

Visual & Performing Arts District Advisory Committee (VAPA DAC)

November 19, 2025 – in-person

Board Room, SMMUSD District Office, 1717 - 4th Street, Santa Monica 90401

MINUTES

Attendees: Lauren Applebaum, Sarah Jane Barney, Cynthia Boorujy, Kim Crawford, Gina deBaca, Janis Gabbert, Jenna Guggenheim, Wendy Jaffa, Zina Josephs, Aimee Koeplin, Maria Leon-Vazquez, Michael Mollo, Dr. Jim Wang

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by Co-Chair Janis Gabbert.
2. **Minutes** from the October meeting were approved, with corrections, by unanimous consent. (Barney)
3. **Administrative Co-Chair and VAPA Coordinator** – Dr. Jim Wang reported the following:
 - a. **Communications** -- He's working on creating a VAPA YouTube page so concerts at JAMS, LMS, and Samohi could be live streamed.
 - b. **Facilities** -- The Malibu High auditorium is flooded. The new Barnum seats are in.
 - c. **Elementary**
 - i. Music Informances during the school day rather than evening concerts.
 - ii. 10 elementary music teachers work at 9 schools, with one "lead teacher" at each school.
 - iii. 4th and 5th grade Dance Informances.
 - iv. Stairway of the Stars concerts began in 1950, and he's been archiving the written Stairway programs. He's hoping Ryan Roberts, a Samohi alum who has moved from the NY Philharmonic to the LA Philharmonic, will be the honoree this year. The event showcases elementary, middle, and high school students. The choirs will perform in Barnum at 11 AM, the orchestras at 2 PM, and the bands at 5 PM. Outside, there will be an Arts & Music Festival with a secondary stage, an Art Walk, food trucks, a Community Arts booth, an instrument petting zoo, and an Arts & Craft booth.

D. Curriculum

- i. Dance – Folklorico instruction will begin in December at Edison McKinley, Rogers, and JAMS, with 3 new teachers. 5th graders will attend "The Nutcracker" at the Broad Stage.

ii. Music – An accompanist for LMS was hired. Enrollment in the Bergmann program for this year has ended.

iii. Visual Arts – Samohi Art Department meeting. Samohi alum – gallery – murals – one week – festival – Looking at supplanting “gifts” with Prop 28 funding.

4. Board of Education Liaisons – Dr. Tahvildaran-Jesswein did not attend the meeting. Maria Leon-Vazquez gave an update on the unification process. She also reported on test results in language arts, math, and science. The California Dashboard compares test results with past years and with other school districts. District enrollment has dropped from 12,000 some years ago to 8,600 this year. Chronic absenteeism continues to be a problem, and School Board members are visiting the school with Dr. Shelton.

5. DAC Midyear Report – Suggestions for improving the draft report included

- adding a Table of Comments,
- adding the percentage of students enrolled in VAPA classes,
- filling in the gaps in the “Accomplishments to Date” section,
- adding information to the “Scheduling” section (freshman year at Samohi doesn’t work: VAPA vs. foreign language; similar scheduling problems at Malibu High). LCAP goals seem to drive scheduling priorities.
- Aimee stated that PTA has done a study showing that participation in VAPA classes correlates with improved attendance.
- In order to advocate for a 7-period day at the high schools, we need to build coalitions.
- Add back the detail in the SMAPA summary.
- In the “VAPA Classes” section, there’s only 1 section of Wind Ensemble at Samohi.
- The “Bergmann” section needs to be updated, as does the “SMEF Stretch Grants” section.
- There was some question about “Kiwanis” Art scholarships. “Performances and Arts Exhibits” is missing some events.
- The “VAPA DAC roster” could be alphabetized.

6. Public comments regarding items not on the agenda – None.

7. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Zina Josephs, VAPA DAC Secretary