

## Music education is part of district turnaround strategy

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A few miles away from the state Capitol, where education funding hangs in the balance, parents packed a multi-purpose room to celebrate a hard-won success at Rosa Parks Middle School in Sacramento City Unified School District.



Students took the stage to talk about why the school's fledgling music education program is important to them. The school band then played one of its first public performances for parents, teachers, school administrators and elected officials gathered there.

"Practicing means you have to keep at it until you improve. That's what I learn from playing music," student Mintoya Robinson shared.

Fellow bandmate Pashone Grand-son agreed, "I learn from music about patience. When you mess up, you have to learn how to not get frustrated, and if you want to make it perfect, you just have to start over."

Last year, Rosa Park Middle School was named one of the Superintendent's Priority Schools, an SCUSD program designed to turn around its most chronically underachieving schools. Priority Schools receive additional resources and program flexibility.

The first six schools in this program – Jedediah Smith, Father Keith B. Kenny and Oak Ridge elementary schools, Will C. Wood and Fern Bacon middle schools and Hiram Johnson High School – have all seen marked growth since the beginning of the program.



“When schools are in trouble, there’s often a reaction to push things like arts and music to the side and focus on reading and math. Musical instruments end up in storage lockers gathering dust,” said Sac City Superintendent Jonathan Raymond, “As educators, we know that the art classes are the very things that keep kids in school, keep them interested and help them engage in deeper, more successful learning. We knew music had to be part of our turnaround strategy.”

A strong commitment from the community helped. Parent engagement has been a large part of the success at Priority Schools, and Rosa Parks parents were eager to bring back the arts. This approach was applauded by school officials Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Iris Taylor and Fine Arts Training Specialist Gayle Carrick, who were in attendance, as well as Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson.

The mayor offered words of support for the students and school, “I commend these students, this school and its community for making music a priority here. In Sacramento, The arts are valued. We recognize that they contribute to economic vitality, workforce development, civic pride and community spirit.”



The event at Rosa Parks Middle School was co-hosted by the California Alliance for Arts Education and is part of a statewide campaign to “Bring Back the Arts.”

“For too long the voices of students have been largely ignored,” said Alliance Executive Director Joe Landon. “This campaign will be carried by student musicians, dancers, artists and actors, who can offer a powerful testament of how the arts impact their lives.”

For four decades, the California Alliance for Arts Education has led efforts to ensure that the visual and performing arts are a core part of every child’s education in California, by focusing on state policy, coalition building and public advocacy. To read about how arts education contributes to higher test scores and lower dropout rates, visit [www.artsed411.org](http://www.artsed411.org).