

Pasadena Unified School District

2007-2008 student enrollment: 20,905

3 high schools (grades 7-12 and 9-12)

3 middle schools (grades 6-8)

18 elementary schools (grades K- 5, K-6 and K-8)

9 alternative schools¹⁶

DISTRICT CONTEXT

Prior to 2003, Pasadena Unified School District had been working toward creating a K-8 magnet school in the arts, but those plans were abandoned when the *Arts for All* initiative was launched and a new administration embraced the idea of providing more equitable access to arts education for *all* students. The district employed arts specialists in visual arts and music at the secondary level and had a relatively strong music education program, but the arts were taught primarily by classroom teachers at the elementary level according to their own skill level and the encouragement of individual school administrators. Secondary music specialists in particular were worried about the collapse of their programs without a strong feeder system from the elementary level.

Pasadena is a city rich in arts organizations, many of which, prior to *Arts for All*, provided field trip opportunities, assembly programs or classroom residency experiences for district schools as grant money became available. At the time the *Arts for All* initiative was launched, the district and local arts organizations had already begun conversations about working together in new ways to ensure students received standards-based arts education, that teachers were trained to provide quality arts instruction, and that community artists were employed to their highest and best capacities. The *Arts for All* planning process was seen as a good fit to further this process and transform the intermittent nature of arts instruction—particularly at the elementary level—into a sequential, comprehensive K-12 program.

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR ARTS EDUCATION

From the beginning, the planning team had strong, equal representation from the district and the community, and formed the district Art Team/Community Art Team, or DATCAT. The district members included school administrators, a school board member and secondary arts specialists, including one Teacher on Special Assignment who provided leadership during the planning phase. The Community members were arts providers, a Pasadena Education Foundation board member, a Pasadena Art Council member and an artist-parent. For purposes of this report, the planning team will be referred to simply as the CAT team.

¹⁶ Alternative schools are addressed in the LACOE case study.

Working with the assistance of an *Arts for All* planning coach, the CAT team prepared and submitted a ten-year master plan to the school board in the spring of 2004. As in other Vanguard Districts, the plan was based on essential elements of a quality arts program. Those elements were divided into three strategic groupings and designated to work committees for follow-through. They included: 1) Content: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, 2) Infrastructure: Professional development, Evaluation, Program Administration, and 3) Sustainability: Partnerships, Funding, Resources and Arts Awareness. The plan is presently being updated with the goal to identify relevant action steps for the next three years (2008-2009 through 2011-2012).

The district had previously passed a policy on arts education in 2001 stating support for the adoption of a comprehensive curriculum in the arts based on the visual and performing arts framework for California. It also acknowledged the importance of community instructional partners for students and a preference for utilizing arts-integrated instruction in all core subject areas. An addendum statement was approved in 2003, acknowledging the importance of weekly instructional time, credentialed teaching staff, an arts coordinator, community resources, facilities, and necessary supplies. It also noted the fundamental importance of ongoing professional development and directed the superintendent to develop an arts budget and provide for the review, evaluation and development of the Pasadena USD's arts education programs. These commitments provided the basis for and the leverage behind the district arts education plan.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Once the district arts plan was written and the work committees were formed, a number of key accomplishments were achieved between 2004 and 2006. In the area of instructional content, these included a decision to focus on improving elementary arts education during

the first phase of implementation, the researching of possible curriculum and instruction models, the adoption of the California Visual and Performing Arts Framework, the development and adoption of district art standards, and the writing of K-12 visual arts and music achievement benchmarks.

“I do think you have to be strategic and you have to figure out the right timing to do certain things....we always had to be very flexible.”

In the area of infrastructure, accomplishments included a professional development partnership with a newly hired city arts coordinator, a school-level assessment of arts education program quality, and the adoption of a school board policy and arts plan. In the area of program sustainability, the CAT team cataloged Pasadena's arts providers based on their educational services, established a one percent baseline district budget for the arts with a community match of one percent, created a list of plausible grant sources, inventoried all available arts

facilities and equipment, and hosted two district-wide events showcasing student work in the visual and performing arts as an advocacy measure. After completing the groundwork,

the CAT team narrowed its focus to impacting the quality of instruction and deepening the collaboration between the district and the city.

At this point, the team recognized they needed an administrator with diverse skills to move the arts plan forward. Given the work represented in the arts plan, the team hired a former non-profit executive director in 2006 with experience in fundraising, marketing, budgeting, education programming and event planning. While she had no prior teaching experience, she came from a theatre background and held a broad perspective of the benefits of learning in all four art disciplines. This new arts coordinator had to overcome two initial challenges. One was learning to function effectively in a district central office environment without a background in public education. This was complicated by a string of turnovers among senior administrators, meaning considerable time and energy had to be spent in rebuilding supportive relationships and defending the use of district funds to implement the arts plan.

The other challenge was transforming the dynamic among arts specialists from operating in relative isolation to working in a group and taking ownership of enacting the arts plan. It had been generally assumed that the arts coordinator would do all the work to ensure it was implemented. In addition, not all arts specialists were ready to give up their individual work styles. With the exception of some visual arts specialists, most had to be wooed to gain their trust and participation in the implementation process. By taking the time to get to know the existing arts specialists and community partners, the arts coordinator was eventually able to harness the participation of key stakeholders.

The arts coordinator also disbanded the work that had addressed the original strategic directions of content, infrastructure and program sustainability. As time went on, the educational partnership between the district and the City of Pasadena, the Foundation and the local arts providers was acknowledged as essential to sustaining the effort to realize the goal of equitable student access to quality arts instruction.

One of the goals of the district arts plan was that all K-5 students would receive 12 weeks of music instruction and 12 weeks of visual arts instruction each school year. To facilitate this, the CAT team purchased teachers' edition textbooks on visual arts and music for all elementary teachers in the fall of 2006. The one-time legislative block grant was used to pay for a year of training and mentoring. In addition, the district paid a consultant to create a special supplemental visual arts curriculum called, *My Masterpieces: Discovering Art in My Community*. This program matched community arts providers with specific grade levels, according to the district content standards to be taught. Beyond providing students with lessons that introduced them to significant original works of art, the program was designed to enable students to visit each

“The city also went through an arts planning process, so we had this communication between the District and the city. We decided we were going to be an egg with two yolks.”

of the major arts and cultural facilities in the city at least once during their elementary school years.

In 2007, the Pasadena USD arts program grew again when, as part of the plan, a middle school music teacher was promoted to district Music Coordinator and her responsibilities expanded to include supervising all school music specialists. The position was paid for partly through the ongoing legislative block grant funding and partly through the district personnel budget. As a supervisor, the music specialist schedules elementary music class rotations and distributes musical instruments, coordinates professional development workshops and organizes performance events, including the district-wide concerts. During 2008-2009, she will be preparing a plan for expanding the music program by strengthening the sequencing of instruction across school levels. This will ensure students obtain the skills they need to successfully transition into more demanding courses as they grow and, ultimately, revitalize the secondary music programs.

The arts coordinator intends to hire a district-level visual arts specialist during 2008-2009. Elementary theatre and dance instruction will be handled somewhat differently, at least in the short term, as there is no room in the schedule to teach these art disciplines as separate subjects like music and visual arts. Instead, the current plan is that theatre will be integrated with language arts instruction and dance will be offered during physical education or through afterschool programs.

MECHANISMS AND CHALLENGES

Perhaps the signature characteristic of the Pasadena story is the belief that the arts present an opportunity for direct civic participation in schools, and vice versa. In a city that values the arts and culture, the goal of the district-community collaboration is to help students develop an appreciation or passion for the arts, as they will become the next generation of civic leaders, business people, parents, arts audiences and creative artists. To this end, the arts coordinators from Pasadena USD and the City have worked closely in creating programming that serves the interests of all parties. While this partnership is central to the implementation of the Pasadena USD arts plan, other factors assist or impede progress. These are listed below as mechanisms and challenges of change:

Mechanisms of Change

- *Community expectations.* The community supports and values the arts and the expectation is that its schools will also.
- *Multitalented arts coordinator.* The arts coordinator's executive background and experience in non-profit arts and educational programming allows her to function well in numerous capacities.
- *Arts-experienced classroom teachers.* Between 25-30 percent of Pasadena USD's teaching core have background training in an art discipline.

- *A supportive school board.* Individual members are willing to take supportive actions even in the face of a small coalition of community opposition to arts education in the schools.
- *District and community art team co-chairs.* This partnership ensured a balance in power during the implementation process, and expanded their ability to gain the cooperation of others as needed.
- *Making goals visible through the arts plan.* An initial lack of interest shown by secondary music specialists was overcome when they realized there was the potential to develop a quality, sequential K-12 program.
- *Adequate funding to musical instruments.* Being able to purchase enough instruments to supply a district-wide K-12 music program was key to adoption and expansion.
- *Mandated weekly arts instruction.* Elementary teachers were encouraged to enlist in professional development workshops to fulfill the district mandate of one hour of arts instruction each week.

Challenges to Change

- *Open, fluid membership on the CAT team.* Too much flexibility in meeting attendance and membership meant that decision-making was slowed by the need to educate new members on preceding events and understandings.
- *Continual change in leadership.* Due to chronic turnover in high level administration, the district's governing structure has threatened to disrupt or slow implementation processes.
- *Conflicting priorities and administrative practices.* Internal policies and changes in day-to-day working practices created challenges in securing district-designated arts funding, as when funds were needed to carry over a year to cover larger curriculum purchases.
- *Lack of news media interest.* The local press has been critical of the school district, which made it difficult to showcase art events in the community newspaper.
- *Teacher buy-in.* Getting teachers to take ownership of the district arts plan remains a challenge, primarily because of their busy teaching schedules.
- *Excessive paperwork.* The arts coordinator would greatly benefit from an administrative assistant to keep up on paperwork for the arts program and for website updating.
- *Culture of local control.* In the Pasadena USD, each school historically operates as an independent entity, or an educational island. This caused a communication disconnect, as when a PTA president and another parent had wanted to try a new arts education initiative without knowing about the district arts plan or even thinking to check with the district arts coordinator.

OUTCOMES

Pasadena USD's strongest areas of arts program development are standards-based curriculum adoption and the maturing community partnerships with the City and its arts

providers. The CAT team made substantial progress in other aspects as well, as indicated below:

Content

Standards-based Curriculum. Prior to *Arts for All*, the district had identified key content standards in the four major art disciplines that Pasadena teachers would use to guide their instruction. Next, state-approved textbooks (SRA) in visual arts and music were reviewed, adopted, purchased and distributed to all K-6 elementary teachers, using the one-time legislative block grant funding. Outdated curricula for secondary visual arts and music were also revised to align with the key content standards. The result was a K-12 sequential learning system in both art disciplines. *My Masterpieces*, a supplemental visual arts curriculum that introduces K-6 students to the art and art facilities in the community was written by an arts consultant in 2007-2008. It will be piloted in four schools during 2007-2008. Music integration materials were purchased for the fifth and sixth grades, and general music textbooks were purchased for fourth grade. Plans to introduce dance and theatre curricula have not yet begun.

Pedagogy. Perhaps the most fundamental change attributed to the *Arts for All* initiative has been the realization by elementary teachers that the arts were henceforth to be considered part of the core curriculum, rather than used for enrichment. To confirm this perspective, the teachers were mandated to teach one hour of music for 12 weeks and one hour of visual arts for another 12. Grade level pacing guides were developed for the K-6 visual arts and music curricula. In addition, a concerted effort was made to ensure that classroom teachers and community artists collaboratively plan standards-based lessons instead of just accepting whatever the artists suggest.

The combined changes in curriculum materials, professional development, encouragement from the district's central office and new expectations of teaching artists has reportedly resulted in an increased interest and frequency of instruction across the district. The arts are treated as discrete subjects mostly, although some integration is supported at the upper elementary grades during fifth and sixth grade music and through making visual arts-literacy connections with the SRA textbooks. Music instruction has expanded from an upper elementary instrumental program to an inclusive, general music program for grades K-6. Students at the lower grades are now exposed to band instruments to build interest in the upper grade (Grades 4-6) instrumental program. Currently, dance and theatre instruction continue to be offered on a sporadic basis by teachers with the skills and confidence to do so.

Student Assessment. Arts assessments are embedded in select K-6 visual arts and music lessons from the adopted textbooks. No data have been collected on student outcomes to date. A performing arts talent identification tool used in New York City public schools and others was also piloted in coordination with the district's Gifted and Talented Program (GATE).

Professional Development. Once the visual arts and music curricula was adopted, K-5 elementary teachers and principals were offered a day of orientation training in their use. The training was provided by art teachers, community artists and textbook publisher representatives. Recognizing and responding to the need for additional professional development, the district pursued—and won—external grants specifically targeted to support professional development for visual arts, including a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Trained coaches—who were mainly retired teachers—rotated to schools and supported classroom teachers in trying selected lessons from the textbooks with their students. Afterschool and in-service workshops were also offered to expand the number and type of visual arts lessons being taught. During the summers, the district arts coordinator and the city arts consultant host an annual arts institute for teachers and interested community members. An area of special focus within the institute is providing arts instruction for English language learners and students with special needs.

Infrastructure

Program Administration. The district hired a three-quarter-time arts coordinator with a theatre and non-profit administration background. The position is paid out of ongoing state block grant funding. The district arts coordinator is expected to carry the bulk of the workload at this time. One significant challenge faced by the coordinator is that, as a mid-level administrator, she is somewhat confined to making changes in arts curricula and instruction and has more difficulty affecting improvements in areas such as arts facilities or in district budgeting for arts education, which are under the authority of other administrative departments.

Personnel. A part-time district-level music coordinator position was restored in 2007-2008 and a part-time district visual arts coordinator will be hired in 2008-2009. Their roles are to help the district arts coordinator strengthen curriculum connections across school levels, support teachers in professional development and coordinate arts events. The arts coordinator was also promoted from external consultant to administrative staff.

Facilities and Equipment. Since 2005, musical instruments, curricula, arts supplies and related equipment have been purchased and delivered to all Pasadena USD schools. Sixty percent of these costs were paid for through the state block grant money and another 40 percent were paid for from school budgets. A district-wide musical instrument inventory was completed in 2007 and a new tracking system is being explored to prevent loss and ensure equitable access to resources. Individual schools are presently creating plans for a one-time facilities upgrade as part of a school bond measure under development.

Partnerships and Collaborations. While attracting community arts partners has not been difficult for Pasadena USD, creating functional instructional teams that best serve the students has taken some time. The CAT team had to re-define what the district wanted from its community collaborators. The local arts providers had to change their delivery model to better reflect instructional needs in the classroom rather than provide experiences based primarily on their own interests. In the past, individual schools contracted separately with community arts providers to teach aspects of the visual and performing arts. While

some of that activity continues, the district now has a listing of 23 vetted arts organizations that deliver sequenced instruction through the *My Masterpieces: Great Art in My Community* curriculum. The district has also held an art exhibition in coordination with the nearby Art Center College of Design.

Sustainability

Policy. Pasadena USD had a board policy for arts education prior to joining *Arts for All*, but the CAT team has since spearheaded three revisions to reflect the adoption of the 2004 California Visual and Performing Arts Framework as well as the school board's recognition of the arts as part of the core curriculum. With recent high turnover in district administration, the arts coordinator reported she was able to refer to the policy as a way to stop challenges over arts spending from newly hired leaders. Having the policy in place has also given the arts coordinator a stronger say on district issues, such as the designation of instructional minutes for the arts.

Funding. The majority of funding used for arts education since joining *Arts for All* has come from state block grants, the district general funds, resources gathered through the collaborative efforts of the City and Education Foundation and grants that were pursued and won. The one-time legislative block grant was used primarily for purchasing needed supplies, materials and equipment. The ongoing block grant has been spent on the arts coordinator's salary, the district-level music specialist, and professional development. The district has paid for secondary arts specialist salaries, art supplies and equipment and curriculum materials. The Pasadena Education Foundation has also worked with the arts coordinator in attracting numerous funding opportunities from private and public grant sources including VH1. It was also instrumental in raising funds for district-wide arts exhibitions and music festivals and provided matching funds for the U.S. Department of Education professional development grant through private donors. Pasadena USD also had lottery funding and film location fees that were earmarked for arts education.

Evaluation. Pasadena is notable among the Vanguard Districts in its focus on program evaluation during the early stages of implementation. The district has been collecting periodic evidence on changes in arts education program quality from school sites, which has provided data for administrative reflection. The CAT team also conducted a site-base assessment of available facilities and resources both within the district and with community arts providers. All of this information has informed planning and implementation decisions. Professional development workshops are regularly evaluated and a multiyear study of their coaching model for visual arts training is being initiated in 2008-2009. The supplemental visual arts curriculum, *My Masterpieces*, also has an evaluation component being developed. What the district currently lacks is a cohesive design for their overall evaluation process.

Communication and Advocacy. Communication between the arts coordinator and the schools is conducted primarily through distributed flyers, e-mail announcements and the district's on-line master calendar. An arts education website has been posted but is not currently used to its full potential due to the lack of staff hours needed for continual

update. In terms of external communication and advocacy efforts, Pasadena USD employs a communications director, however media relations are handled largely by the district arts education office as time allows. In addition the arts coordinator is occasionally invited to speak to local civic groups such as the Pasadena Arts Commission, the Women's Club and Soroptimists International about the importance of the arts in education and to solicit private donations for the district arts program.

Two of the most visible ways the district demonstrates the arts program's impact are the annual district-wide music festival and biennial art exhibition. These events are gaining wider community recognition each year, with over 3,000 people attending the *No Boundaries* exhibit at two neighboring cultural institutions, the Pasadena Museum of California and the Pacific Asia Museum last May. The CAT team promotes these events to send a message to the school community that arts education has regained some permanence in the public education process.

District Leadership. Perhaps the biggest challenge faced by the Pasadena USD arts program is the high turnover of senior level administrators in recent years. Relationships are constantly disrupted and when new leaders are hired, the resulting shift in internal policies and practices sometimes creates obstacles to getting things approved or accomplished. In addition, each new superintendent's budget review represents a potential threat to funding previously earmarked for arts education.

CHANGES IN INCREASED ACCESS TO ARTS EDUCATION

Pasadena USD has been primarily focused on improving access to arts education at the elementary level, which is where the greatest changes were reported. With the influx of state funding, the district was able to provide curriculum materials and professional development to support sequence instruction in visual arts and music at all 18 schools. The superintendent also mandated that one hour of instructional time a week be devoted to the arts, so, for the first time in recent history, all K-5 students were slated to receive instruction in both areas during 2007-2008.

As the state block grant funding was to be distributed across all schools, the secondary schools equally benefited from infusions of materials, instruments, equipment and supplies. Due to stronger partnerships with city arts providers and available grant funding through the *Arts for All* Pooled Fund and other sources, the number of assemblies, field trips and community artist residencies increased across most schools. Student exhibitions and performances were also on the rise with the reinstatement of the district-wide music festival and *No Boundaries* visual arts show. This increase was due, in large part, to having an arts coordinator available to help organize such events. The high school level also offered more arts classes due to increased Regional Occupation Program (ROP) offerings made possible through the Los Angeles County Office of Education.

Areas of access that had not received focused attention as of May 2008 are afterschool programming—though there have been some offerings at the elementary and high school

levels—the hiring of school level arts specialists, access to new facilities or improved space, and linking arts instruction with technology on a systematic or wide-spread basis.

Overall, the Pasadena USD CAT team has made promising strides in documenting the status of art education in district schools, building the capacity of elementary teachers to offer visual arts and music instruction, and enjoining the surrounding community’s enthusiastic support for arts education. Without having joined *Arts for All* and developing a master arts plan, the CAT team reported the district would probably not have hired an arts coordinator, revived their all-district festivals, adopted visual arts or music curricula, attracted VHI funding, or created the *My Masterpieces* program. Team members also stated the belief that equity in access to arts education would have been unlikely to have improved across the schools in any significant way, due to the historic pattern of site-based decision-making. Instead, Pasadena is well positioned to tackle its next great challenge: providing sequential dance and theatre education for all K-12 students.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OPPORTUNITIES

The following list represents ways that *Arts for All* could continue to support the Pasadena Unified School District CAT team:

- Building school board relationships
- Training in working with school principals: how to prepare them for arts education, how to understand their needs as administrators, and how to collaboratively meet their needs.
- Guidance on determining quality criteria for professional development
- Grants that do not require matching funds
- Branding the district arts program for advocacy purposes
- A workshop in how to design and maximize the use of a district arts website
- Designing a streamlined, yet comprehensive program evaluation