

# Press Release

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## **ARTS EDUCATION IN CITY SCHOOLS SAVED BY SOLAR POWER**

SAN DIEGO, CA, JUNE 21, 2011: In a unanimous vote during a budget meeting this afternoon, the San Diego Board of Education restored full funding to its arts education programs for the upcoming 2011/12 year. In recent days, Board member Scott Barnett crafted a motion restoring \$1.5 million in previously scheduled cuts to the San Diego Unified School District's (SDUSD) Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) Department. The key element of his motion was identifying a way to pay for the restoration with offsetting cuts and new revenues, so that the fiscal impact of the decision did not increase the District's deficit.

SDUSD's solar program provides the majority of the funding in Barnett's scheme. Using cost savings from the District's recently expanded photovoltaic project, added to other financial sources, the Board of Education was able to restore \$1.3 million

to the VAPA Department, fully restoring proposed cuts, and \$200,000 to the music programs in two magnet schools. Restoration of the VAPA budget will secure 35 positions, primarily music instructors in the elementary schools.

San Diego Alliance for the Arts Education Chair, Victoria Plettner-Saunders comments: "We celebrate today's unanimous decision by the Board of Education to restore full funding for arts education. SDUSD has built a remarkable and award-winning big city arts education program, and the Board demonstrated its respect for the role of the arts in the education of San Diego's 132,000 students. In addition, today's budget victory reflects a three-year partnership of the Board, senior staff in the District, and the San Diego Alliance for Arts Education. In today's budget climate, it is not enough to tout the value of arts education; it is necessary to support the Board, roll up your sleeves and be a part of the solution."

The Board's decision is a major victory for arts education advocates in San Diego. This complete restoration of the VAPA Department may be the only victory of its kind among the more than 1,000 California schools districts during this embattled budget year. Widespread support from teachers, principals, students, arts organizations, music supporters, and community activists effectively pushed Board members to find the resources needed.

Board member Scott Barnett is proof that arts education is a non-partisan issue. Barnett, a Republican and the former President of the San Diego County Taxpayers' Association, believes that arts education is a valuable use of taxpayer funds. Barnett is a municipal finance expert and the father of two children who are students in the District. Since his election in November 2010, he has actively worked to support arts education in the District. Barnett was joined by the four other Board members, all Democrats, in supporting his fiscal solution to cuts in arts education proposed by the District administration.

SDUSD's Board of Education and its VAPA Department were the recipient in April 2011 of the top, \$10,000 national award for outstanding achievement in arts education from the Kennedy Center Alliance for Art Education Network and the National School Boards Association. This award was based in part on the District's sustained efforts in building music education programs that serve virtually all elementary schools in the District each year, a rare achievement. It is also based on the District's multi-year projects to develop national model arts instruction, done in partnership with the University of California, Irvine and funded by the Department of Education.

The San Diego Alliance for Arts Education is a community-based, volunteer organization that advocates for arts education in San Diego City schools. It is part of a statewide advocacy network established by the California Alliance for Arts Education.

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