

Visual & Performing Arts District Advisory Committee (VAPA DAC)

Wednesday, May 27, 2026 – 7 PM – in-person

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

AGENDA

VAPA DAC roster for 2025-26 and when terms expire:

June 2026: Deborah Berek, Janis Gabbert, Domenic Piturro

June 2027: Lauren Applebaum, Cynthia Boorujy, Wendy Jaffa, Zina Josephs, Michael Mollo,
Rebecca Terlizzi

June 2028: Annie Azzariti, Sarah Jane Barney, Kimberly Crawford, Jenna Guggenheim,
Aimee Koeplin, Emily Senchuk

7:00 PM -- **Call to order and welcome**

7:05 PM – **Approve minutes** from February meeting

7:10 PM -- **Calendar review** -- Board of Ed meetings: June 4, 18, and 23

<https://www.smmusd.org/board-of-education/board-meetings>

REPORTS

7:15 PM – **Administrative Co-Chair and VAPA Coordinator** – Dr. Jim Wang

7:45 PM – **Board of Education Liaisons** – Maria Leon-Vazquez and Dr. Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS (per the DAC Charge)

8:00 PM – **VAPA DAC charge for 2025-26:**

- *Support a comprehensive preK-12 arts education program as an integral part of the core curriculum offered to all SMMUSD students, with dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts taught as discrete disciplines and integrated into other subject areas; as we align with and promote the Excellence through Equity Plan, which includes teaching cross-cultural and socio-emotional skills.*
- *Serve as a conduit for parents, teachers, students and community members to inform and make recommendations to the Board of Education on matters related to equitable access and successful participation in comprehensive, sequential, standards-based preK-12 arts education, while comparing the district's curriculum, scheduling, staffing, instructional materials, equipment, and facilities with National and State standards and frameworks; as we align with and promote the Excellence through Equity Plan.*

- *Maintain the Board and District commitment to the adoption of a new 6-year SMMUSD Arts Education Strategic Plan. Review and advise this Plan to align with and promote the Excellence through Equity Plan.*

1. **Elementary Music Curriculum update**
2. **DAC End-of-Year Report** – Review, revise, and approve
3. **Measure R update**
4. **Prop 28 update**
5. **Visual & Performing Arts Department website:**
<https://www.smmusd.org/departments/visual-performing-arts/home>
6. **Media coverage**

SMMUSD Shares Update on Elementary Music Program Review, Emphasizes Expansion and Equity – 4/20/26 – *SMMUSD news release*

<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1777588209/smmusdorg/xjwik8q5kkab9vhhcc07/PR-VAPAElemMusicRecap043026.pdf>

“The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) held its regularly-scheduled Visual and Performing Arts District Advisory Committee (VAPA DAC) meeting April 29, where District staff shared an update on the ongoing review of the elementary music program and engaged in dialogue with committee members and the community. The discussion focused on a draft proposal under consideration that aims to expand access to music education for students in Transitional Kindergarten through second grade, while also strengthening how music instruction is sequenced to support long-term student success.

District staff clarified that the proposal is intended to expand, not reduce, music opportunities by providing all students with early, foundational instruction from credentialed teachers and create a more consistent and equitable program across all school sites. Staff emphasized that music instruction is not being eliminated at any grade level and the proposal aims to explore a shift in how and when students are introduced to instrumental music. In the current draft proposal, general music instruction would be expanded in the early grades, fourth grade curriculum would continue to include music instruction, with a focus on instrument exploration before beginning instruction in instrumental music. District staff emphasized that instrumental programs and existing honors opportunities, including Stairway to the Stars, would continue and not change.

Dr. Jim Wang, SMMUSD’s visual and performing arts coordinator, emphasized that the work remains in a planning and feedback phase. “As we continue this work, I want to be clear that we do not yet have a final plan,” said Dr. Wang. “My ultimate goal is to be reflective while also building a musical environment where every student can thrive and to make our

District's music program better than it has ever been.” Dr. Wang added that he will continue working closely with elementary music teachers in the coming weeks to gather additional input and ensure their perspectives help guide the he next phase of this work. District staff also shared data and research related to student participation trends in music programs, including a review of retention rates as students transition from elementary to secondary levels. The presentation highlighted the importance of early, scaffolded music instruction and the role it can play in increasing student confidence, engagement and long-term participation in music.

“Among secondary school music teachers, there is a collective commitment to ensuring we nourish the roots of our music program, and we ask what our elementary schools need,” said Angela Woo, director of instrumental music at John Adams Middle School. “We want to ensure there is a place for everyone, regardless of proficiency or interest.”

Public comment during the meeting reflected a wide range of perspectives, with parents, teachers and community members expressing strong support for the District's music programs while sharing concerns regarding potential changes, including the timing of instrumental instruction and overall program structure. Speakers emphasized the importance of maintaining access, program quality and transparency throughout the process. SMMUSD leadership reiterated its commitment to engaging with educators, families and the community as part of the review process. Additional opportunities for input will continue through upcoming meetings and ongoing discussions with music teachers, school leaders and advisory groups. For questions or for more information, please contact Dr. Jim Wang, Coordinator, Visual and Performing arts at jwang@smmusd.org

7. Calendar of upcoming performances and arts exhibits

May 27 – JAMS Choir Concert
May 28 – LMS Band Concert
May 28 – MMS/MHS Band Concert
May 28-30 – Samohi Theatre – Public Domain
May 30 – Samohi Orchestra Senior Gala
June 2 – Samohi Band Concert
June 3 – Kiwanis Finalist Performances
June 4 – LMS Pops Concert
June 4 – MMS/MHS Choir Concert

8:50 PM – Public comments regarding items not on the agenda

8:55 PM – Announcements and adjournment