

## *Beverly Hills Unified School District*

2007-2008 student enrollment: 5,305

1 high school (grades 9-12)

4 elementary schools (grades K-8)

1 alternative school<sup>9</sup>

### DISTRICT CONTEXT

Beverly Hills Unified School District is a small district located in an affluent urban community where parents are avid supporters of arts education. Prior to joining the *Arts for All* initiative in 2004, the four K-8 elementary schools employed full-time visual arts specialists and shared itinerant choral and band specialists. Dance and theatre instruction were offered periodically by classroom teachers with training or through residency visits by community arts providers. At the high school, elective courses are offered in dance, choral and instrumental music, theatre and visual arts. In contrast to teachers in other subject areas, the arts specialists made independent decisions on curriculum and instruction. The district had designated a visual arts specialist as an arts coordinator in the past, but there was no master plan in place and eventually the position was phased out.

Beverly Hills USD paid for teaching personnel and curriculum materials for the arts from the general budget. The district also received significant external funding through school PTAs, the Beverly Hills Education Foundation and grants. These funds inadvertently created inequities in arts education offerings at the four elementary schools. When the *Arts for All* initiative was announced, it was viewed as an opportunity to address the equity issue and to elevate the art disciplines as core subjects to be taught through a standards-based, sequential curriculum.

### STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR THE ARTS

When the Beverly Hills *Arts for All* initiative began in 2004, the district established an arts advisory committee (CAT team) comprised of board of education members, district and school administrators, teachers, community advocates, parents and students. The committee worked with an *Arts for All* planning coach to assess the district's existing arts program, create a new vision and develop a three-year arts plan. The plan included recognized elements of a quality arts program: curriculum and instruction, evaluation, resources and facilities, funding and support, partnerships and communication, and program administration. Many of the plan's objectives were later viewed as unrealistic, given the budget and three-year period allotted.

As part of the planning process, the CAT team wrote a detailed arts education policy that was approved by the Beverly Hills Board of Education in February 2005. The policy states the board's intention is to "educate all students so they can experience, perform, produce

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<sup>9</sup> Alternative schools are addressed in the LACOE case study.

and appreciate the arts.” The policy also acknowledges that the arts should be taught during the school day as part of a comprehensive curriculum and that in times of budgetary cutbacks, reductions in funding would be distributed across all school programs, rather than eliminate the arts. Targeted objectives for the district were then described relative to the principal elements of the arts plan, including: a standards-based curriculum and assessment, a qualified arts coordinator, qualified teachers in all art disciplines K-12, ongoing professional development, opportunities during school hours for teachers to collaborate, an appropriate student-to-teacher ratio, standards-based instructional materials and facilities, equipped visual arts and performance rooms, exposing students to a wide variety of artistic styles, venues and performances, cross-school learning activities and the establishment of community resource partners, including businesses and parents.

When the district arts plan was updated in 2008 it reflected more realistic objectives than the first plan had. However, the plan did not include a calendar of action steps, so the CAT team will continue to meet to make decisions based on input from a needs assessment survey teachers completed. As of spring 2008, there were 23 CAT team members, although most decisions are made by a smaller, core group of participants. The team is currently composed of ten arts specialists, two school administrators, two high school students, the district arts coordinator, a board of education member, three PTA presidents, the Beverly Hills Education Foundation president, the Beverly Hills mayor, the city recreational services manager and the executive director of a Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts. The CAT team is set to expand again in 2008-2009 with the addition of more district arts specialists.

*“None of these things would happen without the coordinator. Almost like the captain; you roll on a ship and the captain is giving the orders. You need a captain.”*

## IMPLEMENTING THE ARTS PLAN

Implementation of the Beverly Hills *Arts for All* plan began with the hiring of a full-time arts coordinator as a teacher on special assignment position (TOSA), made possible through a matching two-year grant from the *Arts for All* Pooled Fund. A former K-8 music specialist, she worked with district arts specialists to align K-12 instruction in the major art disciplines with California visual and performing arts content standards. Curriculum alignment was happening simultaneously in all subject areas as part of a district-wide effort to forge a more cohesive instructional program. The arts coordinator also worked with teachers in scheduling time to share knowledge and collaborate in planning for quality, sequential instruction for all students.

In the fall of 2006, two additional instrumental music specialists were hired so each elementary school now has a full-time choral and instrumental (band and string) teacher for grades six through eight. Students in grades one through eight already received general music education and access to the music specialists was extended to kindergarteners in all

schools. The state legislative block grants paid for musical instruments in all grade levels along with other art supplies and equipment, including digital cameras and computers to be used for documentation.

The students were offered new opportunities to showcase their work as well. Through a developing partnership between the district and the City of Beverly Hills, music and dance students were invited to perform in a multicultural festival. In one special project organized by a board member and a hotel developer, high school students painted a mural that was installed at a downtown construction site. The mural is still in place more than a year later, and includes the district's *Arts for All* logo as a public promotion for district arts programs.

As an additional instructional program and fundraising effort, the district also started a five-week Summer Arts Academy open to all Beverly Hills USD students as well as to students from surrounding districts. The Beverly Hills Education Foundation, which supports a range of school programming, covered the costs of the summer school and then donated the student enrollment fees to provide additional funding for the arts. The Summer Arts Academy proceeds were later used to pay professional development costs for district visual arts specialists, who were initiating an animation program.

In 2007-2008, a former Beverly Hills High School dance specialist and assistant principal was appointed as district arts coordinator when the former coordinator left to take a similar administrative position at the Los Angeles County Office of Education. While the former coordinator had been employed full time, her replacement, for personal reasons, asked for and received a half-time position. She also held the position of physical education coordinator. Thereafter, the arts committee was renamed the Arts and Physical Education Advisory Committee with a goal of incorporating more movement in the arts plan, primarily with dance instruction. Working with a matching grant from the *Arts for All* Pooled Fund, the district paid for a dance residency for all fifth graders and for physical education specialists to be trained in dance class organization. The arts coordinator also worked with kindergarten and first grade teachers on ways to incorporate dance and the other art disciplines into their curriculum.

Another area of focus during 2007-2008 was exploring formative and summative (end of year) student assessment in the arts. Responding to a district directive for improved accountability in student learning across all subject areas, arts specialists and classroom teachers met to discuss ways to assess students in the arts at all grade levels. Next steps for the CAT team includes targeting elementary classroom instruction, program evaluation, parent advocacy and strengthening local business and civic partnerships.

## MECHANISMS AND CHALLENGES

The CAT team benefits from the strong support of parents who are active on the CAT team, the board of education, the school PTAs and the Beverly Hills Education Foundation. Individual school PTAs have contributed up to 25 percent of the total district expenditures in arts education. This school-community collaboration, along with the efforts of the board,

district administrators and its past and current arts coordinators, is at the heart of the Beverly Hills USD expansion in arts education. These and other mechanisms and challenges that have impacted the implementation of the district arts plan are listed below:

### **Mechanisms for Change**

- *Administrative dynamics.* It was easier for the new arts coordinator to communicate with and gain the cooperation of principals from an administrative position, as opposed to approaching them as the former coordinator had, as a teacher on special assignment.
- *An arts coordinator with secondary teaching experience.* It was easier to garner participation from secondary arts specialists because they could relate to someone who understood their perspective on arts instruction.
- *Board of Education support.* The district arts plan and policy were swiftly approved, in part, because board members helped to prepare it. The board continues to show support by approving the hiring of additional personnel and the purchase of supplies and instruments.
- *Strong partners.* The Beverly Hills PTA and the Education Foundation aligned their objectives for supporting arts education with the district's arts plan and are helping to fill instructional gaps by funding programs according to the needs set forth by the CAT team.
- *Civic support.* The City administrators are committed to ensuring the arts are part of a comprehensive education for Beverly Hills USD students. The district and City have an on-going fiscal partnership that allows for community access to campuses after school hours for cultural, educational and recreational activities in exchange for significant operational funding. This funding made it possible to hire more art specialists at the elementary level.

### **Challenges of Change**

- *Changing leadership.* A series of changes in senior administration has resulted in uneven attention being paid to the arts plan, which has stalled implementation efforts at times.
- *Teacher resistance.* With three arts specialists at each elementary level, classroom teachers questioned why they also needed to teach the arts through integration. The teachers also had a prior history of attempting a full adoption of the Getty Center for Education in the Art's Discipline-Based Arts Education instructional model and of failing to get everyone on board. Some teachers were hesitant to put their energy into another arts education initiative.
- *Crowded teaching schedule.* The elementary arts specialists reported that they barely get to see the students each week, so plans to add more dance and theatre instruction time into the regular teaching schedule has been a concern.
- *Lack of record keeping.* When the arts coordinator was hired in 2006, she found there was no organized documentation of the district's recent arts education expenditures or what had been accomplished since joining *Arts for All*. She also has

had a difficult time documenting more recent expenditures at the school level because it has been difficult to track funding that comes from a variety of places. She sees a benefit in tracking how all arts-related funds are spent in the district to assist schools in making an organized plan that supports the advancement of equitable access to learning opportunities in the arts.

## OUTCOMES

Perhaps the most significant outcome at Beverly Hills USD to date was a policy decision: whatever administrative decisions on instructional practices affect other areas of the school curriculum now affect the arts education program as well. This indicates the arts are being taken seriously as a component of the core curriculum. Other changes in the district associated with the *Arts for All* initiative are briefly described below.

### *Content*

**Standards-based Curriculum.** Beverly Hills USD is continuing to develop sequential curricula in the four major art disciplines (dance, music, theatre and visual arts). Presently, teachers at all grade levels rely on the state content standards to guide instruction. Additionally, the arts specialists at the high school level are working with K-8 teachers in aligning instruction and assessment in the arts to ensure a smooth transition for students from eighth grade into high school arts programs.

**Pedagogy.** Currently, Beverly Hills is primarily focused on teaching the arts as discrete disciplines, with some integration happening at the elementary level. The district now employs specialists for dance (9-12), music (K-12), theatre (9-12) and visual arts (grades K-12). With the reinstatement of a string instruments program in grades six through eight, the sequence from general music in the lower elementary grades to the high school music classes has been considerably strengthened. Dance has been incorporated into K-8 physical education classes by employing professional dancers to model effective instruction with students and then training the physical education teachers how to structure dance classes. Sequential theatre instruction has not been adopted yet at the K-8 level due to time constraints in the school day.

**Student Assessment.** During the 2007-2008 year, all district teachers participated in professional development about formative and summative assessments and how those practices might influence their instructional choices in core subject areas, including the arts. Resulting changes in classroom practice have not been documented to date.

**Professional Development.** In the past year, each district arts specialist participated in professional development days, including animation training for the visual arts specialists. Their students will soon learn to make drawings, upload them into a computer and animate

them. In addition, kindergarten and first grade teachers attended a session on integration led by the arts coordinator, creating an opportunity to share effective practices.

### *Infrastructure*

**Program Administration.** The current arts coordinator holds a part-time administrative position, though it will be reconfigured as a part-time TOSA position in 2008-2009. She juggled the responsibility of overseeing both the arts and physical education programs for the past year, but now will focus solely on arts education and be relieved of some administrative duties.

**Personnel.** At the high school level, there were arts specialists on staff in all four art disciplines prior to joining *Arts for All*. District funds have been used to hire two additional music specialists for grades six through eight, so each K-8 site now has an instrumental specialist as well as a choral and visual arts specialist. In addition, K-8 physical education specialists have been trained to offer a unit in dance and choreography.

**Facilities and Equipment.** All Beverly Hills USD schools have functional performance spaces and dedicated rooms for visual arts and music. No significant physical improvements were made to these facilities in the past four years based on the arts plan. State legislative funds and general district funds were used to purchase musical instruments, art supplies and equipment. Teachers at each school were given the opportunity to create a wish list, so purchase decisions were made solely on a classroom-by-classroom basis.

**Partnerships and collaborations.** The Beverly Hill Education Foundation and the school PTAs have become good partners in finding ways to fill instructional gaps in the arts. Other instructional partners include the Music Center of Los Angeles County and Theatre 40, which send residency artists to work with students. Two developing civic partnerships, with the City of Beverly Hills and the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, will provide ongoing opportunities for students to exhibit and perform.

### *Sustainability*

**Policy.** The district approved an arts education policy in 2005 that documented the board of education's commitment to develop a comprehensive K-12 sequential program and treat arts education on an equal basis with other core subjects. For the first time, the arts are to be held to similar accountability standards as well.

**Funding.** Beverly Hill USD funds its art education program through a combination of internal and external sources. Currently, the general budget covers salaries and some instructional resources. The high school's performing arts endowment was generated through a one-time private donation that pays for performance projects each year, sometimes in combination with matching funds from the district or other grants and donations. State block grants were used to purchase supplies over the past two years.

While the arts coordinator organizes and runs the Summer Arts Academy as a source of income, the Beverly Hills Education Foundation and the school PTAs raise additional funding for arts education programs beyond what the district can provide. However, the arts coordinator must then adjust for inequities that seep into school arts education programs because some PTAs raise more money than others. The Foundation has recently redirected its giving towards technology and arts education, and hopes to start an arts endowment in the future. As previously stated, it currently pays the overhead for the Summer Arts Academy and then donates student enrollment fees to the district arts programs. A District-City partnership that allows community use of the campuses provides operational funds for the district, freeing up other portions of the general budget for hiring additional arts personnel.

**Evaluation.** The CAT team conducted a district-wide assessment of arts education programming in 2004, which provided a baseline for measuring future progress. The revised district arts plan indicates that the arts coordinator will be spearheading an evaluation effort and program needs assessment in 2008-2009 to determine action steps going forward.

**Communication and Advocacy.** The arts coordinator has primarily used the district website for communication and advocacy. She has also attended PTA meetings and met with teachers to stay abreast of school schedules and other issues. In addition, she drafts a weekly update on implementation progress for the board of education, sends press releases to local newspapers and occasionally sends flyers out to teachers, as when she is recruiting students for the summer academy. She has also appeared on local access television when presenting the CAT team's activities and accomplishments to the board. Finally, to show the community what students are learning in the schools, student work is occasionally displayed in various city venues.

**District Leadership.** The original arts plan was strongly supported by an assistant superintendent who has since left Beverly Hills. The Beverly Hills Board of Education's solid endorsement of the arts education program is perceived as vital to ensuring its viability. Through the adopted board policy on arts education, the superintendent is responsible for implementing the plan and for providing for the ongoing review, evaluation and continued development of the district's arts education program. Two successive superintendents have remained supportive.

## INCREASED ACCESS TO ARTS EDUCATION

The Beverly Hills CAT team has made progress in increasing student access to quality arts instruction in numerous areas. Three years of cross-site discussions on K-12 standards alignment, integration and assessment have set the stage for higher quality arts instruction in the classroom. Due to the hiring of additional arts personnel at both the K-8 and high school level, the number of visual arts and music classes has increased, meaning the number of hours of instruction and the number of students who receive instruction have also increased. This is particularly true with instruction in string instruments and with dance during physical education classes. In addition, a sculpture class was added at the high school

level and students (grade 6-12) will soon have access to animation coursework. Arts instruction in the elementary classroom is not perceived to have increased significantly as specialists teach two out of four major disciplines. The Beverly Hills Parks and Recreation Department offers arts programs afterschool at one elementary school that expanded slightly. Instructional resource purchases have included musical instruments, art supplies and equipment for all grades. Digital equipment such as digital cameras, computers and animation software has been provided for teachers at the secondary level (grades 6-12).

The arts specialists have increased their focus on ways to have their students' work shown publicly, which led to district-wide events being organized for the first time. For example, a string instruments festival was initiated as well as a juried band festival intended to prepare students for musical competitions. More students are now participating in national competitions due to the encouragement of the music specialists. In all, the five Beverly Hills schools sponsored over thirty arts events during the 2007-2008 school year, including 21 musical performances, eight plays, six art exhibitions and two dance performances. This was in addition to in-house events at each school resulting from artist residencies or classroom instruction. An additional play was produced in the winter by the high school drama department.

Areas of access that have not changed significantly are the number of elementary classroom teachers providing arts instruction or the condition of arts facilities. Access for students with special needs has not changed as they already participate in the current arts program. While the district has improved student access to dance and music and strengthened visual arts instruction through the alignment with state standards, perhaps its greatest challenge ahead is in finding ways to integrate theatre and more dance into the school day when teachers are already feeling overwhelmed by their workload. While the CAT team stressed the need for increased funding to sustain the Beverly Hills USD arts program, securing and sustaining the commitment of elementary classroom teachers will be of equal importance.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OPPORTUNITIES

Seven areas for continued assistance through *Arts for All* were identified:

- Arts coordinator coaching on different aspects of implementation
- CAT team training in building a community advocacy campaign
- Completing a fully action-oriented strategic plan
- Increasing teacher buy-in through focused professional development
- Funds for teaching resources, professional development and arts personnel salaries
- Documentation notebook, so avoid the loss of history when an arts coordinator leaves
- Tools for tracking school expenditures for the arts