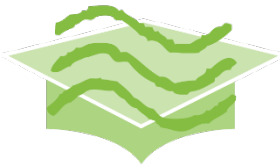


Success Story: San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory's Community Opus Project



2020 Action Agenda for Advancing the Arts in Education: Priority Area 1: Raise Student Achievement and Success

"Our Community Opus music program brought together Chula Vista's diverse communities. It created a sense of pride and identity across schools, and across the city, and shows school leaders and parents the full potential open to students when music learning is available to all."
– Dalouge Smith, President and CEO, San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory



Photo courtesy of San Diego Youth Symphony Orchestra Community Opus Project.

Student Achievement Through Music Education: The Community Opus Project

Arts Education Partnership (AEP) partner organizations work to promote opportunities for high-quality, arts-based and arts-integrated learning opportunities that align with college, career and citizenship readiness goals. [Studies](#) conclusively show that music education equips students with the foundational abilities to learn, to achieve success in other core academic subjects and develop the capacities, skills and knowledge essential for lifelong success.

In 2010, San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory (SDYS) launched the Community Opus Project to achieve the vision of making music education accessible and affordable for all students. SDYS designed Opus as an afterschool music instruction program and grassroots campaign to build support for in-school music education by demonstrating to school districts the benefit of providing music as part of every student's core curriculum.

SDYS partnered with Chula Vista Elementary School District (CVESD), California's largest K-6 district (serving 30,000 students), which eliminated music and other arts programs more than 15 years earlier. The campaign began by launching a free afterschool instrumental music program for third graders at two Title I schools and tracked student outcomes, engaged parents, held numerous performances and educated the community on the value of music education. As a result, CVESD leaders quickly recognized the positive impact of music on students, families and schools.

Before the end of the first year, CVESD asked SDYS to expand the program to serve students at six Title I schools. In its third year, CVESD asked SDYS to pilot in-school music instruction and made the commitment to reinstate in-school music for all students. The Opus afterschool program now serves more than 350 students from elementary to high school. Just five years after Opus began, 70 percent of CVESD's 30,000 students learn music as part of their regular curriculum and all students receive arts education in school.

Current Location: San Diego, Calif.

Population Served: Elementary school, middle school and high school students.

Conditions for Success: With financial support from CVESD, as well as local and national foundations, individual donors, and federal, state and local governments, SDYS focused on the goal of demonstrating the value of learning music and in-school music instruction. SDYS developed collaborative efforts with district leaders to track outcomes for individual students learning music. Using the district's own data and indicators increased credibility and convinced district leadership of the value of music education. The data showed that Opus students had significantly higher attendance and test scores than students not learning music. Even before this data was available, leadership saw a significant increase in parental engagement in their children's overall education.

SDYS's first step was to align the SDYS Board of Directors to this approach. Since 1945, SDYS has provided San Diego's youth with the highest-quality orchestral music instruction and performance opportunities. Extending the vision to include influencing school systems required the board to adopt new metrics for measuring success. Redefining the scope of desired impact resulted in a new set of beliefs about SDYS's role in the community and the practices needed to achieve its goals.

SDYS recognized the imperative of differentiating between the role of in-school and out-of-school music education, so the two are complementary and mutually reinforcing. At its core, SDYS adopted an abundance point of view that believes its own organizational impact will grow and become more robust the more successfully it partners with school districts to improve their capacity and commitment to music education.

Questions to Consider:

- How can community arts organizations partner with schools and districts to strengthen their capacity to provide universal access to arts education?
- Who are the most important allies to cultivate when doing the work?
- How can you utilize data to build support for arts programming?
- How will you measure success?

Learn More:

Video: [UCTV's High Notes: The Case for Music Education](#)

Video: [NEA Webinar: The Restoration of Arts Education](#)

Video: [Community Opus Project](#)

[AEP 2020 Action Agenda for Advancing the Arts in Education](#)

[ArtsEdSearch](#) studies on the effectiveness of music education in supporting student success.

About AEP Success Stories

The Arts Education Partnership (AEP), a center within Education Commission of the States, is guided by [The Arts Leading the Way to Student Success: A 2020 Action Agenda for Advancing the Arts in Education](#). To achieve its goal to expand access to high-quality arts learning opportunities for all students, AEP gathers detailed information on Success Stories with the potential to be replicated in communities across the country. AEP will use this information to promote and disseminate these stories through online resources, publications and media platforms.

San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory
[San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory](#) (SDYS) has a 71-year history of setting the region's highest standards for excellence in music education through its Conservatory Programs. SDYS has seen that student adherence to the high standards, self-discipline and teamwork required for musical success provides unparalleled training for future success in any field or educational path.

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