

## Arts Education in the San Francisco Bay Area History and Resources

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Educator Robin Havens and student Tremeisha Brown work on a cartooning project at San Francisco's Life Learning Academy, a 2007 SparkEd Partner School.

Photo credit: ©2007 Justin Warren/Life Learning Academy

## SECTION I – CONTEXT

### ARTS EDUCATION IN THE BAY AREA

As a strong supporter of public arts education, artist [Ruth Asawa](#) helped found San Francisco's School of the Arts and spearheaded the Alvarado Arts Program, which brings working artists into San Francisco's public schools. Asawa has fought hard to enhance the level of arts teaching and curriculum in San Francisco's public schools and her commitment to arts education in San Francisco's schools is exemplary. Programs such as hers are relied upon heavily to provide quality arts education, in some cases representing the only exposure to the arts that students have.

In 1978, California voters passed Proposition 13, a state law that severely limited the ability of local governments to raise money by increasing property taxes. Approved by 4.2 million voters, the proposition rolled back tax rates to 1975 levels, capped them at 1% of a property's value, and guaranteed that assessed values would not rise more than 2% a year. The proposition was copied in whole or in part by 22 other states. While it sounds beneficial to Californians, the effects of Proposition 13 have been mixed.

The proposition precipitated an era of economic prosperity throughout the 1980s in California, but then depleted the public school system of funding when property taxes could not be raised or lowered according to need. Restricted by the reductions in property taxes, the state Legislature created a California-focused school finance system in which the property taxes collected for school districts fund a district's revenue limit. In most of California's nearly 1,000 districts, the balance of the funding needed to reach revenue limits is then provided by the state.

When the state's economic boom ended in the 1990s, California experienced wild escalations in its real estate market coupled with a recession that rendered the state unable to adequately support its public schools due to the cap on local property taxes. The effects of this inequality have been serious – forcing

the state and local school districts to make deep cuts to their budgets in every way, compromising the quality of education. Although California was in the top five states in public education throughout the 1970s, it has been in the bottom ten in the 1990s due in part to the effects of Proposition 13.

The passage of Proposition 13 resulted in the near elimination of funding for arts education and supplies, and the conversion of spaces once dedicated to the arts to other programs. Faced with extreme financial problems, school districts across the state made decisions about which programs received funding and which did not. Not surprisingly, subjects deemed to be "core" subjects, such as math, science, language arts, and social science remained, while those considered secondary were cut, including music, visual arts, dance, and theater.

In the years since these cuts were made, the benefits for students studying arts education have been more clearly identified. A number of critical studies published by the Arts Education Partnership and other leading education and research organizations illuminate the many ways that student experience in the arts enhances academic achievement and social development.

According to opinion surveys, articles, and other educator publications, the majority of California's teachers seem to agree that the arts have been deeply under-funded and under-supported in California public schools, especially at the elementary and secondary levels, to the detriment of the students. According to the 1997 report on the visual and performing arts in California's schools, arts education in the state has been in a perpetual state of crisis since the passage of Proposition 13. Spearheaded by then Superintendent of Public Instruction for California Delaine Eastin--a strident arts supporter--the report also detailed the importance of reinstating the arts as a central commitment in the schools.

The statistics in Eastin's survey suggest that in a majority of school districts across the state only 10 to

25% of students were engaging in some form of arts education. In addition, because the passage of Proposition 13 occurred more than 24 years ago, many teachers presently teaching in California's schools are graduates of the state's public schools--teachers who themselves received minimal or negligible exposure to and experience in the arts as students. According to Glen Starkey's 2002 article in the New Times (a newspaper serving San Luis Obispo and Northern Santa Barbara Counties), a survey of arts teachers in Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Francisco, and Ventura counties "found that in most school districts, an average of only 2 percent of all teachers were qualified to teach arts." That being said, concerted efforts on the part of arts educators, teachers, artists, arts councils, and arts organizations such as Young Audiences of the Bay Area, the situation is beginning to change.

In 2001 the California Board of Education adopted a set of standards and a framework for study of the visual and performing arts for students from pre-school through grade 12 (see **Resources**). The framework explains the concepts underlying student education and progress in the arts – the standards articulate specific benchmarks for student achievement. Once adopted, the VAPA documents require that students receive education in the arts in order to perform and be assessed at a level equal to the "core" subjects.

Since California adopted the VAPA standards, many school districts are creating systems to assess their arts programs and make improvements in instruction. In addition, the University of California and the California State University systems now require incoming freshman to have accomplished at least one year of arts education in order to be accepted to their school systems beginning in 2003. These expectations are also tiered, meaning that the expectation of arts experience at the high school level increases every year between 2003 and 2006. By 2006 UC and CSU schools will require a year of continuous arts education in one discipline from all incoming freshmen. These requirements pose significant challenges for local districts and schools that must now provide quality arts education for their students according to the standards that adequately prepare students for application to the state school systems.

This complex history has resulted in inconsistencies in the quality, frequency and consistency of arts education at the K-12 levels from district to district and from school to school across the Bay area. Some districts provide certified teachers in one or more of the arts (dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts), while others rely solely on outside arts and education organizations (called arts providers) to fill the gaps in their faculty.

Independent arts providers offer a range of programs for students and for teachers taught by professional teaching artists or by artists who are also credentialed teachers. Programs usually happen at a school site and involve students directly with artists through performances, artist residencies, and workshops. The benefit of using arts providers is that they offer an array of teaching artists from diverse cultures that employ different teaching styles and techniques. Arts providers also offer training and professional programs for teachers, principals, site coordinators and school leaders to help them develop and teach discipline-based and integrated arts curricula.

Two strategic planning processes are underway in the Bay Area that are both determined to articulate and provide sequential, consistent arts education for students from kindergarten through grade 12.

Alameda County Office of Education -  
<http://www.artiseducation.org/aall/aall.htm>

San Francisco Unified School District: Arts Education Master Plan -  
<http://portal.sfusd.edu/template/default.cfm?page=initiatives.aemp>

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"Art failure? Local educators struggle to fill the arts gap left by Proposition 13," Glen Starkey, New Times - [http://newtimes-slo.com/archives/cov\\_stories\\_2002/cov\\_12052002.html](http://newtimes-slo.com/archives/cov_stories_2002/cov_12052002.html)

## SECTION II – TEXT RESOURCES

NOTE: Additional discipline-specific arts and culture texts can be found in the SPARKed Educator Guides Archive of the SPARK Web site at <http://www.kqed.org/spark/education/lessonplans/archive.jsp>.

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## SECTION III – INTERNET RESOURCES

### NATIONAL & STATE INTERNET RESOURCES

American Alliance for Theatre and Education – Organization dedicated to promoting standards of excellence in theatre and theatre education, connecting artists, educators, researchers and scholars with each other, and providing opportunities for our membership to learn, exchange, expand and diversify their work, their audience and their perspectives. - <http://www.aate.com>

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

Arts Education Partnership - National coalition of arts, education, business, philanthropic and government organizations promoting the essential role of the arts in the learning and development of every child and in the improvement of America's schools. - <http://aep-arts.org>

ArtsEdge – The arts education initiative of the Kennedy Center, offering a range of programs, curricula, links, and resources for educators. - <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org>

ArtsEdNet – The Getty Center for Education in the Arts - <http://www.getty.edu/artsednet/home.html>

Arts for Learning – A K-12 multimedia professional development project created by Young Audiences Inc, participating Young Audiences chapters, and national arts and arts education organizations across the country – <http://www.arts4learning.org>

Arts in Every Classroom, The – A collaborative project of The Annenberg Foundation and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), Learner.org offers a video library, sample curricula and resources. - <http://www.learner.org/channel/libraries/artsineveryclassroom>

Association for the Advancement of Arts Education, The - The AAAE teaches teachers how to use the arts to teach social studies, science, math and language arts through arts integration. - <http://www.aaae.org>

California Alliance for Arts Education – The CAAE promotes, supports, and advocates for visual and performing arts education for preschool through post-secondary students in California schools. - <http://www.artsed411.org>

California Arts Council – The state arts council for California, offering grant programs, the arts license plate, and links to arts organizations across the state, as well as updates on the state's funding of the arts and arts education - <http://www.cac.ca.gov>

California Assembly of Local Arts Agencies - A non-profit, member-supported organization representing California's 250 local arts agencies - <http://www.calaa.net>

California Department of Education – Visual & Performing Arts Education – Complete overview of the state's arts initiatives, including Arts Assessment, Arts Taskforce, Arts Funding, Policies, and Legislation - <http://www.cde.ca.gov/shsd/arts>

California State Visual & Performing Arts Content Standards – Online version (printable). - <http://www.cde.ca.gov/shsd/arts/standards.htm>

California's Local Arts Education Program (LAEP) - LAEP encourages the establishment of arts programs in public schools by linking local school districts with local arts agencies. - <http://www.cde.ca.gov/shsd/arts/laep.htm>

Harold Gardner's *Theory of Multiple Intelligence and Arts Education*– Eric Digest synopsis with references - <http://www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed410226.html>

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 – Awards in the visual and literary arts open to K-12 students through local and regional networks. -  
<http://www.scholastic.com/artandwritingawards/index.htm>

TCAP – The California Arts Project – The state’s subject matter project in Visual & Performing Arts, TCAP’s mission is to deepen teachers’ knowledge of dance, music, theatre, and visual art, to enhance student success pre-kindergarten through post-secondary, and to develop instructional strategies to support the Visual & Performing Arts Content Standards and framework in California’s public schools. - <http://csmp.ucop.edu/tcap>

TeachingArts.org – A gateway site to arts education organizations and information in California. -  
<http://www.teachingarts.org>

Young Audiences Inc. – The national umbrella organization for Young Audiences’ chapters nationwide – the largest and oldest provider of arts education in the US. -  
<http://www.youngaudiences.org>

## SECTION IV – VIDEO RESOURCES

### VIDEO RESOURCES

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/download/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>

SPARK – KQED-produced multiplatform arts project about art and artists in the Bay Area, including weekly television program, Web site, and educational outreach. Most stories viewable on-line along with events, education, outreach, and more at <http://www.kqed.org/spark>

Art:21 - **Art** in the Twenty-First Century is a new PBS documentary series about contemporary visual **art** in America and the artists who make it. Three seasons of the films are available on DVD or VHS, including educational materials. - <http://www.pbs.org/art21>