

Visual & Performing Arts DAC

October 22, 2025

MINUTES

Attendees: Sarah Barney, Deborah Berek, Cynthia Boorujy, Janis Gabbert, Wendy Jaffa, Zina Josephs, Maria Leon-Vasquez, Michael Mollo, Emily Senchuk, Rebecca Terlizzi, and Dr. Jim Wang

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:08 PM by Co-Chair Janis Gabbert. Attendees briefly introduced themselves.
2. **Minutes** from the September meeting were approved by unanimous consent. (Berek)
3. **Administrative Co-Chair/VAPA Coordinator** -- Jim Wang reported on the following:
 - a. **Outreach and Calendar** – The new website is still in progress, with a new calendar tab. He’s working toward a central box office for all VAPA events, starting with Stairway 2026. The Dia de los Muertos exhibit at Samohi is opening on October 23, with the mariachi ensemble performing. On October 30, Edison and Rogers will have Dia de los Muertos events. The Samohi marching band is competing at the 5A level (based on the size of the band). A news release is going out re a November 5th adjudicated district choral festival at JAMS for 5th grade and middle school. There is now a VAPA Instagram account.
 - b. **Curriculum** –
Dance: Jim is still in the process of hiring folklorico instructors for Edison, Rogers, and JAMS. A 0.2 FTE Samohi dance position is posted. Enough students signed up last year to form a class. 5th graders will once again be attending a performance of “The Nutcracker” on December 3rd. A city grant is paying for bus transportation.
Music: Jeffe Huls is evaluating accompanists for Vanessa Counte at LMS. Samohi Jazz Combo 1 has worked with Stanley Clarke. This is his 3rd and last year as Artist-in-Residence. The mariachi programs have started. Re the Bergmann program, Jim has met with prospective vendors and plans to increase the number of lessons, but perhaps with fewer students. It will be more like a scholarship program for students on free lunch, with music teachers ranking students’ priority for inclusion in the program and assessing their growth. All 10 elementary music teachers will be able to attend the CASMEC conference using professional development funds provided by Ed Services.
Visual Arts: The Samohi photography teacher had to resign, and a new teacher, Tony Chiappetta, has been hired.
 - c. **Fiscal budget** – Measure R -- Prop 28 – He’s working with elementary principals to pool their funds to purchase musical instruments.

- d. Questions from attendees concerned livestreaming performances from Barnum or JAMS, the Samohi Instagram page, and families opting out of allowing their children's photos to be shown.
4. **Board Liaisons** -- Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein did not attend the meeting. Maria Leon-Vazquez reported that the Board of Education will discuss unification again on October 23. They are negotiating with the Malibu City Council and families. A vote will occur in November. Out of the 9 criteria, Malibu meets only 1 or 2. Both districts would be basic aid, but Santa Monica is asking Malibu to balance the funding per student. Jim noted that Malibu fundraising has not kept up with Ed Foundation fundraising. Maria also noted the opening of the TK-3 classrooms at Grant.
5. **DAC Mid-Year Report** – The committee reviewed a district enrollment summary (per grade level and per school), as well as the district-funded music program for grades 3-5, district funded middle school VAPA classes, district-funded high school VAPA classes, partnerships with non-district benefactors (SMC dual enrollment, Ed Foundation support), and 2023-24 Santa Monica Arts Parents Association expenditures. Missing is a summary of Measure R and Prop 28 VAPA funding. Committee members expressed concern about the lack of VAPA classes at Olympic High which currently has 27 students. A suggestion was made to comment in the report about the timing of the refurbishment of Barnum Hall (during the fall semester).
6. **VAPA DAC appointments** – On October 20, Sarah Wahrenbrock, Assistant to the Superintendent, notified us that Lauren Applebaum, Wendy Jaffa, and Cynthia Boorujy had been appointed to terms ending in June 2027, and Emily Senchuk, Kim Crawford, and Sarah Barney had been appointed to terms ending in June 2028. Aimee Koeplin was re-appointed, and Sarah expected that Annie Azzariti would be re-appointed at the next BOE meeting. Deborah Berek suggested that we thank the Board of Education.
7. **Agenda planning** included further discussion of the Mid-Year Report and inviting the Olympic High principal to speak at our November 19 meeting.
8. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Zina Josephs, Secretary