic Art & Writing Awards  
<http://www.scholastic.com/artandwritingawards/index.htm>

TCAP – The California Arts  
<http://csmp.ucop.edu/tcap>

TeachingArts.org  
<http://www.teachingarts.org>

Young Audiences Inc.  
<http://www.youngaudiences.org>

### **WEB-BASED, INTERACTIVE ARTS LEARNING**

The Art Historian  
<http://cte.jhu.edu/techacademy/web/2000/saldana/>

Arts for Learning  
<http://www.arts4learning.org>

ArtsConnectEd  
Walker Art Ctr & Minneapolis Institute of the Arts  
<http://www.artsconnected.org/>

Minneapolis Institute of Art  
Painting Restoration  
<http://www.artsmia.org/restoration-online>

GeeGuides  
<http://www.geeguides.com>

SFMOMA  
Interactive Programs  
[http://www.sfmoma.org/education/edu\\_online.html](http://www.sfmoma.org/education/edu_online.html)

Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston  
<http://www.icaboston.org/home/media>

The Dia Center  
Artists' Web Projects  
<http://www.diacenter.org/webproj/index.html>

## TEXT RESOURCES

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Blythe & Associates, The Teaching For Understanding Guide. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

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Eisner, Eliot. "Discipline-based Arts Education: Conceptions and Misconceptions." Educational Theory 40(4), 1990: 423-430.

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Heath, Shirley Brice and A. Roach, "Imaginative Actuality: Learning In the Arts in The Non-School Hours." Champions Of Change: The Impact Of The Arts On Learning. Washington, DC: The Arts Education Partnership & the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 2000: 19-34.

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Lantieri, L. "A Vision Of Schools With Spirit." Schools With Spirit, Nurturing The Inner Lives Of Children And Teachers. Massachusetts Beacon Press, 2001.

Levine, M. A Mind At A Time. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002.

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