

Fine Arts DAC Recommendations — May 5, 2005

Superintendent John Deasy, at Stairway of the Stars concert, March 2005:

“There’s no such thing as a true education without the arts.”

Executive Summary

The Fine Arts DAC was formed by the Board of Education to support the District in providing access for all students to comprehensive, sequential, standards-based instruction in all four arts disciplines. That has been the focus of our recommendations each year since 1997.

National Opportunity-to-Learn Standards for Arts Education describe the curriculum and scheduling, staffing, instructional materials and equipment, and facilities that are needed in order to provide effective arts instruction.

The DAC is delighted that on February 3, 2005 the Board of Education adopted the “Arts for All” plan, in furtherance of the district’s meeting those standards.

DANCE — We recommend expanding the dance program at elementary, middle, and high school levels. The elementary dance program needs standards-based facilities to avoid teaching outside on asphalt, which is not safe for students. Secondary dance classes should also have accompanists and Malibu High needs a dance facility.

DRAMA — We recommend expansion of the elementary and middle school drama programs; adding Drama at either A or Z period at JAMS; adding a Musical Theatre elective at Samohi; hiring a part-time manager for Barnum Hall at Samohi (detail below); and providing materials and equipment at all secondary schools for making costumes and building scenery.

ELEMENTARY MUSIC — For the 9th year, we are recommending a full return of the districtwide pre K–5 elementary general music program, starting with 3rd grade next year. We hope that a Phonathon organized by SMMEF will provide funding. SMMUSD had such a program until 1983, and general music has been part of the curriculum in American public schools since the 1830’s. The next district bond measure should include provision for standards-based facilities for elementary instrumental music (especially sound isolation).

SECONDARY MUSIC Staffing: At Samohi, we strongly recommend hiring a manager for Barnum Hall to handle scheduling, security, operation, and maintenance. Barnum’s heavy use for Samohi events already calls for professional supervision. Public performances in the hall should not occur until the district has a manager in place to protect the taxpayer’s investment in the building and its expensive equipment. School district teachers and administrators cannot be asked to donate their evenings and weekends to staff the auditorium for non-school events. Funding is also needed at Samohi for the Jazz Choir instructor and accompanist and for an additional 0.2 FTE choir teacher to divide up the 120 voice Chorale into two sections. At Malibu High, an additional 0.2 FTE instrumental music teacher is needed. It is not reasonable to expect one person to teach orchestra, band, and jazz at both middle school and high school. More sections are needed to provide instruction at all skill levels.

Scheduling: At JAMS, we recommend re-establishing daily music instruction, which would require a partial modification of the current “block” schedule. We are concerned about some issues that may affect enrollment. Elimination of Z-P.E. and the addition of “double math” classes, Spanish, and AVID classes may prevent students from taking arts electives. The new JAMS Improvement Action Plan may also affect students’ ability to take arts classes appropriate to their skill level due to scheduling conflicts. Samohi needs more A-period classes for 9th and 10th graders so they can take arts and foreign language classes or arts and sports simultaneously.

Equipment: Although much progress has been made, additional instruments are needed at all the secondary schools.

Facilities: Regarding facilities, the Samohi music students still need lockers to protect their instruments, and the continued restoration of Barnum Hall requires design and installation of acoustical side wall panels for which money has already been raised. Improvements to the Lincoln and Malibu choir rooms will need to be included in the next facilities bond measure, and Lincoln needs an acoustic shell for the auditorium stage.

VISUAL ARTS — SMMUSD had a districtwide elementary art program until 1978. We are recommending a return of the pre K–5 program beginning with 5th grade (8th annual request). We are hoping that SMMEF can fund staffing for this. The district will need to supply materials and equipment.

In secondary, we recommend equitable art staffing at the middle schools. JAMS is now down to 1.0 FTE. Funding for visual arts instructional materials and equipment is inadequate throughout the district due to budget difficulties. One of the photography teachers gets 3¢ per student per day for supplies. We recommend additional funding for purchase of needed equipment and consumable supplies.

Regarding facilities, Malibu High needs more storage and better ventilation in the ceramics room. This is a health and safety issue. Samohi needs both more storage and sinks for clean-up. At JAMS, the lone remaining art room has been locked up since January due to rain damage and growth of black mold. There appears to be no time line for completing repairs. The sub is using a cart to carry supplies and equipment to four different classrooms.

At Samohi, enrollment in art classes is down by about 50 students to 871 this year. As a result, one of the art teachers may be assigned to teach two non-art classes next year. We think the dip in enrollment may be because of the way the houses are set up and because counselors may be advising students not to take art until their last two years of high school.

The DAC believes that all students should receive basic instruction in all four disciplines in elementary school and then be able to continue further study in at least one art discipline *throughout* secondary school.

Specific recommendations are laid out in the district-provided template which follows.