

# Visual & Performing Arts District Advisory Committee (VAPA DAC)

January 13, 2021 – via Zoom

## MINUTES

Attendees: Jason Aiello, Annie Azzariti, Deborah Berek, Rebecca Cardenas, Janis Gabbert, Linda Greenberg, Zina Josephs, Elizabeth Manco, Lydia Muraro, Domi Piturro, John Redfield, Alisa Stewart, Ann Thanawalla, Tom Whaley

Public comment: Wendy Dembo, Nikki Kolhoff

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM by Vice Chair Lydia Muraro.
2. **Career Technical Education (CTE) Pathways at Samohi**  
<https://www.smmusd.org/domain/4311> -- The committee voted by unanimous consent to move discussion of the “Career Technical Education pathways at Samohi” item earlier in the agenda. Since there are currently no VAPA teachers on the DAC, Zina had asked Jason Aiello, orchestra director at Samohi, to tell us a little about CTE, while we await a more robust discussion with Dr. Mora in February.

Jason noted that each pathway will involve juniors and seniors, who will become a “cohort.” Most music classes are “singletons,” i.e., there is only one section of each class, and the Engineering pathway, which has been around for some time, also consists of one class each in grades 9-12. The only scheduling problem they’ve had so far was with a senior taking an Engineering class the same period as Symphony; the music and engineering teachers worked out a solution. (The current concert master is going to Swarthmore as a double major: music and engineering.) He said that the CTE classes provided by SMC work well, but with new pathways that will have a CTE/English “block,” scheduling may be more complicated. VAPA teachers are not opposed to the pathways, they’re just concerned about possible scheduling conflicts in future. Tom recommended that DAC members watch the upcoming presentation to the Board of Education.

Questions raised for discussion with Dr. Mora at the February DAC meeting:

Janis: Music is an essential part of film and video production. Why is Music not included in the Arts/Media/Entertainment pathway?

Domi: SMC is getting some high-tech equipment. How to link up with SMMUSD?

Ann: Is there a lottery to get into the PLTW Engineering pathway?

Ann: Will the district share the plan with middle school parents?

Deborah: These types of scheduling conflicts have existed for many years, and the DAC has tried to offer solutions. Will the return to in-person learning result in some flexibility in scheduling?

Lydia: Why is the district investing millions of dollars on new buildings when we don't know what programs will be implemented or how many students will sign up? When will we see proposed schedules? Has the Board looked at rotating schedules?

Lydia: PLTW students get priority for summer school, and counselors push foreign language in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. How can we make this equitable for students interested in the Arts?

Ann: Is individualized learning the end result vs. Community learning?

**Public Comment:**

Wendy Dembo: Before the Board does a huge investment in facilities for CTE, they should see if parents are interested in the program, i.e., do market research.

Nikki Kolhoff: Samohi Principal Shelton has stated that 400 students would not be able to take other electives. We need to know how CTE will impact the Arts before spending \$100 on a new building for a new program that doesn't exist. A rotating class schedule is needed, and additional ISPE would give students more flexibility.

3. **Minutes** -- The minutes from the December meeting were approved by unanimous consent. (Berek)
4. **P.S. ARTS** – Rebecca Cardenas reported that Edison Language Academy and SMASH received instruction during the fall semester. Instruction at the other elementary schools is starting now. They are distributing art kits to students, and there will be a Family Art Night at McKinley this month.
5. **Administrator Co-Chairperson** -- Dr. Jacqueline Mora was unable to attend the meeting.
6. **Staff Liaison and VAPA Coordinator** -- Tom Whaley reported on the article in Santa Monica Daily Press about 33 Samohi music students being selected for All-State honor ensembles, the second highest number of any high school in the state. The pianist in the All-State Honor Jazz Band is a 10<sup>th</sup> grade Samohi student, William Schwartzman. The Samohi Jazz Band will present a virtual concert using Jamulus, YouTube, and Zoom. \$10,000 has been added to the instrument repair budget. Lindsay Okumura's elementary choir video was shown to the Board of Education. Third graders will begin learning to play the recorder in February. He will give us an update on the Dance, Theatre, and Visual Arts programs in February.

7. **Board of Education Liaisons** – Dr. Tahvildaran-Jesswein did not attend the meeting. Maria Leon-Vazquez reported that the Board of Education will be selecting a new Board member to replace Oscar de la Torre on January 14<sup>th</sup> and also review a proposed Board Policy and Administrative Regulations regarding Historic Preservation.
  
8. **What California’s color-coded county tracking system means for schools** -- Higher risk to lower risk tiers range from Purple to Red to Orange to Yellow, and Los Angeles County is currently in the Purple Tier, which means schools cannot currently reopen for in-person instruction.
  
9. **VAPA elective choices** – Tom met with the DELAC Committee to clarify the audition process and let them know whom to contact if they have questions or concerns. The Liaison explained that English Language Learners and Special Needs students don’t have an elective.  
Public Comment: Alisa Stewart commented that with her special needs son and his friends, the teachers are now helping them more in selecting electives.
  
10. **Waiting lists for middle school Art classes** – Follow-up to September meeting discussion – a. **Lincoln Middle School** counselors reported that about 67 7<sup>th</sup> graders requested Art and were not able to get in this year. About 15 8<sup>th</sup> graders requested Art as a SECOND elective and were not able to get in, i.e., students with AM PE or ISPE may have not gotten it as their 2nd choice, due to scheduling conflicts. Priority goes to 8<sup>th</sup> graders with only 1 elective. **The numbers tell us that we need 2 more periods of Art at Lincoln.** The school was able to accommodate most if not all Music selections. There are no Dance or Theatre classes. b. **JAMS** counselors didn’t have access to the exact numbers but reported that there are many more requests for Art than seats available. **They recommended that, at minimum, the Art teacher be assigned a “plus one” in order to add a section.** Every JAMS student who requests Music gets Music. There are no Dance or Theatre classes.

Discussion included the fact that Art is part of core curriculum, access to Art instruction should be equitable at all schools, that instruction should be sequential in Art, as it is in Music (without gaps in instruction after elementary school), and that the Measure R parcel tax provides about \$12 million per year. **Measure R:** *"To preserve quality schools despite inadequate state funding, and prevent program cuts shall the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District renew - without increasing -- existing school parcel taxes, annually adjusted for inflation, with exemptions for homes owned and occupied by senior citizens, and annual audits reported to taxpayers by*

*Independent Citizens Oversight Committee? Funds used to retain highly qualified teachers and reduced class size, protect excellence in math, science, technology, arts, music, reading; sustain libraries. No funds used for administrator salaries."*

**Public Comment:**

Wendy Dembo: Her daughter at Lincoln Middle School is interested in Art, but skipped the 6<sup>th</sup> grade Exploratory because she wasn't interested in the other subject(s). She couldn't get into Art in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and she may not be able to get into art in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. "Art is the poor step child compared to Music."

11. **Mid-Year Report** – As the hour was late, there was unanimous consent to hold a special DAC meeting in early February to review the Mid-Year Report. (Josephs)
12. **Public comments regarding items not on the agenda** – Linda Greenberg reported that the Ed Foundation is about 15% behind in donations, in comparison to other districts that are 25-30% behind.
13. **Adjournment** – The meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.