

Burbank Unified School District

2007-2008 student enrollment: 16,640

2 high schools (grades 9-12)

3 middle schools (grades 6-8)

11 elementary schools (grades K-5)

6 alternative schools¹⁰

DISTRICT CONTEXT

When Burbank Unified School District joined *Arts for All* in 2004, it already had a respectable arts education program in place, however an initial assessment of resources revealed gaps in equity. Beyond salaries for secondary arts specialists that were paid by the district, school PTAs and booster clubs were the primary sources of funding for arts education. Each school planned for arts education independently and, as the amount of available financial support varied from site to site, some had developed stronger art programs than others.

“The plan has clarified everyone’s vision of what we want to see for our students. Arts education is on everybody’s radar now.”

At the high school level all four art disciplines were offered as electives, and the district had nurtured an award-winning vocal music program. At the middle school level, visual arts and music specialists provided elective courses. At the elementary level, there were no arts specialists on staff so instruction was based primarily on the interest and skill of individual classroom teachers or the encouragement of principals who valued the arts. At least some of the visual arts lessons offered by teachers stemmed from prior training in Discipline Based Arts Education (DBAE) at the Getty Center for Education in the Arts. Community arts providers also brought arts learning experiences into elementary classrooms through artist residencies when PTA or grant funding was available. Burbank USD viewed the *Arts for All* initiative as a way to improve the quality and content of arts instruction while helping to reduce inequities in learning opportunities across the school district.

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR ARTS EDUCATION

The initial *Arts for All* Task Force (CAT team) had 23 members including a school board member, a deputy superintendent, the district grant coordinator, school principals, secondary arts specialists, elementary classroom teachers, PTA parents, community arts providers, a community relations executive from Warner Bros. Entertainment and an *Arts for All* planning coach. The five-year plan included six focus areas common to quality arts programs: 1) curriculum, assessment and professional development, 2) program

¹⁰ Alternative schools are addressed in the LACOE case study.

evaluation, 3) program administration and personnel, 4) partnerships and collaborations, 5) instructional materials and equipment, and 6) funding. The Burbank *Arts for All* Plan was approved in December 2005. Two years later, communication was added as a seventh focus area.

In discussing the value of the strategic planning process in 2008, Burbank CAT team members said that the systematic process and resulting master plan had been critical to making changes in arts education. It pulled district administrators and teachers together under a common vision of what they wanted to offer students. A school board policy for arts education was also written and approved in 2005 and provided additional authority for enacting the district arts plan. The policy acknowledged the arts as an integral part of the schools' core curriculum and supported the development of a comprehensive visual and performing arts program. Of particular interest was the stated commitment to "support the need to provide funding for high quality, standards-based K-12 arts education in an equitable manner, consistent with the principle that arts education in an integral part of the core curriculum."

Once the policy and plan were approved, the team was restructured to effectively transition from the planning stage to the implementation stage. The prevailing belief was that the implementation team should consist of those individuals most responsible for completing the work. In addition, the team recognized that reducing the number of people at the planning table would streamline decision-making. By excusing a few of the community representatives, the membership was reduced from 23 to 17.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Once the Burbank USD arts plan was approved, the CAT team turned to writing K-12 curricula for the four art disciplines, beginning with visual arts in 2005-2006. The plan for the elementary schools stipulated that music would be taught as a discrete subject by credentialed specialists while dance, theatre and visual arts would be taught by classroom teachers through integration with other academic subjects. To support the adoption of the visual arts curriculum, professional development workshops were conducted during the summer of 2006. Teaching artist residencies, scheduled through the Music Center of Los Angeles County, provided instructional modeling and teacher mentoring during 2006-2007.

A full time arts coordinator was hired in a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) position by the district in mid-2006 to oversee the continued rollout of the arts plan using matching funds from the *Arts for All* Pooled Fund. At the same time, the vice president of corporate responsibility at Warner Bros. took the lead in creating the Burbank Arts Education Foundation to secure donations from parents, local businesses and philanthropic entities. While there were already two education foundations providing financial support for schools, the Arts Education Foundation was created to support the district's broader vision to increase equitable access to quality arts instruction for all Burbank students. The

Foundation was preparing to hold its first fundraiser targeted at nearby film and television corporations in June 2008.

In 2007, two itinerant music specialists were hired to provide instruction for the eleven elementary schools. The one-time block grant from the state legislature was used to pay for musical instruments, professional development, arts supplies and related equipment according to the stated needs of each school. A portion of the funding also paid for professional development and the expanding elementary music program. The new music specialists collaborated with two classroom teachers with music backgrounds and a consultant to write and pilot curriculum for grades two through five. Kindergarten and first grade sections will be added during 2008-2009 following a training workshop to introduce the entire K-5 sequence of instruction and to connect lessons to other subject areas.

During the 2007-2008 school year, Burbank USD took advantage of an *Arts for All* grant to host Music Center of Los Angeles County artist residencies at every elementary school and middle school. As a result of this effort, more teachers spent a portion of their summer break attending trainings at the Getty Center and the Music Center than in the past. The teachers reportedly found value in these programs because the trainings focused on skills and strategies that were standards-based and integrated with other core curricular areas.

MECHANISMS AND CHALLENGES

The CAT team agreed that the hiring of an arts coordinator was central to effectively rolling out the arts plan to date. Other mechanisms that supported implementation, as well as some of the challenges faced are listed below:

Mechanisms of Change

- *Experienced planning coach.* The *Arts for All* coach has provided advisement beyond the planning stage and was considered instrumental in orienting the arts coordinator when she was hired in 2006.
- *Full-time leader.* Having a full-time arts coordinator focused solely on actualizing the goals of the district arts plan accelerated implementation.
- *Board participation.* A school board member actively participated in the writing of the district arts policy and arts plan, which facilitated the approval process.
- *Corporate partnerships.* Burbank is the home of a number of high-profile film and television corporations including Warner Bros., which has become a major fiscal contributor and *Arts for All* collaborator.

Challenges to Change

- *Declining enrollment.* It has been difficult for the district to increase expenditures for arts education when a decline in student enrollment has led to a decrease in the general funds.

- *Uneven adoption.* Burbank elementary schools are at different stages of understanding and adoption of arts education and the district arts plan. The arts coordinator has had to assess each situation individually and calibrate implementation efforts accordingly.
- *Insufficient funds.* The success of the arts plan is dependent on having enough funding to write curriculum and pay for the necessary professional development to ensure a successful adoption.
- *Limited professional development.* Elementary teachers have received limited training in standards-based arts instruction due to the cost. Ongoing professional development will be needed following the adoption of each art discipline.
- *Teachers' pre-service training.* Classroom teachers tend to spend the most time on subjects they enjoy and feel confident teaching. Due, in part, to their own lack of pre-service training in the arts, they are not always given equal time in the classroom.
- *Full teaching schedules.* Elementary teachers already have a full schedule of subjects to cover, so the goal of adding four discrete art disciplines to the list represents a considerable challenge.
- *Lack of team planning time.* Teachers lack structured time to meet and collaborate on increasing arts education in their classrooms.

OUTCOMES

When interviewed, members of the CAT team identified a number of significant outcomes that were the direct result of joining the *Arts for All* initiative, including hiring an arts coordinator, writing visual arts and music curricula, developing an elementary music program with specialists, creating an arts education foundation, strengthening community support through arts partnerships and improving attendance at professional development sessions for arts education. Further details regarding these changes and other advancements in the district arts program are included below.

Content

Standards-based Curriculum. The district arts plan specifies adopting one art discipline at a time. To date, visual arts and music curricula have been written, approved, piloted and distributed to all elementary schools. Based on initial feedback from teachers, both curricula will be revised during 2008-2009 to better align with secondary instruction. Dance and theatre curricula have yet to be written.

Pedagogy. At all secondary schools, credentialed specialists teach the arts as electives, with the exception of middle school dance, which is now part of the physical education curriculum. Two itinerant music specialists provide instruction for grades two through five. Kindergarten and first grade teachers have received training and provide general music instruction. When the physical education program was expanded to provide a specialist for

third graders as well as fourth and fifth graders, two weeks of dance instruction were added to that syllabus. In general, dance instruction is focused on preparing students for school dance festivals. Visual arts, theatre and K-2 dance are the responsibility of the classroom teachers. The district upholds integration as the most realistic approach for including arts instruction in the elementary curriculum.

Student Assessment. The CAT team acknowledges that while elementary teachers have received training in assessing student artwork, it is not widely practiced. Future professional development will target aligning assessments with the state content standards. Arts specialists at the secondary level and classroom teachers at the elementary level currently determine report card grades in the arts.

Professional Development. Burbank USD's arts plan specifies that as curriculum in each art discipline is adopted, training opportunities will be provided for the elementary teachers. In the past, interested schools independently pursued professional development in the arts. Since creating the arts plan, more district-wide opportunities have been made available. To date, all elementary teachers have been given opportunities for training in the visual arts. By 2007-2008, over half of the schools had sent teachers for training at the Getty Center and welcomed Getty mentors into classrooms for observations. The CAT team has discovered that it takes more than one year to fully adopt an art discipline, so the arts coordinator is working to schedule further visual arts trainings through the Los Angeles County Arts Museum, Music Center of Los Angeles County, and other local visual arts providers for the 2008-2009 school year, in addition to planning K-5 music integration workshops. Development of a comprehensive, ongoing professional development program is also underway, based on teacher input.

Infrastructure

Program Administration. In 2006 a part-time arts coordinator (TOSA) was hired to oversee the arts plan's rollout. This has since become a full-time position. While the coordinator has taken on much of the work of implementation, the CAT team meets regularly to provide support as needed. As was previously mentioned, providing equitable support for all schools has been a challenge for the coordinator, as some started with much stronger arts programs in place than others.

Personnel. The CAT team believes that the strength of their arts programs reflects the quality of their arts specialists. They reported that secondary students get involved if there are good instructors in an art discipline; without them, they won't. A stagecraft teacher was hired to teach students about staging, lighting, sound systems and related special effects at one high school. In addition, the Los Angeles County Office of Education's Regional Occupation Program (ROP) paid for community professionals with alternative teaching certification to teach classes in photography, videography and the culinary arts. At the elementary level, two itinerant music teachers were hired to serve the eleven schools.

Facilities and Equipment. A major portion of the state block grants was used to purchase equipment, supplies and instruments for all district schools. There were already

auditoriums at each school and they were outfitted with new stage curtains, sound systems, and lighting as needed. In addition, several elementary schools created dedicated rooms for music classes.

Partnerships and Collaborations. Burbank USD is located in a city with a high concentration of television and film studios, and has established a notable relationship with Warner Bros. in addition to other corporations and non-profit arts providers. Financial donations from community partners are now channeled through the newly created Burbank Arts Education Foundation. The foundation board was planning its first fundraiser for the summer of 2008 with the intention of interesting more local creative industry businesses, individuals and other foundations to pledge financial support in the form of a pooled fund, or endowment. Burbank USD also enjoys a strong relationship with the Music Center of Los Angeles County and several other area visual and performing arts providers. Through a matching grant from the *Arts for All* Pooled Fund, Burbank USD was able to provide artist residencies at all elementary and middle schools during 2007-2008. The district has also strengthened its connection with the City of Burbank, and students have been invited to exhibit artwork or perform at the airport, local museums, art festivals and other public functions. All performance fees are used to sustain the school arts programs. In addition, a city staff member currently sits on the foundation's board of directors.

Recognizing the value of strong parent support, the CAT team made a special effort to include school PTAs and booster clubs in the planning and implementation process. The parents have become important allies in providing the means to fill instructional gaps in the arts, particularly for the youngest students (K-1). They have also paid community arts providers and creative industry professionals to deliver student instruction and professional development at individual schools plus send teachers to summer workshops. Afterschool programs are supported through PTA funding as well.

Sustainability

Policy. A school board policy for arts education was written and adopted in March 2005. The policy states that the board recognizes the arts as an integral part of the core curriculum, and encourages the implementation of a quality, standards-based K-12 program with equity and access for all. Beyond listing the essential elements of a quality arts program as set forth in the district arts plan, the policy also states that the board "supports the need to provide funding" for an arts education program.

Funding. Currently, Burbank USD has an art budget of approximately three percent of the total district budget, which is largely used to pay arts specialist salaries at the secondary level and to pay for materials, equipment and support staff at all schools. While falling short of the five percent goal set by *Arts for All*, this budget marks a significant increase up from 1.8 percent prior to joining the initiative. Despite declining enrollment counts and pending state budget cuts, the district has committed to continue paying the two elementary music teachers and the arts coordinators' salaries for the 2008-2009 school year at the request of the CAT team. This decision would free up any new block grant funding

for hiring additional elementary specialists or paying for more professional development and arts supplies.

PTA and booster clubs raise funds for arts programs each year, although the funds are typically directed to specific schools, creating an equity issue. Title 1 funds are also used to support K-5 arts instruction in qualifying schools. While Warner Bros. has provided seed money for the Burbank Art Education Foundation, additional funds must be raised before the endowment is large enough to support district-wide programs.

Evaluation. The CAT team was scheduled to meet during June 2008 to discuss their progress to date and create an action plan for the next year. Program evaluation was originally scheduled to begin in 2008-2009 but it may be tabled to focus on other priorities.

Communication and Advocacy. Each school has an identified arts liaison who communicates with the arts coordinator to facilitate the collection and dissemination of arts education news. School events and other arts opportunities for students and teachers are listed in the district website calendar. A visual and performing arts website and monthly arts e-newsletter are eventual goals, but are reliant on the availability of adequate clerical support.

“You actually have these kids in kindergarten, first and second grade who know about these wonderful [historical] artists. They know what period of art the work was related to. They know some of the key things—what the artist was thinking about when they were making their work.”

The Burbank CAT team reported that their best means of advocating for arts education has been through direct communication. One of the strongest tools has been the bi-monthly televised school board meetings that are watched by many parents and community members. Student artwork and performances are broadcast and newsworthy events and accomplishments are announced. In addition, the Burbank Arts Education Foundation pays for a public service announcement about the arts in Burbank schools and requests donations. Press releases on upcoming events have been frequently sent to the local newspapers. *Verdugo* Magazine, which targets readership in several adjoining communities, now includes a monthly listing of district arts activities and events.

District Leadership. One of Burbank USD’s strongest assets is the unflagging support the CAT team receives from district administrators. The deputy superintendent has been actively involved in and instrumental to the planning and implementation process from the onset in 2004. The superintendent and school board have shown their support through honoring the arts plan, increasing the district arts budget by 60 percent and working together to build sustainable financial relationships in the community, beyond the work of the CAT team.

CHANGES IN EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ARTS EDUCATION

The efforts of the Burbank CAT team have already resulted in positive changes in providing students with greater access to arts education. At the elementary level, increases were reported in the number of hours of arts instruction due to music being taught by itinerant specialists, visual arts being taught more frequently by trained classroom teachers and two weeks of dance being taught by physical education specialists. These activities were supplemented by teaching artists residencies in all elementary and middle schools. The addition of the stagecraft teacher and ROP courses taught by industry professionals increased variety and quality of high school arts electives.

Access for special populations improved slightly as well, as grant funding made it possible for students with special needs and their teachers to participate in Artist in Residency workshops, and Getty Center, Los Angeles County Arts Museum, and Music Center of Los Angeles County programs. The district music specialists also received adaptive training for teaching the deaf and hard of hearing.

Due in great part to the availability of state legislative funding for arts education, the district was able to acquire instruments, equipment and instructional materials for all schools. Student performances and exhibits also increased at all levels partly as a result of the heightened efforts of teachers and partly due to the efforts of the CAT team and the foundation board members drawing in new opportunities.

Overall, Burbank USD has made considerable progress in improving the state of arts education across the district, particularly through initiating the adoption of visual arts and music at the elementary schools. Work remains to be done in increasing equitable student access to dance and theatre education and in strengthening the quality of integrated arts instruction through continued professional development.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OPPORTUNITIES

The CAT team identified five areas where continued *Arts for All* staff support would be useful:

- District and school administrator training in the arts, including hands-on arts experiences (Many have reportedly never had a personal arts experience)
- Guidance in providing effective professional development for secondary teachers—both arts specialists and classroom teachers
- Program evaluation
- Suggested fundraising ideas
- Website editing and newsletter writing. This would include creating an attractive and functional interactive design that streamlines the posting and updating of information.