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# montalvo

## ARTS CENTER

### Montalvo Arts Center and Campbell Union District Partner to Develop STEAM-Powered Curriculum

*Successful 2012-13 partnership with Lynhaven Elementary leads to contract to implement Common Core Standards in Campbell schools*

**SARATOGA, Calif.** – Montalvo Arts Center is pleased to announce that this fall, it will partner with the Campbell Union School District to assist in the implementation of arts-focused lesson plans, designed to teach to new Common Core State educational standards across a total of 10 elementary schools. This announcement comes as the culmination of Montalvo’s year-long relationship with Lynhaven Elementary School, where Montalvo Arts Center brought a group of teaching artists to work directly with teachers to redesign their lesson plans to emphasize multidisciplinary creativity and problem-solving.



ABOVE: Montalvo teaching artist Kerry Mehling leads first grade students in a lesson combining creative movement, literature, and biology entitled “I am a Bee.”

“This partnership is an exciting honor, and an affirmation of a Montalvo program six years in the making,” said Montalvo Executive Director Angela McConnell. “It’s also a resounding endorsement of a tenant central to Montalvo’s mission: that the arts are an essential part of making sure our children get the best education they possibly can.”

“The Common Core standards represent a total reconfiguration of our nation’s pedagogical priorities,” said Charlee Wagner, Montalvo Education Programs Coordinator and Project Manager for Montalvo’s Teaching Artists project. “They demonstrate a shift toward privileging creativity and analytical thinking across disciplines. And, as our program at Lynhaven demonstrated this year, the arts are an ideal means to teach these skills.”

## Montalvo Teaching Artists in Action

Montalvo Arts Center's Teaching Artist program is a joint initiative between Montalvo's Education Department and the Sally and Don Lucas Artists Residency Programs. The program, launched in 2007 with a pilot partnership at Downtown College Prep, was initially conceived of as an on-site residency position at Montalvo. However, as the program has grown in scope, it has come to facilitate partnerships between a team of Bay Area artists and local primary and secondary schools and/or universities for curriculum development. Teaching artists work with students and teachers to design and implement lesson plans using dance, painting, music, poetry, visual, and the culinary arts to teach science, reading comprehension, and math.



ABOVE: Fifth-grade students practice rhythm, music, and math with Brazilian drumming exercises.

2012 marked the most ambitious year yet for the Teaching Artists Residency Program. Ten teaching artists were placed in two Santa Clara County elementary schools—Lynhaven Elementary in the Campbell Union School District and Schallenberger Elementary in the San Jose Unified School District—to work with every teacher in grades K-5. The lessons blended such disciplines as creative movement with biology, cooking with fractions, and art history with persuasive writing. At all times, children were empowered to draw connections, frame arguments, cross-apply lessons, and approach problems creatively.

The scholastic gains made by students, gaged from pre- and post-writing assessments administered in April 2013, were remarkable. The modified lesson plans shifted approximately 26% of the students out of Far Below Basic and Basic Levels to Proficient or Advanced levels, with average gains in the Advanced performance level at an average of 8% per grade level.

In light of these increases, Montalvo is pleased to announce it will continue its programs at grades K-5 at Schallenberger, and that it will expand its presence to all second grade classrooms within the Campbell Union School District as the district implements its new STEAM initiative. Sixty-three classroom teachers will collaborate with their chosen Montalvo teaching artist to design cross-disciplinary curricula and activities tied to grade-specific Common Core Standards for Writing. Residencies will last from 8-10 weeks beginning in

late September/early October and classroom teachers play an active role during the weekly sessions. “In effect,” said McConnell, “Montalvo will be the ‘A’ in STEAM for nearly 1,900 students next year.”

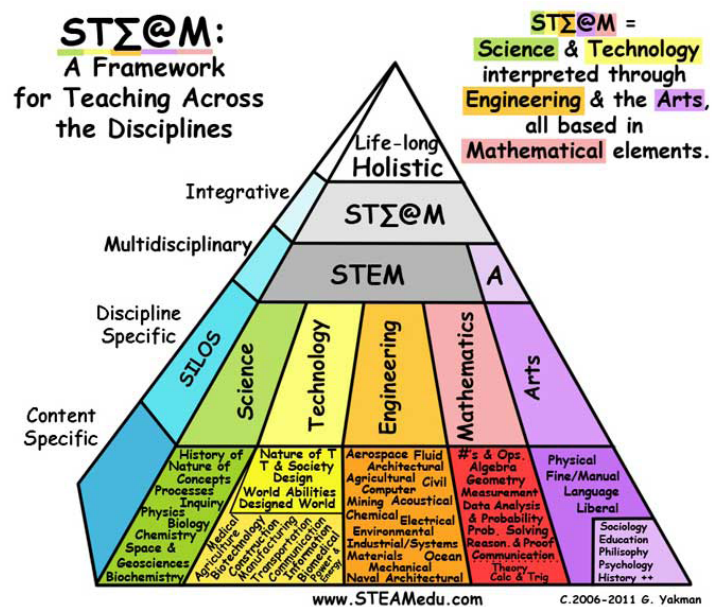
Professional development workshops hosted by Montalvo at the beginning of and midway through the residency will help teachers tap into their creativity and get the most out of their collaboration with the teaching artist. Through hands-on activities grounded in proven arts learning methodologies, teaching artists demonstrate how and why arts learning can provide flexible and effective strategies in the classroom as well as prove a useful mechanism for implementing the new Common Core State Standards.

## STEAM-Powered Learning: Letting the Arts Flower on STEM

Historians disagree as to when precisely the United States began to place a national emphasis on educational training that prioritized science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—summarized with the acronym STEM. Some cite the 1950s space race, while others argue this emphasis was shared by the Founding Fathers. (More information about this may be found in a [2012 report by the Congressional Research Service](#)). Though it is most commonly used to describe initiatives relating to curriculum choices, STEM is more than an educational philosophy: it is an initiative with workforce

development, civic engagement, national security, and immigration policy implications. In brief, its proponents argue that the future economic security and growth of the United State is dependent on training students not only to succeed academically, but to succeed professionally in our increasingly global job market and ensure the future prosperity of the United States.

Over the past decade, educators, arts administrators, and academic institutions including the Rhode Island School of Design, UC San Diego, and Claremont Graduate University, have advanced the argument that STEM is an incomplete means to teach students to truly master the intellectual skills they require to excel meaningfully. They propose integrating the arts into STEM (updating the acronym to STEAM) with the aim of shaping students into innovative, flexible, creative people. As summarized by Georgette Yakman, an American educator who has



ABOVE: The STEAM pyramid, as illustrated by educator and STEAM advocate Georgette Yakman, taken from [www.steamedu.com](http://www.steamedu.com).

worked to pioneer the STEAM system, “STEAM teaches Science and Technology, interpreted through Engineering and the Arts, all based in Mathematical elements.”

These claims are supported by studies from a number of arts institutions that have demonstrated students come to have a better command and deeper understanding of course material if the concepts are addressed in a variety of curriculum content areas. Indeed, a [2012 study conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts](#) demonstrated that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds who actively participated in the arts tended to score better in science and writing, and were more likely to want to go to college.

Today, STEAM has vocal national advocates ranging from Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi to the writers of Sesame Street, who have announced that their 43rd season will focus on integrating the Arts into its existing STEM focus. Since 2012, the Campbell Union School District, led by Superintendent Eric Andrew, has assembled a committee of teachers, administrators, parents, as well as local corporations and nonprofit organizations to work toward integrating STEAM into district schools.

### Common Core: Leveling the Playing Field

Rolling out across California in the upcoming academic school year, the new Common Core State Standards are part of a nation-wide initiative to radically rethink the way public school students are taught, and how their successes are measured. These standards, which



ABOVE: The new USA Common Core Standards, as explained by Think Visually Studios ([click to watch YouTube video](#)).

emphasize imagination, critical thinking, and problem-solving initiative rather than rote memorization, are consistent among schools nation-wide and have been designed to match the educational standards of other countries.

“The standards ‘level the playing field’ in more ways than one,” said Wagner, “they ensure students have a consistent experience regardless of the town or state where their school is located, and

they train kids to standards comparable to their international cohorts’. The standards also permit easier comparison between individual teachers’ curricula to evaluate effectiveness.”

Though the standards are universal, they allow teachers the flexibility to customize their curricula, with an emphasis on integrated lessons and project-based learning, encouraging



children to go on to levels of extended thinking which leads to deeper, more critical knowledge. The standards will roll out in phases through 45 states across the country over the next few years. Only four states—Alaska, Nebraska, Texas and Virginia—have opted entirely out of the program; Minnesota will only partially implement the standards. The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSI) has released standards for math and English language arts. In 2014, standards will be issued for Science, World Languages, and the Arts, but the development of these standards is being led not by the CCSI, but an assortment of prestigious national councils working directly with the states. For more information about these 2014 standards, please visit [nextgenscience.org](http://nextgenscience.org), [actfl.org](http://actfl.org), and [arteducators.org](http://arteducators.org), respectively.

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**Montalvo Arts Center** is an estate of mind! A multidisciplinary nonprofit institution, our mission is to create and present arts of all types, nurture artists, and use our historic Villa, buildings, and grounds in innovative ways that engage people in the creative process. Located in Silicon Valley's Saratoga hills, Montalvo occupies a Mediterranean-style Villa, built in 1912 by Senator James Duval Phelan, surrounded by 175 stunning acres, including the campus of our international Lucas Artists Residency Program. Senator Phelan bequeathed the villa and grounds to the people of California for the encouragement of art, music, literature and architecture, a mandate that Montalvo has carried forward ever since its founding. For more information, call (408) 961-5800 or visit [montalvoarts.org](http://montalvoarts.org).