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Leading From the Middle: Arts Administrators' Beliefs About The Impact of Arts Education on High-Needs Students

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LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE: A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF ARTS
ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION FOR HIGH-NEEDS
STUDENTS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Educational Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctoral of Education

by

Sofia L. Fojas

August 2024

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

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ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION FOR HIGH-
NEEDS STUDENTS

by

Sofia L. Fojas

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ABSTRACT

LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE: A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF ARTS ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT ART EDUCATION FOR HIGH-NEEDS STUDENTS

by Sofia L. Fojas

Research on arts education notes the positive impact of arts education on educational outcomes for students, particularly students of color, students in poverty, and students needing additional academic support. Students living in low-income communities receive different educational opportunities than those in high-wealth districts. This disparity is especially true for highly mobile and high-needs students of color. Arts education has made positive differences in student outcomes. This qualitative study examined the beliefs of county arts leads, leaders in the middle, situated between the California Department of Education and their local school districts, and how they can be empowered to be change agents. Findings demonstrated significant variations in the ways county arts leads in California perceive their sustainable and transformational role. Each has a varied list of responsibilities, serves counties of varying sizes and geographical characteristics, and works within varying organizational structures, with differing levels of support for the arts at their county offices of education. In the conclusion, the researcher recommends policy, practice, and future research.

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I dedicate this to my family, for their unending love and humor; to my wife, Andrea, for her encouragement, support, and editing skills; and to the statewide network of County Arts Leads whose dedication and passion for the arts and for the students they serve is the foundation upon which this study is deeply grounded.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEP – Arts Education Partnership
CCSESA – California County Superintendents’ Educational Services Association
CDE – California Department of Education
COE – County Office of Education
DA – Differentiated Assistance
ESEA – Every Child Succeeds Act
LCAP – Local Control Accountability Plan
LCFF – Local Control Funding Formula
LEA – Local Educational Agency
NCLB – No Child Left Behind
Prop. 28 – Proposition 28: Arts and Music in Schools Funding

Chapter 1

Research on arts education notes the positive impact of arts education on educational outcomes for students, particularly students of color, students in poverty, and students needing additional academic support (Bowen & Kisida, 2021; Brown, 2017; Fried, 1988; Kelly, 2013 Morasco, 2013; Powell Russell, 2015). Students of color in low-income communities receive different educational opportunities than those in high-wealth districts. This disparity is especially true for highly mobile and high-needs students of color. The gap lies in academic achievement and a deeply rooted, ever-widening socioeconomic chasm (Hahnel et al., 2022). In a study of music students in Nashville on the social-emotional effects of arts participation, students participating in music classes were shown to have a stronger sense of belonging in school and stronger growth mindsets (Powell Russell, 2015). Aside from the socio-emotional benefits of arts, students participating in arts through the eighth grade outperformed their non-arts cohorts in multiple areas: higher standardized test scores, higher rates of high school graduation, higher rates of graduation from a four-year college, and higher grade point averages in high school and college (Catterall, 2012). Participation in arts education, cultural arts, arts integration, and the practice of arts disciplines provide essential resources for youth to develop healthy ways to make meaning of their lives and the world around them and connect to themselves and their communities (Powell Russell, 2015).

The Unresolved Issue in Education in a Changed World

The current sociopolitical context in the world has evolved since the start of the research for this study. Researcher, Andy Hargreaves (2024), said it succinctly when he named the

forces affecting students' lives as The Big Five: COVID-19, climate change, the threat to democracy, racism, and war. As this study goes to publication, we have weathered four years of a global pandemic, which is now in its endemic phase. Students have been back to in-person schooling in California since the spring of 2021, and the effects of sheltering in place are still being felt: increased mental health issues, chronic absenteeism, and a delayed development in academic and social-emotional growth during the period of remote learning. These effects are exacerbated for high-needs students in our schools: youth living in poverty, youth in foster care, students experiencing homelessness, and other highly mobile youth. Many high-needs students are students of color (Bishop & Howard, 2024).

High-needs youth have less access to arts experiences in school and yet have a critical need for these intensive arts experiences (Catterall, 2012). In a more recent study, children who participated in music ensemble classes in schools reported higher levels of patience, perseverance, dedication, and a stronger sense of teamwork and belonging (Powell Russell, 2015). In an earlier study of the same school district, participation in music showed increased graduation rates, test scores, attendance rates, and college-going rates than non-music peers (Eason & Johnson, 2013).

California Accountability Framework and New Indicators

High-needs students are the focus of the California Systems of Support. The local control funding formula, the redesigned funding formula established in 2013 through landmark legislation, was the state's attempt at righting the balance of funding toward student groups identified for a greater need for support (California Department of Education [CDE], 2023). Understanding the complex structure of K-12 schools' accountability and assessments in

California will be foundational to understanding the county office of education's role as a change agent for high-needs students. The county offices of education play a significant role in supporting districts through the California systems of support, differentiated assistance, and multi-tiered systems of support.

With the authorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015 at the federal level, each state was invited to create new systems of accountability for the public education system (Hough & Kirst, 2017). In 2017, the CDE created the California school dashboard for parents and local educational agencies (LEAs) to see how their schools performed by assessing multiple measures. This was a concerted effort to move beyond the single rating assigned to schools under the federal legislation, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (Hough & Kirst, 2017). Thus, the school dashboard was created as a response to the local control funding formula, enacted in 2013, which was a new way to fund schools through a series of allocations beginning with a base grant per pupil. The amounts varied by grade band (elementary, middle, and high school), with increasing funding for unduplicated high-needs students identified as those living in poverty, English learners, youth in foster care, and students experiencing homelessness. The California School Dashboard became a way for districts and families to monitor students' achievement in alignment with the new school funding and is one component of the system of support for schools, districts, and county offices of education (CDE, 2022b).

The California School Dashboard was paused from 2020–2022 as the state and federal governments ceased collecting standardized test results because of a worldwide COVID-19 health crisis (CDE, 2023). The 2022 version of the California school dashboard contains

revised measures in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with only one year of performance reported (CDE, 2022c). There are 13 state and local measures for schools (six state indicators and seven local indicators) (CDE, 2022b). The state measures are academic performance, chronic absenteeism, college and career readiness, English learner progress, high school graduation rates, and suspension rates (CDE, 2022b). In 2023, the different performance level colors returned. They are measured using five levels, each with its graphic: very low (red), low (orange), medium (yellow), high (green), and very high (blue). These are divided into categories: district, school, and focal student groups (across ethnic or racial groupings, low-income youth, youth experiencing homelessness, youth in foster care, English learners, and students with disabilities). The five local measures are basic conditions, implementation of academic standards, school climate surveys, parent and family engagement, and access to courses. Districts receive three ratings for each local measure: met, not met, or not met for two or more years (CDE, 2024b).

State Systems of Support Policies and Priorities

In 2017, the CDE set up a system of support to guide districts in addressing the disparities in student outcomes called differentiated assistance, rather than a hierarchical approach to receiving technical assistance in a customized system of support for LEAs identified for underperformance through the California school dashboard (Krausen et al., 2022). Level 1 is the support offered to all LEAs to improve student outcomes. Differentiated assistance from county offices of education represents level 2 support in which districts show significant disparities among student groups. Level 3 is intensive intervention consisting of a lack of progress over time for these significant student disparities. This level of support

comes from the state. A district must show poor gains over two consecutive years in local control funding formula priority areas 4, 5, and 6 - pupil achievement, pupil engagement, and school climate to qualify for additional support from the state (CDE, 2022g). County offices of education delivered these individualized services of support called technical assistance to districts that qualified for differentiated assistance.

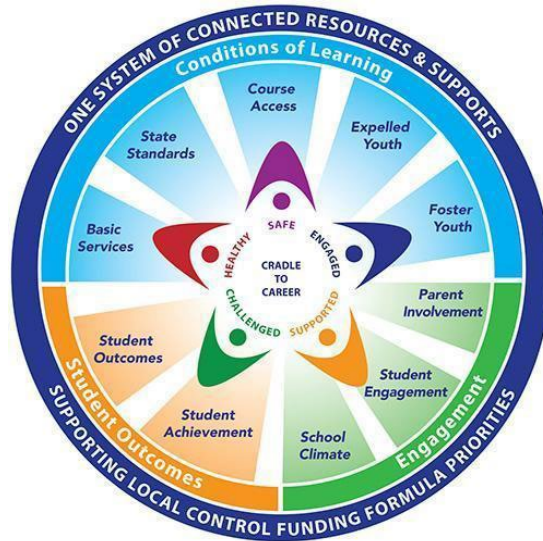
Local Control Funding Formula, Local Control Accountability Plan

In 2013, the California system of funding schools moved from a categorical funding model with designated funds for specific areas to the local control funding formula, in which students in the different grade bands are allocated a base grant. Students are identified according to racial and ethnic subgroups for each student identified as high needs: English learners, foster youth, homeless youth, impoverished students, and students with disabilities (CDE, 2023).

The 10 state priorities determined by the State of California are Priority 1: basic services, Priority 2: implementation of state standards, Priority 3: parent involvement, Priority 4: student achievement, Priority 5: student engagement, Priority 6: school climate, Priority 7: course access, Priority 8: student outcomes, Priority 9: expelled youth – county office of education (COE) only, Priority 10: foster youth - COE only (CDE, 2022b). The graphic below (Figure 1) shows the interconnectedness of the California System of Support. Priorities 9 and 10—expelled youth and foster youth—are the jurisdiction of the county office.

Figure 1.

Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) Priorities/Whole Child Resource Map.



Note. Adapted from California Department of Education website

Each LEA is required to write a district-level plan called the local control accountability plan (LCAP) every three years. Each school contributes its one-year plan called the school plan for student achievement. The plans are structured in the same way so that both plans are aligned. The categories included in the plans are: 1) Stakeholder engagement/involvement - it is mandated that districts have a process for collecting input each year as to the progress of the current plan. At the school level, the school site council provides that mechanism, while the district English learner advisory committee and other community groups may be involved at the district level (CDE, 2022h; 2023); 2) Resource inequities - These may be identified at the school level, and while it is not explicitly raised at the district level, this item is used to assess the effectiveness of a given program (CDE, 2022h); 3) Analysis - Both the district and individual schools examine their respective plans to create a plan for the following year

through the lens of continuous improvement cycle; 4) Goals: What is the LEA attempting to achieve? These must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound 5)

Action/Service: Strategy/Activity - in the annual review of the plans, Actions, and strategies carry out the results by examining the LEA's budget, its LCAP, and school budget to find inequities. 6) Annual measurable outcomes - These are metrics attached to specific goals to measure the effectiveness of action or strategy in the LCAP for specific student groups.

Impact of Arts Education

With the passage of Proposition 28, discussed later in this chapter, the impact of arts education can be measured by the robust data collection and analysis that the LCAP, differentiated assistance and the California systems of support priorities provide to identify disparities for and opportunities to support high-needs students in our state. Research on the value of teaching music, theater, dance, visual art, and media arts has demonstrated that youth learn essential skills of perseverance, collaboration, creativity, and thinking strategies that transfer to supporting learning across content areas (Asbury & Rich, 2008). Assessing learning in the arts through the five arts disciplines and the arts in the form of an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to the arts, has been a significant field of study at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (2021). The studio habits of mind are just one example of the work of arts interaction or learning through the arts and another content area (for example, Math, English language arts, science) in a co-equal fashion. In 2019–2020 alone, 27 research projects and 78 books, chapters, articles, and blogs were devoted to the efficacy of arts learning across the content areas (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2020).

The resilience of unhoused youth who participated in a music studio was studied by Kelly (2013). His questions centered around the benefits of working in the studio and how the students perceived their experiences. The students worked together, helped manage the space, and described the challenges as opportunities for learning rather than obstacles. Sample (2019) also engaged with youth in music at two resource centers serving homeless youth but through a lens of expression of culture and identity. Music, in this case, served as a therapeutic strategy to help the child entirely through an asset-based approach.

The effects of visual arts engagement at a drop-in art class at a local gallery in Nova Scotia, Canada, was studied by Patten (2011). She found that at-risk youth could feel a sense of connectedness in the gallery beyond attending a creative arts class, even as a place to do homework. Art was a pathway to self-expression and belonging. Another study examined youth at a homeless shelter in Spokane, Washington, and how participation in art classes allowed a child to feel social-emotional connectedness, express their creativity, and attend structured activities while building healthy relationships with nurturing adults (Shepard & Booth, 2009).

As K-12 students have returned to in-person instruction, there is an opening to engage young people meaningfully through arts participation and learning in the public-school setting. To do that, leaders in arts education—from teachers and staff to district and county personnel—must believe in the efficacy of their work. This study examines the beliefs and attitudes about the impact of arts education among county arts leads across the State of California. Arts education can serve as a vehicle for cultural inclusion, well-being, and student and family engagement, particularly for highly mobile students such as youth

experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care in the California system of support.

However, there is a gap in understanding how art leaders at the county level see themselves as change agents (Fullan, 2015a).

Problem Statement

Youth without stable housing face obstacles to achieving academic success and a sense of belonging. Students experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care have high chronic absenteeism, suspensions, and low graduation rates (Bishop et al., 2020; CDE, 2021).

Districts are supported by their respective county office of education and every county has an arts lead. That person may be assigned that role in addition to their regular duties, or it may be a dedicated role. While every county office of education has an arts lead, a gap exists in increasing access to arts education for high-needs students (Benge et al., 2022). Obstacles to accessing arts education increased for high-needs students during the pandemic (WestEd, 2021). Activating the network of county arts leads is an untapped resource for increasing access to arts education programs for high-needs students.

The arts have proven critical in developing creativity, self-expression, and transferable skills across content areas. Homeless and foster youth may benefit from meaningful, authentic engagement in the arts to give them experiences and tools to succeed in school (Morasco, 2013).

Theory of Change: Leading From the Middle

The theoretical framework that undergirds this study is Michael Fullan's theory of change, "Leading from the Middle," based on his theory of "whole system change" (Fullan, 2015a). Fullan's theory is that the players in the middle of a system, not its designated

leaders, can be the ones to build coalitions of allies to increase the capacity of those in charge and ensure the sustainability of the innovations taking place (Fullan, 2015a). Top-down leadership interrupts sustainable change and, because of that leadership model, Fullan deems governmental entities as less effective at leading change (Fullan, 2015a). The basis of making sustainable change lies in building rich relationships with those around you, linked positive student outcomes and a cycle of continuous improvement for instruction, a cyclical learning model in which everyone learns from each other, and procuring the necessary resources for the work to continue (Fullan, 2015a).

The county arts leads are the leaders in the middle between the CDE and the districts. County arts administrators are the people at each of the county offices of education who represent the arts at the quarterly California county superintendents' arts initiative meetings in Sacramento. In total, there are 24 dedicated county arts leads and 34 county arts leads who occupy additional roles. The county arts initiative is supported by the Hewlett Foundation in a coalition with the CDE, Create CA, and the California Art Project (Benge et al., 2022). It aims to “work at all levels to strengthen and expand arts education in California Public Schools and increase students’ access to sequential, standards-based arts education through a full complement of services utilizing the statewide county office of education infrastructure (California County Superintendents, 2023) (See Appendix F). While every county has an arts lead, a gap exists in increasing access to arts education for high-needs students (Benge et al., 2022). This does not align with the structure of the county office of education charter to provide assistance and training to schools to protect the rights of students experiencing homelessness, incarcerated youth, expelled youth, and youth in foster care (Santa Clara

County Office of Education, n.d.). Proposition 28, now known as art and music in schools, was passed by voters on November 8, 2022, to increase funding for arts education by allocating up to \$1 billion to hire additional arts teachers in public schools (Jones, 2022). The allocation is based on student enrollment with additional support for students in poverty (D'Souza, 2023). Will the passage of Proposition 28 be an opportunity for county arts leads to help districts increase access to arts-rich experiences for high-needs students in our schools? This study offers an opportunity to gather data and examine an aspect of that question.

Role of County Arts Leads as Change Agents

Fullan developed a theory of change in his research about whole system reform in education (Fullan & Rincon-Gallardo, 2017). He identified critical drivers as policies that improved student outcomes: capacity building, pedagogy, collaboration, and systemness. Fullan talks about “Talk the Walk,” in which the collaborative culture encourages regular communication that refines the language around the pedagogy being implemented and refined. This way, there is more consistency across the system, theories are enacted in real-time and tested and improved, and student outcomes are improved (Fullan, 2015a).

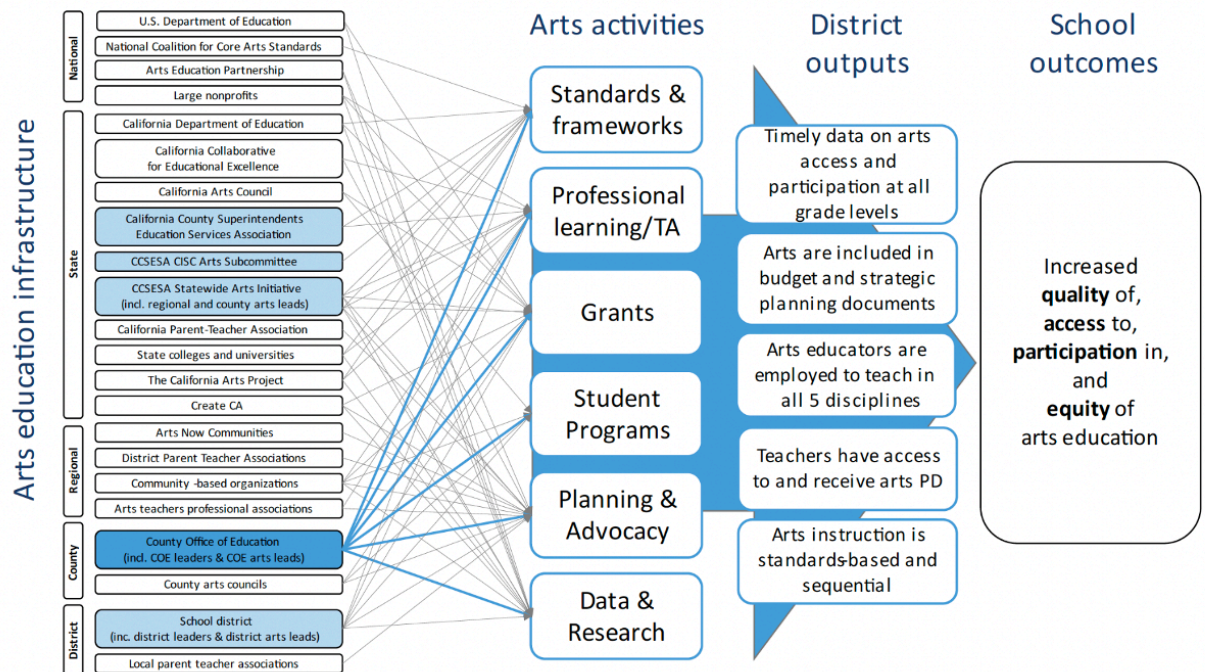
We might consider the concept of systemness from Fullan’s framework on change. It is difficult to define and is a reflective practice in which one is aware of, concerned about, and involved in things from a global perspective as one piece of a larger context. One can begin to address it by forming a coalition to influence others to improve the system (Fullan, 2023). In addition, Fullan’s core concept of managing from the middle runs counter to the hierarchical, top-down approach of the American educational system. The top is never good

enough to run the show, and it is the responsibility of those at the local level to enact change (Fullan, 2023).

In the Stanford Research Institute’s (SRI) study on the role of COEs in arts education in the state (Exhibit 2, Theory of Change), the county arts leads at the county offices of education are ideally situated in the arts education infrastructure to enact change because it is the entity alone that touches every category of arts activities (Benge et al., 2022) (Please see Figure 2 below.).

Figure 2.

Theory of Change.



Note. (Benge et al., 2022)

According to Fullan, effective systems change is derived from a bottom and middle-up approach by building the capacity and a coalition of those in the middle to affect that change (Fullan, 2023). These are two areas where county arts leads are ideally situated to activate.

Purpose of the Study

This study examines the leaders' beliefs about the impact of arts education on student outcomes. These leaders are situated as county-level administrators/arts coordinators, and each has a direct impact on shaping and implementing policy. By learning more about county-level art leaders' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences, we can understand how these county-level administrators, who lead from the middle of a highly complex and hierarchical system, can be more effective change agents for those students who have been historically harmed in education.

Significance of the Study

Federal and state policymakers have long recognized that student outcomes vary by demographic factors, including race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, and family structures (Coleman et al., 1966). Poor student outcomes in K-12 education correlate to race other than White or Asian, language groups other than English, poverty, and single-parent households (Catalyst California, 2023). These conditions are genuine for students experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care.

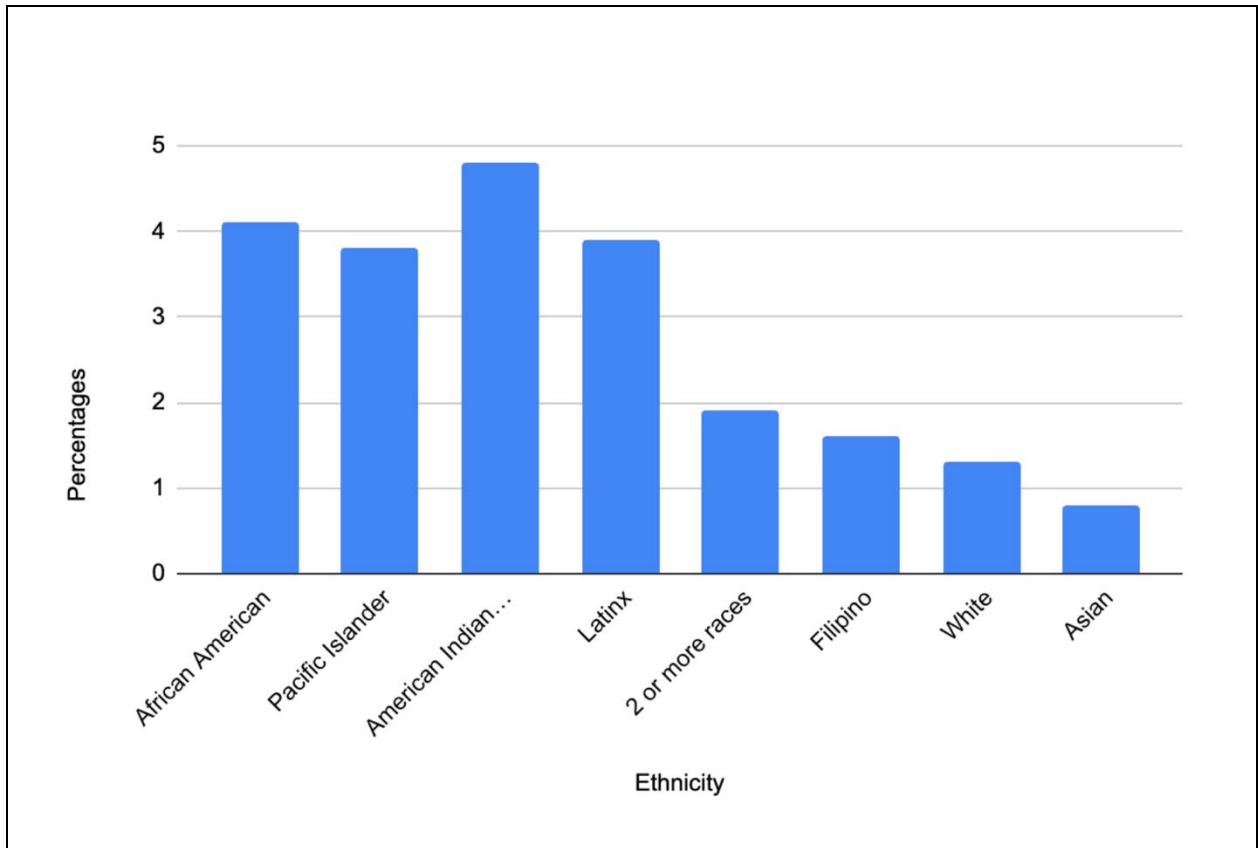
A child is homeless if they lack a regular, adequate nighttime residence (CDE, 2021). Additionally, there were 46,301 youth in foster care in 2019-2020 in California (Yu, 2010). Of 6,329,883 school-aged children, 269,269, or 4.3%, are unhoused. (Bishop et al., 2020). That number has risen by 48% in the last ten years (Jones, 2020). These two student groups

have suffered persistently high suspension, expulsion, and dropout rates compared to their percentages in total student enrollment (CDE, 2021).

In reviewing the demographics of youth experiencing homelessness, we see a disproportionate number of young people of color compared to their numbers in the general population. In a recent report of mobile, unhoused youth living in San Jose (Onasch-Vera et al., 2019), 203 young individuals, aged between 18 and 26 years, were surveyed. The demographics were: 11% White, 16% Black, 56% Latinx, 4% American Indian, 2% Asian, and 11% mixed race. A total of 54% were cisgender male, 40% were cisgender female, and 3% were transgender, with 21% LGBTQ+. Twenty-two percent were still in school and 55% were high school graduates or had obtained a high school equivalency diploma, also known as a General Educational Development (GED) (GED Testing Service, 2022). In a 2018 statewide survey of homeless youth (Kids Data, 2021), 47.1% of homeless students are in grades K-5, 22.0% are in middle school, and 30.9% are in high school. Racial demographics are difficult to track as there are overlapping categories (Asian and Filipino, for example). In terms of student racial demographics statewide (Race Counts, 2023), in 2021 survey information, the breakdown is as follows: Black, 4.1%; Pacific Islander, 3.8%; American Indian, 4.8%; Latinx, 3.9%; two or more races, 1.9%; Filipino, 1.6%; White, 1.3%; and Asian, 0.8%. This number represents the total number of students enrolled in school and does not include youth outside the K-12 system (Please see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3.

Demographics of Students Experiencing Homelessness in California in 2021.



Note. Adapted from Catalyst California (racecounts.org), 2023.

In California, the racial demographics of foster youth are Black, 8.4%; American Indian/Alaska Native, 9.5%; Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.6%; Latinx, 2.6%; and White, 2.2%. In Santa Clara County, the racial demographics of foster youth are Black, 4.2%; American Indian/Alaska Native, statistically insignificant; Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.3%, Latinx, 2.0%; and White, 0.8% (Kids Data, 2019). During the pandemic, homelessness increased from 4,945 households in 2019 to 5,538 families in 2020 in Santa Clara County. In a white paper (WestEd, 2021), there were 4,409 children experiencing homelessness in Santa Clara County

in 2019. Each participating county - Alameda, Santa Clara, Contra Costa, San Mateo, and Solano - had recurring themes: students were difficult to track and lacked quiet learning spaces, food, internet connections, computer hardware, and overall access to resources (Berliner, 2021). In the pivot to distance learning, highly mobile students stopped attending their online classes (Berliner, 2021).

Highly mobile students appear in higher numbers than their representation in the student population due to housing instability and lost instruction due to chronic absenteeism (Van Eck et al., 2017). California has 56% of the total number of unsheltered people in the United States with chronic patterns of homelessness (Senate Housing Committee, 2024). That number has likely increased with the economic instability and job losses caused by the pandemic and is evident among communities of color: 70% of homeless youth were Latinx, and Black students made up 9% of the total. For reference, Latinx students represent 55.3% of the total student enrollment, and Black students are 5.2% in California (CDE, 2021). School districts have had difficulty identifying unhoused youth (Piazza & Hyatt, 2019). Liaisons working with students who are in foster care received increased training across counties in California (WestEd, 2021).

Although data indicates that obstacles for homeless and foster youth have increased during the pandemic, the demographic information is from surveys done before the pandemic. The pandemic surge in March 2020 disrupted the systems in place to collect this information (WestEd, 2021).

The terms “mobile” and “highly mobile students” are used throughout this dissertation. With an awareness of how language can stigmatize children in our educational system, the

term “highly mobile” has been adopted from earlier work done at California State University at Fresno and the University of California at Davis (Tanner-McBrien, 2010). The U.S. Department of Education defines highly mobile youth as encompassing the following categories: children in foster care, youth experiencing homelessness, justice-involved youth, students in military families, and migrant youth (Caballero, n.d.).

The high degree of mobility and lack of school stability contribute to achievement gaps in learning (Tanner-McBrien, 2010). Highly mobile youth experience food insecurity, trauma, difficulties in school, economic insecurity, family instability, and lack of a regular place to sleep, study, and call home. Simple things like a lack of school records, identifying paperwork such as a birth certificate, and a lack of transportation were also barriers to school success (Adams, 2008).

Research on arts education notes the positive impact of arts education on educational outcomes for students, particularly students of color, students in poverty, and students needing additional academic support (Bowen & Kisida, 2021; Brown, 2017; Fried, 1988; Kelly, 2013 Morasco, 2013; Powell Russell, 2015). The arts have been shown to increase self-esteem, create a sense of belonging, increase civic engagement, and connect students to school (Peppler et al., 2023; Powell Russell, 2015; Catterall, 2012). The most recent study outlines how meaningful arts experiences impact not only the individual child but also the broader community where arts activities are culturally relevant and rooted in the community itself (Peppler et al., 2023). This dissertation discusses the perceived impact of high-quality arts programs on high-needs students, particularly foster youth and youth experiencing homelessness, from county arts leads’ perspectives.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are county arts leads/administrators' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences about the impact of arts education on high-need students?

RQ2: How do these beliefs, attitudes, and experiences vary among county arts leads/administrators to better characterize differences in beliefs about the impact of arts education on high-need students?

RQ3: Are these beliefs, attitudes, and experiences about the impact of arts education relevant to foster youth and youth experiencing homelessness in particular?

Initial Definitions

The following terms provide context for this study:

Arts education: Arts education in K-12 schools in California includes the content taught in the five arts disciplines - media arts, dance, theater, music, and visual arts, as well as contemporary arts topics that fall outside the scope of these disciplines. Students in California grades 1–6 shall include instruction in the visual and performing arts to develop their aesthetic expression and skills of creative expression, whereas students in grades 7–12 shall be offered said instruction (CDE, 2022a).

Attitude: The way you think or feel about someone or something; the amount of affect for or against some object (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975).

Belief: Different from knowledge, a belief is defined as (1) a state of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing; (2) something that is accepted, considered to be accurate, or held as an opinion; something believed; (3) conviction of the truth of some statement or the reality of some being or phenomenon primarily

when based on examination of evidence (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Belief represents the information one has about an object and is the fundamental building block of a person's conceptual structure (Azjen & Fishbein, 1975).

California school dashboard: The dashboard is a powerful online tool that displays the performance of LEAs, schools, and student groups on a set of state and local measures to assist in identifying strengths, challenges, and areas in need of improvement (CDE, 2023).

County arts lead/Arts administrator: Individuals representing the arts at the county level designated by their respective county superintendent. There are 58 county arts leads, 11 of whom form a smaller subcommittee of regional leads (California County Superintendents' Arts Initiative, 2023)

County office of education: These governmental agencies answer to the CDE and oversee school district operations within a given county. County offices are led by an elected body known as the county board of education. The county board of education oversees the county superintendent. The county superintendent may either be elected by registered voters in that county or appointed by the county board of education. The specific responsibilities of the county office of education are outlined in several sections of the education code (California County Superintendents, 2024). They are accountability and oversight of county programs (CTE: Regional occupational centers and program, court and community schools, special education classes) and districts regarding their LCAPs, budgets, and fiscal oversight to districts receiving emergency loans (California County Superintendents, 2024).

- **Foster youth:** There are several definitions of youth in foster care based on the different entitlements, supports, and service levels. This list is not exhaustive and is specific, but not exclusive, to the state of California (CDE, 2022e). They are children removed from the home for child abuse or neglect or remain in the home with family maintenance services under Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Section 300, including Indian youth in state foster care; students aged 12–17 removed from the home or are under probation in the home under WIC Section 602; non-minor dependents for students aged 18–24 in high school receiving special education services; students removed from the home in a voluntary placement in the care of a child welfare agency; students who fall under the jurisdiction of a tribal court; and temporary emergency removals (CDE, 2022e).
- **High-needs students:** They are defined as low-income students, English learners, and youth in foster care (CDE, 2021). High-needs students receive additional funding in the local control funding formula funding for schools in California (Hill & Ugo, 2016).
- **Highly mobile youth:** These are children and youth who experience frequent moves to new school districts and include children in military families, youth experiencing homelessness, youth in foster care, and children living in migratory families (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).
- **California Proposition 28:** Legislation passed by California voters in November 2022, renamed arts and music education funding, to approve funding from a percentage of the prior year’s Proposition 98 to fund arts and music teachers in public

schools. A total of 80% is allocated to district hires of classified or certificated arts and music teachers, while 20% is allocated to materials and supplies, professional learning, and administrative costs of up to 1%. Funding allocations are to commence in the 2023–2024 academic year (CDE, 2023).

- **California Proposition 98:** This legislation, passed in 1988 as an amendment to the California Constitution, guarantees minimum funding for K-12 and community college systems based on formulas in the legislation. The funds come from the following sources: income tax, sales tax, corporate and capital gains tax, and local property tax. It represents 72% of the total funding for K-12 education (EdSource, 2009; Petek, 2023).
- **Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education:** This is a federal grant allocated to state departments of education to disburse to LEAs to “improve career-technical education programs, integrate academic and career-technical instructions, serve special (student) populations, and meet gender equity needs” (CDE, 2024a).
- **STEAM:** This is an acronym for integrating science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. It is student-led, inquiry-based learning with teachers in a guiding and facilitating role (Hunter-Doniger & Sydow, 2016). The movement began as a federal initiative led by John Maede, president of the Rhode Island School of Design, in 2013 (Rabalais, 2014).
- **Youth experiencing homelessness:** Under the McKinney-Vento Act, homeless youth and children do not have access to a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including those sharing housing with others due to financial hardship;

children living in temporary housing such as trailers, motels, hotels, or shelters; children or youth who have a primary public or private residence, which is not designed for sleeping; and youth who are migratory, living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, or similar places (CDE, 2022f).

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study will draw on data from a survey and one-on-one interviews from a pool of 58 county arts leads across California. The survey and interview questions will draw on the participants' previous roles in teaching, administration, and other experiences with arts education. The focus will be on the perceived impacts of arts education on high-needs students in the classroom and at school sites. Limitations of the study are related to sampling, methodology, and other features of the research and will be addressed in Chapter Five of the dissertation. The researcher is a colleague of the pool of county arts leads. That relationship may cause undue influence on their answers either in the survey or in the group or one-on-one interviews. This study will take place over several months, and we may not see the critical impacts of arts education for several years. This time is an essential period of legislative change around arts education with the passing of Proposition 28. Some of the implementations of that policy change may be captured in this study.

Assumptions, Background, and Role of the Researcher in the Study

The researcher became interested in this topic as an extension of work as a county and regional arts lead at a county office of education. The barriers to being an effective arts advocate at the county office are real, depending on how one's role is structured. The researcher has personal experience as a child of color, raised by immigrant parents, who

benefited from the free music study and lessons in public schools. The researcher hopes that this exploration will contribute to the body of literature in arts education research to continue to expand strategies to improve outcomes for students who have been historically forgotten or overlooked in our educational systems.

Summary

In this chapter, the unresolved issue that provides the foundation for this study is that high-needs students have less access to rich arts experiences, and they participate in fewer numbers than their peers due to higher rates of poverty, unstable housing, and greater needs for academic and linguistic supports in school. The local control funding formula and California system of supports address the needs of focal student groups, and this infrastructure can serve to mitigate the conditions and address the needs of high-needs students with strategies for improvements (CDE, 2022h).

Participation in the arts is a strategy to improve student outcomes for high-needs students. Students who participate in the arts in school show higher rates of attendance, have a stronger connection to school and their peer groups, higher graduation rates, lower rates of suspension and expulsion, and higher rates of college graduation (Asbury & Rich, 2008; Catterall, 2012; Kelly, 2013; Powell Russell, 2015).

Michael Fullan's theoretical framework of leading from the middle will form the foundation of this study by exploring county arts administrators as change agents (Fullan, 2015a). In Chapter Two, the framework is discussed in greater depth along with a discussion about the cyclical nature of reform in education (Cuban, 1990; Ravitch, 2014, 2016) and the limits of the bureaucratization of education (Darling-Hammond, 2001) as well as the

historical context for the way arts education is positioned in the American educational system. Chapter Two also includes an examination of the literature on the impact of belief on change agents that will be fundamental for examining the beliefs of county arts administrators and the impact of arts education on high-needs students in this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study examines county arts leads' beliefs about arts education for high-needs students. These county arts leads work at each county office of education that level between districts and the CDE. There are 58 county offices of education dedicated to providing support to districts in the following areas: fiscal, administrative, student services, and human resources. The Stanford Research Institute report (Benge et al., 2022) made recommendations for county offices of education and their partners to consider expanding access to arts education to students in California's public schools. In the wake of Proposition 28 legislation to increase arts funding to schools, this study will examine county arts leads' beliefs about the impact of arts education on high-needs youth. We need to understand why there is a gap in the research about the benefits of arts participation for high-needs students and the uneven implementation of an arts-rich learning environment for K-12 students during the school day in California.

This literature review will address the history of reform in education and its cyclical nature, the history of arts education, itself inextricably embedded in the history of the United States, as well as an overview of arts education research to provide context for this study.

Literature Search Strategies

In approaching this work as the first Fellow of San Jose State University's (SJSU's) Center for Collaborative Research Excellence in Education, the researcher focused on arts education and its impact on students experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care. Before becoming a Fellow, another SJSU graduate student created a literature review of articles about youth experiencing homelessness and those in foster care. This work will build

upon those contextual resources with articles related to arts education, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math), and arts integration. Keywords used in searching the Martin Luther King Library databases were those terms in combination with youth, foster care, and homelessness. Other keywords used were homeless youth and arts, STEAM; foster youth and arts, STEAM; homeless youth, performing arts, engagement; homeless youth, music, resilience; foster youth, engagement, K-12; homeless youth, music, K-12. Other topics for research were youth and STEAM, youth, and arts integration to build context for those specialized lenses of arts education. The review found numerous articles on community organizations using arts participation to engage high-needs youth in afterschool programs. Finding no research on in-school arts programs used to engage either of these focal populations, Mantra Roy, a librarian in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library at SJSU, assisted me with the keyword search: impact music painting “homeless youth.” I used the San Jose State Library for 80% of my inquiries. I did use Google Scholar when the articles were behind a paywall. Other sources include ResearchGate, EBSCOhost Open URL Connection, and ProQuest eBook Central to look at current dissertations from other institutions. The gap is clear: there is no research on arts-related interventions in the school day for youth experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care.

There have been obstacles to change that deepened the socioeconomic chasm in a schooling system with a funding foundation in real estate property taxes. Coupled with a complex, hierarchical management within the K-12 system that is often unwieldy and slow to react, the difficulty in making changes to support student outcomes seems insurmountable.

An investigation into the role of beliefs of county arts administrators about the impact of arts education on high-needs students in the educational landscape will be critical to addressing a key obstacle to access to arts education programs for students in foster care and youth experiencing homelessness within the school day. This study examined county arts leads' beliefs about arts education for high-needs students and what some barriers may be in enacting them from a county perspective. Beliefs research will be critical to understanding how beliefs can influence action and the policy that drives our educational system in California.

Limits of Educational Bureaucracy

The county office of education is one part of a hierarchical educational system in California (Benge et al., 2022). Studying the evolution of the American educational system from a local, rural system to a robust centralized bureaucracy (Tyack, 1974) provides an understanding of the role of county arts leads and the context in which they work. The rigid hierarchy of public education creates a separation of decision-making in which those individuals farthest from the children in the classroom are empowered to make decisions (Darling-Hammond, 2001). This bureaucratization of education makes for a system that needs to be faster to address dysfunction (Darling-Hammond, 2001). These conditions profoundly affect teachers in the classroom and administrators leading schools. Symptomatic of the bureaucracy, students were sorted into categories that had a dehumanizing effect on them as children but made it more efficient for administrators to identify categorical funding in California. Students are categorized by the programs in which they participate (Darling-Hammond, 2001). The system is built on inflexibility at all levels: the classroom, the school,

and the district. Teachers' specialization was needed to address students' individualized needs, and students were increasingly isolated from each other even if they remained in their schools. Some children lost instruction as they were “pulled out” of their regular classroom to attend more specialized classes of support (Darling-Hammond, 2001, p. 65).

The multiple layers of hierarchy are another barrier that stifles the ability to address issues as they arise. The layers of accountability removed those closest to the students from any power to make decisions (Darling-Hammond, 2001, p. 67). The bureaucratization of the educational system has ceased to be an effective filter for improving student outcomes.

Darling-Hammond has this to say about the American public education:

There are many reasons for the failure of our educational system to provide high-quality education for all children. These reasons are complex and need to be more concise. Because they are not insurmountable. In the more than twenty years since I started teaching, I wrestled with the issues of how to provide engaging, successful education for all students—education that helps them locate who they are and how they can make a contribution to the world—that stretches them to achieve very high standards yet affirms their basic humanity and right to pursue what matters most to them. (Darling-Hammond, 2001, p. xiii)

Tyack (1974), in a foundational text about the roots of urban education, described the evolution of rural schools to the bureaucratization of urban schools. This historical analysis aligns with Darling-Hammond's (2001) concept of school bureaucracy as an obstacle to change. Both authors argue that school governance has shifted to a corporate structure with the formation of school boards as committees made up of “successful” community members working with “experts,” school superintendents, and school staff (Tyack, 1974, p. 35). This urban school system was the next stage of a public education system as the United States moved into the early twentieth century from the Industrial Age. Still, school systems, with

the governing boards, perpetuated social and economic inequities in the larger society (Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

“Reforming Again and Again and Again”: A Brief History of Education Policy Reform

Larry Cuban, another emeritus researcher from the Stanford Graduate School of Education, lent his insights to the research on the inevitable cycle of educational reform to the canon of educational thought. This cycle of educational reform aligns with cycles of reform seen in arts education in the United States.

Cuban (1990) outlined the ebb and flow of reform cycles beginning in the 1930s and 1940s with their progressive measures of a child-centered curriculum in education, giving rise to the more conservative teacher-facing movement of the 1950s as the United States struggled to keep pace with the economic and technological advances taking place in Russia and Japan (Cuban, 1990; 2021). Cuban expounds on the topic of the cycles of reform here:

The unique organizational characteristics of this tax-supported public bureaucracy governed by lay policymakers merge with the imperative to retain the loyalty of the system's constituencies. Both help to explain schools' obvious vulnerability to pressures for change from external groups. When value conflicts arise and external pressure accelerates, both get wedded to an organizational drive for retaining the support of critical supporters; such conditions push school districts to try novel programs, join regional and national efforts to improve curriculum, and adopt innovative technologies to be viewed as worthy of continued endorsement. The combined political and institutional perspectives also help to explain why districts in different parts of a state, region, and the nation resemble one another in structures, roles, and operations. (Cuban, 1990, p. 10)

Despite the relative structural inertia that characterized school bureaucracy in the United States during this period, the civil rights movements (including women and gay liberation movements) profoundly affected education from the 1960s to the 1980s. Beginning with the landmark case on school desegregation, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, 1954 (National

Archives and Records Administration, 2024), and continuing with school reforms aimed at the achievement gap between racial minorities and white students, the call for change put pressure on educational boards, bureaucracies, and schools. Other landmark legislation and laws including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) began to reshape the school bureaucracy so that it was more responsive to students with disabilities and special needs.

More broadly, school reform took shape in the 1980s and 1990s with more standardized testing, efforts at improving graduation rates, increasing standardization of the curriculum, and an increasing focus on racial disparities between urban and suburban schools under the NCLB moving into the 2000s (Cuban, 2021). These reforms led to the perception of a “crowding out” effect. It seemed that all subjects in school were important but paradoxically some academic subjects were more important than others. The NCLB reauthorization is often blamed for the scarcity of arts education, which was deemphasized when it wasn’t defunded. Despite a seemingly laser focus on the testing of mathematics and English language arts, the arts curriculum nonetheless was named as a “core content” area under the NCLB legislation.

Still, arts advocates rejoiced everywhere when the Every Student Succeeds Act replaced NCLB in 2015 as there was an intentional calling out of the arts as part of a well-rounded education combined with more flexibility of resource allocation in the new legislation (Zubrzycki, 2015). The punitive nature of the NCLB toward underperforming schools was a potent obstacle to innovation or creativity in instructional practice. Arts education could be legitimized by the educational bureaucracy as standards-based and a part of a 21st-century skill set.

In the 2010s, policymakers and reformers undertook a swing back towards the direction of student-centered curriculum and instruction, in part aided by the authorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015 by President Obama. In California, a restructuring of school finance with the local control funding formula in 2013 was adopted to address the entrenched academic disparities between student groups. Governor Jerry Brown was determined to overhaul the funding infrastructure for K-12 education to address the deeply entrenched inequities, particularly for students in poverty, English learners, and high-needs students.

The new funding calculations are based on a weighted student formula in which every student received a base grant with supplemental funding for focal student groups and concentration grants for districts with an excess of 55% of these focal student groups unduplicated. Those students who needed more resources to address inequities received additional funding on a per-pupil basis (Office of Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr., 2013).

Ravitch (2014), once a proponent of standardized testing and charter schools, examined the endless cycle of education reform and has made a strong case for the current reform cycle as a move to privatize public education. Ravitch highlighted the research that has supported the ideals that support positive outcomes for students in schools. Among these, prenatal care is critical for healthy children; small class sizes help students to thrive with more individualized attention from teachers; and children need academic classes combined with, not instead of, the space to play and be creative.

Ravitch's (2014) premise is that our public education system reflects the crisis of widening disparities seen across our electorate in the larger socio-economic landscape. Ravitch also highlights the arts as a necessary part of a student's educational ecosystem.

Cuban (1990) outlines the ebb and flow of reform cycles beginning in the 1930s and 1940s. The implications of this insight are many. Cuban wrote:

Reforms do return again, again, and again. Not precisely as before or under the same conditions, but they persist. It is of even greater importance that a few reforms aimed at the classroom make it past the door permanently. Policymakers, practitioners, administrators, and researchers need to understand why reforms return but seldom substantially alter the regularities of schooling. (Cuban, 1990, p. 11)

In the next section, there will be further discussion of reform cycles with a focus on the historical evolution of arts education in the PK-12 school system.

Arts Education in Common Public Schools: A Brief Historical Context for the United States

Arts education has always had a role to play in the evolution of education in the United States. The idea that the arts would be “essential to the prosperity of the state” has always been a part of the fabric of this country, and the arts were linked to an educated populace from the beginning of the founding of this country (Arts, Education and Americans Panel, 1977, p. 56). The sentiment was reflected in the personal letters of James Madison, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson in the late 18th century (National Endowment for the Arts, 2000). The puritans had four priorities: tame the land, build churches, create a government, and provide education (Arts, Education and Americans Panel, 1977). Therein lies the tension between the arts for their own sake and the accumulation of wealth and prosperity as God’s work in which the arts had no place. As prosperity grew, there was a need for respite, and painting was the first artistic pursuit of the pre-revolutionary middle classes (Arts, Education and Americans Panel, 1977). The first federal support of the arts was the establishment of the United States Marine Band in 1790.

In the 19th century, a young America was dedicated to the philosophies of Emerson, the writings of Whitman, Melville, and Thoreau, the landscape paintings of American painters, and expansion into new territories in the West. The concept of the arts was a western European one with wealthy benefactors supporting the creation of opera companies, symphony orchestras, museums, and institutions of higher learning like Stanford University and the University of Chicago (Arts, Education and Americans Panel, 1977). By the early 1900s, there was a proliferation of American arts in cinema, theater, music, visual arts, and dance. Jazz and popular music spread worldwide between the two world wars (Arts, Education and Americans Panel, 1977).

Between 1800 and 1960, national institutions were created such as the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institute, the National Arts Commission, and the National Institute of Arts and Letters. House Joint Resolution 104 established a national theater, opera, and ballet, and, in 1958, what would become known as the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 1971 (National Endowment for the Arts, 2000).

Arts Education Reform (1960–1989)

American schools adopted the approach of a liberal arts education with arts education focusing on experimentation rather than order coming out of World War II. The artistic expression had a therapeutic bent, a response to the fascism seen in Europe during the war (Raber, 2017). The culture of resistance seen in the social movements of the 1960s was reflected in the arts education in schools (Raber, 2017).

Arts education in California was at its peak and well-supported between 1960 and 1970. “There was a time when the visual and performing arts were more of a part of public schools.

California teachers had to play a musical instrument to receive a credential” (Ritsch, 1999, p. 1). In 1970, the Ryan Act was passed, eliminating training in the arts for pre-service elementary education teachers (Create CA, 2018). In 1978, arts education was further crippled in California by the passage of Proposition 13, a ballot measure that froze property taxes and cut budgets for police, fire, libraries, and arts education in public schools (Ritsch, 1999).

The rest of the country fared no better. The arts, education, and Americans panel, led by David Rockefeller in 1977, produced a report that reviewed the uneven distribution of arts education programs in schools and community programs (Arts, Education and Americans Panel, 1977). By the 1980s, influenced by the excellence in education movement and the report (U.S. Department of Education, 1983), arts education moved toward a framework known as disciplined-based arts education. The curriculum is based on four visual art areas of study: aesthetics, art criticism, art history, and art production (Alexander & Day, 2001).

Rise of STEAM and Career Technical Arts Education (1990 to Present)

James Catterall is credited with inventing the notion of “STEAM” education in 1993. STEAM is an acronym for science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. In the 1990s, K-12 arts education was increasingly integrated into curricular pathways dedicated to science, technology, engineering, and math. Catterall was an essential researcher in arts education, and in the early 2000s, he saw the devastating effects of the Bush-era NCLB educational policy on low-performing schools. What better way to support the sciences and infuse the curriculum with creativity and art techniques (Catterall, 2017)? In a national study on STEM, a researcher found a correlation between arts participation and increased scores in

math and science across gender, race, and socioeconomic levels (Rabalais, 2014). Arts participation had a positive impact on learning in STEM. He argued that incorporating arts into STEM would lead to a more prepared workforce (Rabalais, 2014). STEAM contributed to deeper, more collaborative learning in STEM (Videla et al., 2021). School accountability was severely shaken by the Soviet launch of a “beach ball-sized satellite” in 1957, igniting the space race to the moon (Cuban, 2004, p. 22). Creativity is a part of the STEAM mindset. Integrating STEM with the arts allows for the iterative creative process of making mistakes and persevering through adversity without judgment (Needles, 2020).

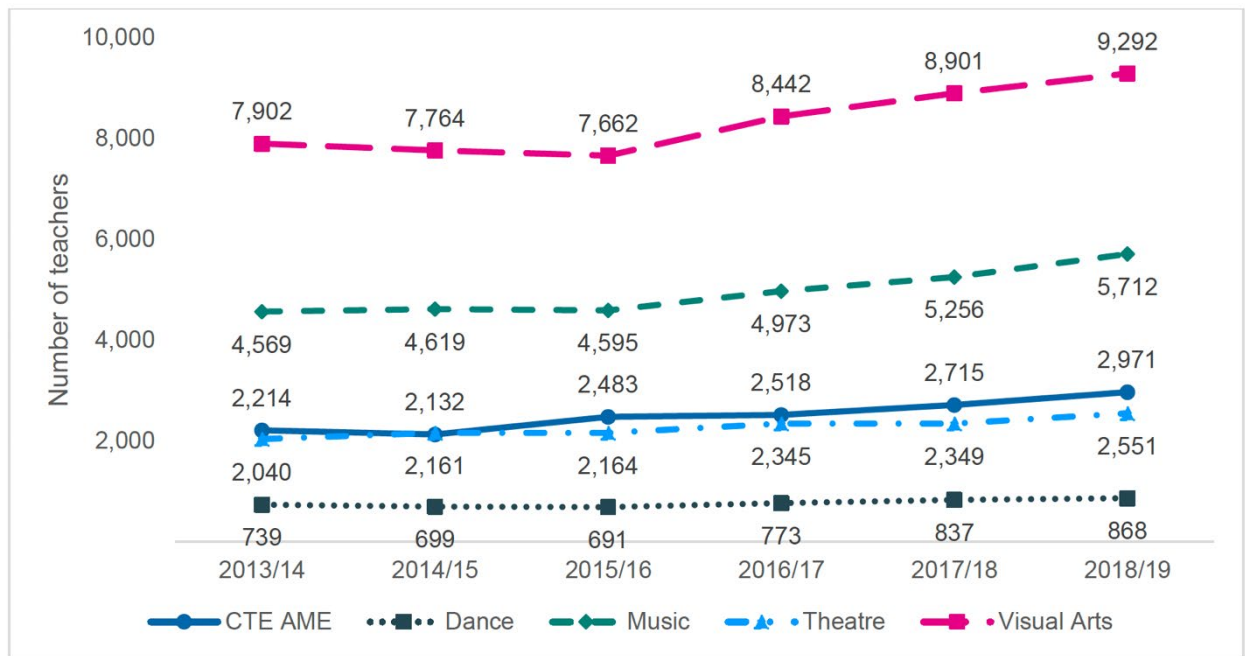
Alongside STEAM and the school accountability movement, career technical education was coming to the fore, with public education as the mechanism for creating a viable workforce. Career technical education, defined by the CDE (2022d), is “a program of study that involves a multiyear sequence of high school courses that integrate core academic knowledge with technical and occupational knowledge to provide students with a pathway to postsecondary education and careers.”

What had once been called vocational education became, in 2005, under U.S. President George H.W. Bush in the White House and California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, career technical education (EdSource, 2005). Support for this movement took place at the federal level with the School-to-Work Opportunities Act in 1994 and then a reauthorization of the federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. Students were now expected to have college-level courses tied to specific industries (EdSource, 2005). A new framework and content standards around career technical education were developed. Along with a deep investment of millions of dollars in schools came an accountability structure and

guidelines for spending the funds (CDE, 2022h). In California, there are 15 pathways, of which arts, media, and entertainment are one pathway, overlapping with the traditional arts offerings in non-Career Technical Education (CTE) programs. (Zook, 2022). Arts participation did increase with the introduction of arts, media, and entertainment (AME) courses in 2014 as a pathway for career technical education (Benge et al., 2022). CTE courses are high school-level areas of study, and the number of CTE AME teachers saw the largest increase of all arts discipline teachers at 46%, from 2040 to 2097 teachers, between 2014 and 2019 (Benge et al., 2022; see Figure 4 below).

Figure 4.

Arts Teachers in California School by Discipline.



Note. Stanford Research Institute analysis of county of office of education staff assignment datafiles. Adapted from Benge et al., 2022.

Districts with two programs must adhere to a strict structure and accountability with an advisory council, industry partnerships, curriculum creation, and labor market demand for the industries. Teachers could be CTE-certified without a standard teaching credential. The Carl D. Perkins Career & Technical Education Grants can add up to several million dollars for LEAs. In FY22, California received \$137,373,362 in funds (Advance CTE, 2022).

The Power of the Arts: Arts Education Research

Youth without stable housing face obstacles to achieving academic success and a sense of belonging. Students experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care have high chronic absenteeism, suspensions, and low graduation rates. (Bishop et al., 2020; CDE, 2021). These obstacles have increased during the pandemic (WestEd, 2021).

The arts have proven critical in developing creativity, and self-expression, and have transferable skills across content areas. Homeless and foster youth can benefit from meaningful, authentic engagement in the arts to give them experiences and tools to succeed in school (Morasco, 2013). In this chapter, the literature is divided into three overarching themes: arts and the development of resilience among highly mobile youth, particularly youth experiencing homelessness; the impact of arts, culture, and integrated teaching and learning strategies; and the impact of administrators' beliefs on delivery of arts education for high needs students. The critical research on the effect of arts participation on high-needs students in high-quality arts programs will be examined, particularly students experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care.

Resilience and the Arts

Numerous studies focused on arts participation in programs serving highly mobile students. Bonnette (2020) described maker spaces at the intersection of the arts and creativity and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), to improve students' engagement and sense of belonging by creating an after-school creative learning environment. Schwan (2017) highlighted the arts as a vehicle for social justice. She interviewed youth experiencing homelessness about their arts program in a shelter for unhoused youth, and they talked about recovery, healing, self-expression, relaxation, and self-confidence. She described the ways the arts could be a tool for ending homelessness. She outlined 10 ways the arts might provide concrete strategies, among them: advocacy, healing, building social connections, and using the arts as a way to shift the public discourse in public education by fostering understanding of the issues that highly mobile students experience, and encourage governmental action (Schwan, 2017).

A mixed-methods study linked creativity and artmaking with resilience in youth at a drop-in center (Prescott et al., 2011). They spoke of resiliency and creativity as a reciprocal process. All the participants interviewed for the study said that art played a critical role in their lives and was a vehicle for personal growth, creative expression, and building connections with others. Rivas' (2014) master's thesis examined creating an art appreciation class at a homeless shelter in Orange County, California. She argued that the arts supported academic success for students experiencing homelessness. Another example of arts learning through a cultural lens as an asset-based approach to resilience for college readiness is Iglesias' (2019) dissertation. Other studies include arts learning through music (Kelly, 2013;

Sample, 2019) and visual arts (Patten, 2011; Shepard & Booth, 2009) as a source of strength and empowerment for highly mobile youth.

The arts have been shown to increase self-esteem, create a sense of belonging, increase civic engagement, and connect students to school (Peppler et al., 2023; Powell Russell, 2015; Catterall, 2012). The most recent study (Peppler et al., 2023) outlines how meaningful arts experiences impact not only the individual child but the broader community where arts activities are culturally relevant and rooted in the community itself (Peppler et al., 2023). This dissertation will discuss the perceived impact of high-quality arts programs on high-needs students, particularly foster youth and youth experiencing homelessness, from county arts leads' perspectives.

Proposition 28 and Renewed Funding for Arts Education (2022–23)

On November 8, 2022, California voters passed Proposition 28, legislation designed to allocate up to 1% of the prior year's Proposition 98 allocation for schools, or up to \$1 billion, to fund the hiring of arts and music teachers in the public schools in California (State of California, 2022). In the wake of increased arts education funding for schools with the passage of Proposition 28, the opportunity to build a new system of accountability for arts education is in view. The state education code in California requires all students in grades 1–6 to have music, dance, theater, and visual art education and be offered arts courses in grades 7–12 (CDE, 2022a).

When voters passed Proposition 13 in 1978 to cap property taxes at 1% until the property was sold, it “exacerbated education inequities with reduced revenues for schools” (Hahnel et al., 2022, p. 11). The legislation deepened the socioeconomic divide between affluent, well-

funded schools and schools in socioeconomically challenged neighborhoods, with Black and Latinx Californians holding disproportionately less real estate wealth than their White and Asian counterparts. (Jones, 2022; Hahnel et al., 2022). Fewer property taxes translated to fewer resources for schools in neighborhoods that are predominantly Black and Latinx. Interestingly, with Proposition 28 passing in November 2022, the tide seems to have turned towards a progressive stance regarding arts education. One might even say that this is a reaction to the deep cuts made in the late 1970s from which education in California has not recovered. (Hahnel et al., 2022).

Reforms, while returning repeatedly, come back to a different ecosystem. With Proposition 28 funds released to the school in Fall 2023, now is the time to design arts plans with measurable outcomes for students. The campaign to reform funding for the arts was led by Austin Beutner, former superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District, with a background in philanthropy. He financed an initiative to fund the arts based on 1% of the previous year's Proposition 98 allocation to schools (D'Souza, 2023).

Proposition 28 passed in November 2022 with 61.5% of the vote (Jones, 2022). Each school received an allocation of funds, the total of which is expected to be roughly \$938 million (Create CA, 2024), determined by the number of total students, grades PK-12: 70% of funds are based on total enrollment, with the other 30% based on the number of socioeconomically disadvantaged students (Create CA, 2024). LEAs have up to three years to spend the funds, with 80% of the allocation dedicated to hiring classified or certificated teaching staff and 20% dedicated to supplies, contracts, and professional learning. Of that 20%, up to 1% can pay for the administration of the funds (California County

Superintendents, 2023). LEAs may waive the 80/20 split for cause, yet to be determined.

LEAs with enrollment below 500 students will not be held to the 80/20 split allocation.

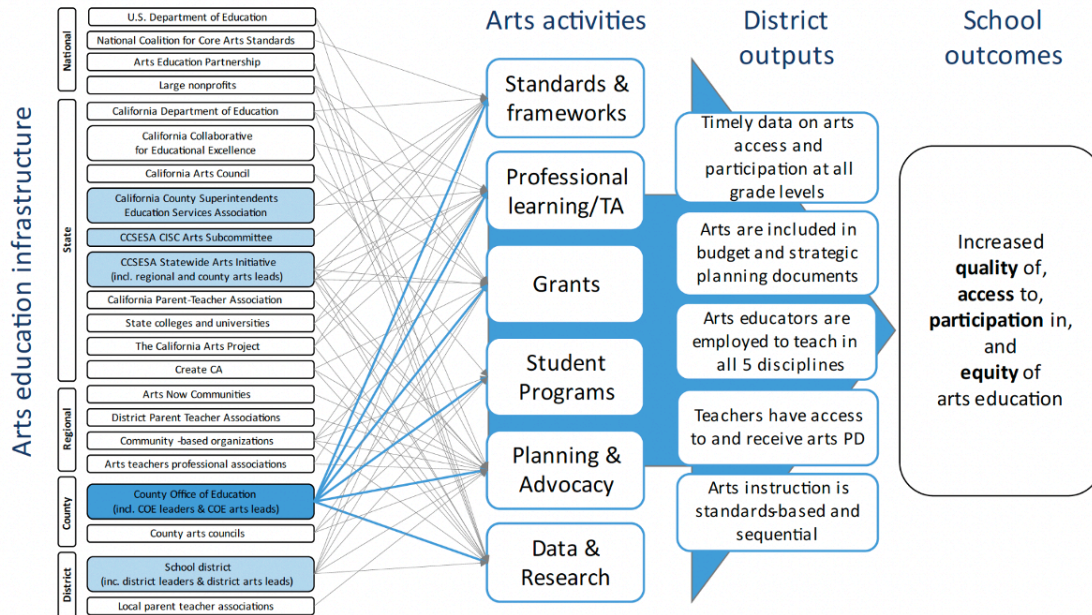
Under the new legislation, each school site in a district will create an arts education plan to be approved by the local board of education. Districts or LEAs must post the plans on their websites, certify the expenditure of funds by creating a report at the end of the funding cycle, and posting that information along with the school plans. The CDE developed guidelines for spending Proposition 28 funds for a July 1, 2023, implementation. Districts must expand their arts programming with a supplement, not a supplant clause (Create CA, 2024).

Leadership From the Middle

With the passage of Proposition 28, the implementation and support to districts will land on those in the middle (see Figure 5 below), the county arts leads. Michael Fullan and his networks provide models for a sustainable way to support the level of change required to implement the new guidelines for Proposition 28. It is the theoretical framework of this study.

Figure 5.

Theory of Change



Note. Adapted from Bengte et al., 2022.

Fullan, a leading researcher on whole system change in education (Fullan, 2023), has written books and numerous articles on school improvement and created a network of schools with his research institution, the New Pedagogies for Deep Learning, in which his ideas are adopted and enacted in schools across the world, including in California (Fullan, 2023). In the videos, Fullan models leading from the middle with easily remembered catchphrases for his work: “Talk the walk,” “Students as change agents,” “the culture of yes,” “Leading from the middle,” “simplicity,” and the “6 Cs” (Fullan, 2015b). Building capacity for change by creating a collaborative culture is a component of his program. He challenges educator leaders to be empathetic, build trust, and create a climate of risk-taking by embracing ambiguity. Leading from the middle means getting greater leverage for

coherence and then designing policies to reinforce that coherence (Fullan, 2015a). There is a space for policy innovation, even in a system with many barriers to change, and the system itself seems intractable (Benz, 2021).

Connections to the California Systems of Support and SRI County Office of Education (COE) Report Recommendations

The guidance the county arts leads have given their districts is to slow down and plan carefully considering the passage of Proposition 28 (Herrera & Baier, 2023). The Stanford Research Institute County Office of Education report (Benge et al., 2022) had several recommendations for county offices of education:

- leverage the CCSESA/COE network to promote the implementation of California’s new arts standards and framework,
- continue to build relationships with district leaders to maximize influence,
- model strategic planning and community engagement processes that foster support for arts education and contribute to sustainable arts programs,
- tailor support for districts receiving differentiated assistance,
- consider how new funds can be leveraged to implement arts programs that address social and emotional learning goals, and
- increase arts learning opportunities in court and community schools to reengage students, promote equity, and demonstrate the effectiveness of arts programs (Benge et al., 2022, p. vi).

There is a dovetailing of the recommendations with the California systems of support with differentiated assistance, the California school dashboard, and district LCAPs and building relationships with districts to support an expansion of arts programming. An

alignment can be seen in Fullan’s concept of leading from the middle in the network building with districts to support increased arts programming. This is especially critical in the wake of the passage of Proposition 28. Program improvement in data reporting for elementary arts data, measuring the effectiveness of arts programming, and oversight of court and community schools to support a more robust arts education for students in alternative settings. These recommendations provide a sharpened focus to this work that goes beyond supporting the standards and framework (Benge et al., 2022).

As for Proposition 28, the first year of implementation will likely be uneven. Each allocation has a three-year timeframe to spend the funds. Districts are advised to follow the tenets around a well-rounded arts education in Chapter Nine of the California state framework (CDE, 2022a).

There has yet to be official guidance from the CDE. However, one wonders if these funds might be considered another support in the California system of supports to improve student outcomes. Michael Fullan’s research on building a system-wide capacity for innovation and change would provide an infrastructure for approaching new opportunities with these increased funds for arts education in schools.

County Arts Leads/Administrator Beliefs About Arts Participation

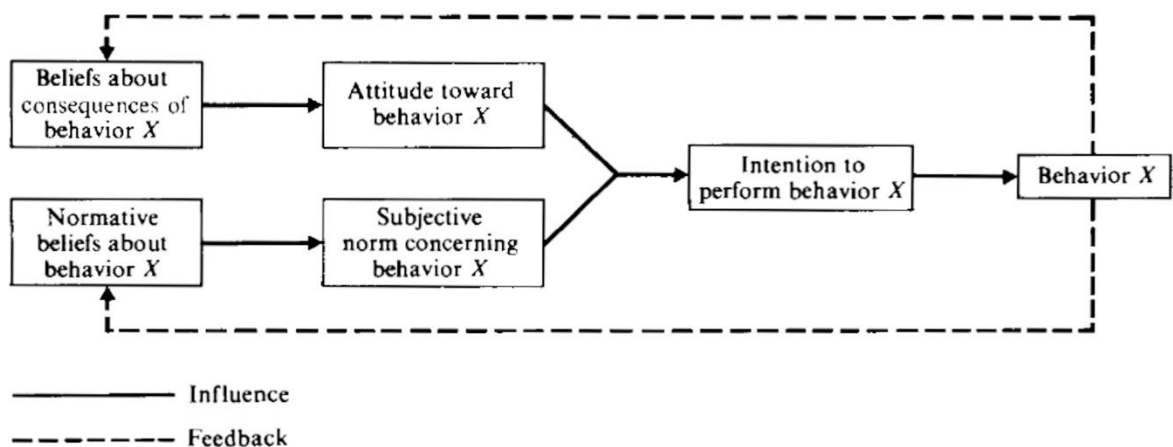
This study examines county arts leads’ beliefs about the impact of arts education on high-needs students. Beliefs matter in leadership and can influence students' ability to participate in arts education and the very quality of arts programming itself (Rankin, 1976). Teachers' and administrators’ positive beliefs about their students can engender positive student

outcomes (Calabrese et al., 2007). Where educators persevere to bring the best opportunities to their students, students begin to thrive (Mintrop, 2012).

The study of beliefs and attitudes begins by examining their relationships to behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975). Beliefs about the consequences of behavior X influence the attitude towards that behavior, which in turn influences the intention to perform that behavior, which becomes the performance of that behavior. People will perform a behavior if they feel the outcome will be positive and will tend not to perform a behavior if the outcome is negative (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975). One may also be influenced by the beliefs of others about a given behavior, which can influence a person to eventually perform that behavior because others are doing it regardless of the particular outcome (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975) (See Figure 6 below.)

Figure 6.

Conceptual Framework for the Prediction of Specific Intentions and Behaviors



Note. Adapted from Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975.

How will these concepts be related to each other in this study? The researcher will determine the beliefs and attitudes of county arts administrators about the impact of arts education on high-needs students and the relationship between their beliefs and arts experiences for youth experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care. Will the differences among beliefs of county arts leads be relevant to high-needs students? Beliefs are the basis for a person's attitude towards an object, and that belief can drive behavior that can have consequences or lead to certain events. Our beliefs can come from things we experience or observe directly or from external sources such as friends, news reports, or anything we might read (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Educator beliefs, including those of administrators, critically affect student outcomes (Schroth & Helfer, 2020; Sjöqvist et al., 2021). Schroth, Helfer, and Sjöqvist wrote that fifteen hundred arts teachers and administrators were surveyed concerning the best ways to teach artistically gifted students. The attitudes of sorting students into those deserving of and less deserving of participation in the arts still exist in schools. Those less deserving are considered poorly behaved and performing below their peers academically. These high-needs students had less access to involvement in art-rich environments. The study concluded that teachers and administrators believed that those students considered artistically gifted should have access to arts, while students who didn't perform to a high academic level were justifiably denied access to the arts (Schroth & Helfer, 2020).

These sentiments, while commonplace among educators, run counter to the findings of a well-known study that youth in poverty who participated in an arts-rich environment in elementary school showed more positive outcomes academically, and civically and

maintained these levels of success through high school “and beyond” (Catterall, 2012). The principal investigator examined four large databases that collected data from youth over time: The national education longitudinal study of 1988, the early childhood longitudinal study, the kindergarten class of 1998-1999, and the education longitudinal study of 2002 (Catterall, 2012). As each study has slightly different parameters and designs, there are variables in the arts experiences in which the youth engage. This study focused on the early arts experiences of teenagers and young adults living in poverty based on parental education level and job status (Catterall, 2012). The study is often quoted and is the single most important study of arts education’s impact on high-needs youth. Even so, the authors warned the reader of the correlation versus the causal relationship of arts to a youth’s future success. Participation in the arts has not definitively been proved to cause greater academic success (Catterall, 2012).

Rankin (1976) examined the arts education beliefs of elementary teachers and administrators in a large district in Texas. Her focus was on how the adults in the educational system might influence students’ access to the arts in school. She sought to discover if there was alignment among the teachers and administrators around their art activities in terms of the goals and objectives of the program. Interestingly, the results of the survey sound like much of what is expressed about the value of arts education today: there are benefits of learning in the arts for its own sake; students’ social-emotional development is increased through arts participation; and learning across other content areas can benefit through an arts-integrated approach (Rankin & Davis, 1976).

Rankin also delineated the locus of control between teachers, art supervisors, and the district superintendent. Each had positional authority, with the arts supervisor having a broad

area of influence, from teachers to administrators to community members, and the board of education, while site administrators and the superintendent made sure the art education program received the necessary support in the school and around the community (Rankin & Davis, 1976). In the study, a survey the researcher called an “opinionnaire” of 58 questions was given to teachers, administrators, the art director, and the superintendent. The survey used a Likert scale of responses (Rankin & Davis, 1976). More work is needed to unpack arts education and the beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of county arts leads in California than the Rankin studies reveal in a sample of Texas respondents over three decades ago.

Summary

Research has shown that the county arts leads at the county offices of education have a tremendous opportunity to be effective change agents in increasing the participation of high-needs students in the arts (Benge et al., 2022). Education has evolved over the last century to include cycles of reform, some of which have sought to undermine the strategies that research has shown to be effective (Ravitch, 2014). Cuban (1990) outlined the ebb and flow of educational reform. The rise and fall of arts education as enrichment and then as a pathway for employment mimics the trends of progressive and conservative swings of the educational pendulum. Bureaucratization of public education aligns with the movement to privatize public education that has worked against improved student outcomes, particularly for high-needs students (Darling-Hammond, 2001).

In 2013, Governor Jerry Brown sought to overhaul the funding structure for public education in a fundamental shift towards a weighted student formula for high-needs students

called the local control funding formula: local control at the district level with increased funding for students needing more support (CDE, 2022h).

Student groups identified in the local control funding formula have demonstrated disproportional absenteeism rates, high suspensions and expulsions, low standardized test scores, and lower graduation rates (CDE, 2023). The research on arts education participation shows an increased sense of belonging, increased graduation rates, increased test scores, lower rates of suspensions and expulsions, and increased civic engagement (Powell Russell, 2015; Catterall, 2012). While there are numerous studies on art interventions for after-school programs and high-needs students (Arts Education Partnership, 2023), there is a gap in the literature on arts interventions in schools for high-needs students.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design

Purpose of Research

This study examines leaders' beliefs about the impact of arts education on student outcomes. These leaders are situated as county-level administrators/arts coordinators, and each has a direct impact on shaping and implementing policy. By learning more about county-level art administrators' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences, we can understand how administrators who lead from the middle of a highly complex and hierarchical system can be more effective change agents for those students who have been historically harmed in education.

There are three phases of this research. In the first phase, the researcher administered an intake survey questionnaire to county arts leads to capture their beliefs, attitudes, and experiences about the impact of arts education on students in the K-12 system in California. (Appendix A). In the second phase, the researcher conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with participants who completed the survey questionnaire and indicated an interest in being interviewed. In the third phase, a cross-case analysis was conducted using Yin's (2018) model to analyze and explore the concept of educational leadership through the lens of Fullan's theoretical framework, leading from the middle (2015a).

Research Questions

RQ1: What are county arts leads/administrators' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences about the impact of arts education on high-need students?

RQ2: How, if at all, do these beliefs, attitudes, and experiences vary to better characterize differences in beliefs about the impact of arts education on high-need students?

RQ3: Are these beliefs, attitudes, and experiences about the impact of arts education relevant to foster youth and youth experiencing homelessness in particular?

Research Methodology and Study Design

This study used a sequential explanatory qualitative design consisting of three phases. This method allowed for scope and breadth through analysis of statistical results and depth through the interpretation of county arts leads' voices through qualitative research. The study utilized a quantitative measure to recruit county arts leaders about their beliefs about the impact of arts education on high-need students, and foster and homeless students. Primary quantitative data were analyzed, interpreted, and guided the study's second phase. The qualitative method (second phase) focused on an in-depth understanding of why county arts leads have these perceptions. A third phase investigated the concept of the educational leadership of county arts leads through the lens of Fullan's theoretical framework (2015a).

Research Methods

The proposed qualitative study seeks to bring forth a more thorough understanding of county arts leads' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences regarding the impact of arts education on high-needs students in the K-12 system by drawing from the strengths of quantitative and qualitative research designs. Qualitative research is recognized to support deeper insight into a problem, or phenomena being studied by combining data collection and rigorous analysis methods, thereby bolstering the limits of the methods in isolation (Creswell & Creswell,

2018; Yin, 2018). To this end, the researcher incorporated a qualitative strategy to collect a substantial body of evidence, explore a complex construct, and address the research questions proposed in this study.

The proposed study began with the deployment of a survey questionnaire designed to measure county arts leads' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences regarding the impact of arts education on high-needs students in the K-12, focusing on high-need students, foster care, and youth experiencing homelessness. A survey questionnaire was administered to county arts leads. Data collected and analyzed from the survey questionnaire informed the sampling, inclusion criteria, and final interview protocol for the qualitative data collection phase.

The qualitative research method gathered an in-depth description of attitudes, beliefs, and experiences that further explained the survey questionnaire data. These one-on-one interviews followed a semi-structured protocol and were transcribed, analyzed, and coded for recurring themes. The qualitative phase promoted a deeper understanding of the quantitative data collected and triangulated the researcher's preliminary analysis and interpretations of the quantitative results.

A third phase investigated the concept of the educational leadership of county arts leads through the lens of Fullan's theoretical framework (2015a). While the interviews were coded and analyzed through the lens of the three research questions, two themes arose from an analysis of the county arts leads beliefs about their role in leading from the middle.

Study Population/Participants

The participants of this study were county arts leads across California. 57 county arts leads met the criteria, as described below, for participation. These county arts leads were

encouraged to respond to an online confidential survey questionnaire near the start of the 2023 academic year. Follow-up interviews were conducted with a smaller number of survey questionnaire respondents for triangulation and validation of survey questionnaire results.

Study Sampling Procedures

County arts leads who are currently employed at or have been employed at these offices within the last 2–3 years formed the population for sampling. A representative sample of these county arts leads was identified through state-level associations and local networks. Alternate options for participation in the study were obtained through message boards or snowball sampling, based on an initial set of leads within Santa Clara and surrounding county offices of education. The researcher first invited participants by email with the survey questionnaire. Then follow-up emails were sent to participants as needed, depending on participation rates. Sampling for the follow-up interviews was limited to 10–15 participants. A total of 12 interview participants self-selected from the initial survey respondent pool using purposive sampling techniques.

Description of Timeline and Setting

The proposed study was conducted during the academic year (August–December 2023). The sample of survey participants was obtained during August–October 2023. For those participants who agreed to participate, interviews were conducted in November 2023. Data collection was completed by December 2023.

The settings for both data collection phases of the proposed study were remote. The researcher selected this setting for (1) convenience to the participants and (2) to ensure a higher likelihood of participation and completion. The quantitative data collection phase of

the study incorporated an online survey questionnaire. Study participants accessed this survey questionnaire remotely using an online link they received by email. Respondents completed the survey questionnaire in a location and at a time of their choosing within the survey data collection window. The qualitative data collection phase, consisting of semi-structured interviews, occurred via Zoom web conferencing. Thus, the settings for these interviews took place remotely from any location where such technology is accessible. The time of interviews was arranged based on the availability of the study participants.

Instrumentation

The survey questionnaire aimed to capture a general overview of county arts leads' beliefs about high-needs youth and the impact of arts education on them. The survey questionnaire consisted of two content areas: 1) Questions related to participants' attitudes, experiences, and beliefs about the power of arts education in a general sense, and 2) Questions related to arts leads' experiences, beliefs, and attitudes about the impact of arts education in high-needs student populations.

The semi-structured interview gathered in-depth descriptions of attitudes, beliefs, and experiences that may further explain survey questionnaire data.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is a regional arts lead and has helped plan and lead the quarterly meetings. Hence, many participants may have an indirect knowledge of the researcher. Additionally, the researcher's life experiences will necessarily color the interpretation of the data even though every effort was made to be reflective in the investigative process, mitigate those effects, and ensure the reliability of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

The survey questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions were drawn from the participants' previous roles in teaching, administrative, and other experiences with arts education. The focus was on the perceived impacts of arts education on high-needs students in the classroom and at school sites.

The proposed protocol was designed to align with survey questionnaire items. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The protocol used in the qualitative phase of this study revisited the items from the survey questionnaire. The protocol was reviewed by experts who are known and available to the researcher. These experts offered feedback related to potential item bias and item clarity. Their feedback guided protocol changes before conducting any interviews. All interviews were audio recorded and immediately backed up on a two-factor authenticated password computer accessible only by the researcher. (See Semi-Structured Interview Protocol, Appendix B).

Data Collection Procedures

Following the quantitative data collection and preliminary analysis phase, interview protocols were refined, and qualitative sampling criteria were established. A purposive sample of county arts leads was recruited for the qualitative phase of the study. Potential participants were invited to participate in a 45-minute semi-structured interview. The researcher interviewed 12 county arts leads for this phase of the study. All interviews were audio recorded digitally and immediately backed up on a two-factor authenticated password-protected computer accessible only by the researcher.

Potential respondents were pre-notified of the study by email and included participant consent notification. Follow-up correspondence consisted of a link to the online survey. Pre-notification began in the summer (August 2023), and the follow-up survey questionnaire link was emailed in early September. Reminder emails were sent periodically, depending on the response rate. The survey from Phase one ended in September 2023. Data analysis began once the survey data were collected to identify participants to be interviewed. The survey data informed the further refinement of the qualitative phase of the study.

Sample Size

There are currently 58 county arts leads. There was a 44.6% return rate for the surveys and 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted for the study. This qualitative study incorporated several data analysis strategies. Proposed data analysis strategies to be used in the study include the following strategies:

Quantitative Analysis

A quantitative analysis of the survey data drew on the questionnaire's information. It included descriptive statistics for nominal and ordinal data. Reporting on sample characteristics along with attitudinal data were presented.

Qualitative Analysis

The interviews followed a semi-structured protocol. The qualitative data were transcribed, analyzed, and coded for recurring themes. These themes were analyzed using NVivo and Dedoose software and organized into thematic categories to find patterns connected to county arts leads' beliefs about 1) county arts administrators' beliefs about the ways arts participation can impact high-needs students' success in school, and 2) the

relationship between county arts leads' beliefs and access of high-needs students to arts education in their respective counties.

The survey and interview data analysis drew on information from the items/prompts in both instruments. Any limitations in the instrument design will be clearly stated in Chapter Five of the dissertation. Triangulation efforts were taken to ensure the credibility of results which are a critical piece of the study design.

Evidence for Validity and Reliability

To ensure the consistency and reliability of the data set, the researcher followed a strict protocol of informed consent in both the survey questionnaire and the interview sections. As a colleague of potential participants, disclosing positionality was critical to transparency in the research. The researcher triangulated the data from different sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to ensure that the themes were built with the added integrity of fact-checking. Codes were also checked to ensure the meanings remained consistent throughout the interviews. Another step to ensure the worthiness of the research was to highlight the outlier datasets that do not support the emergent themes. A total of 12 interviews were conducted so that the more significant number would increase the validity and potential generalizability of the results. The interview transcripts were checked and rechecked for errors, omissions, and mistakes. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

The proposed study was submitted to the SJSU Institutional Review Board in June 2023. Participation in the survey was voluntary and required informed consent from all participants. The consent and participation agreement included participant rights and

confidentiality protections. This agreement was integrated into the survey questionnaire as the first item, and participants accepted the agreement to move forward with the rest of the survey questionnaire. (See Appendix B for a consent notification/agreement copy.) Written consent was obtained through a consent form for all participants in the qualitative interviews, in addition to verbal consent to the audio recording at the beginning of the interview (See Appendix C for a copy of the qualitative interview consent form.)

Participant confidentiality was a priority of the researcher in this study. Significant effort went into ensuring the privacy of participants. Survey questionnaire data were cleaned to de-identify responses before initiating data analysis. Additionally, all participants were assigned a unique numeric identification number, and all data were reported only in aggregate to prevent revealing participants' identities. In the qualitative phase of the study, all interview participants were assigned unique numeric identifiers, and identifying language in interview responses was redacted before data analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings

This study examines the beliefs of county arts leads and the impact of those beliefs on participation in arts education for high-needs students. This chapter discusses the results of the sequential explanatory qualitative design consisting of two phases: Phase One was a survey to identify potential subjects for the study, and Phase Two was the interviews of a subset of those participants who were available to participate. Phase Three was the cross-case analysis of the interviews using Yin's model of cross-case analysis and Fullan's leading from the middle. The study was conducted to answer these questions:

RQ1: What are county arts leads' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences about the impact of arts education on high-need students?

RQ2: How do these beliefs, attitudes, and experiences vary among county arts leads to better characterize differences in beliefs about the impact of arts education on high-need students?

RQ3: How relevant are these beliefs, attitudes, and experiences to the impact of arts education on foster youth and youth experiencing homelessness in particular?

This chapter analyzes the data collected, consistent with the sequential explanatory multi-case study, and the analysis will be aligned with the research questions. This chapter includes sample demographics with figures to complement the descriptions. Transcripts from 12 participants were analyzed to uncover 64 codes. There were three levels of analysis: (a) open coding, (b) selective coding, and (c) theoretical coding. At each level of analysis, the codes were filtered into overarching categories that resulted in themes connected to each of the three research questions. Michael Fullan's theoretical framework, leading from the middle

(2015a) was utilized for cross-case analysis. This analysis across cases will describe emerging patterns (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Yin (2018) calls this a case-based approach to multi-case analysis. Tables and graphics describe the data in this chapter, and excerpts from the participant interviews are used to emphasize the key themes and resulting analysis. Three themes and an analysis of arts administrators as change agents in systems change will be discussed.

Sample

The sampling for the interviews was formed from the pool of 58 county arts leads currently employed at county offices or have been employed at these offices within the last 2–3 years. Participants were recruited from the county arts leads pool from each county office of education in California with a population of $N = 58$. The sampling technique used to identify participants was convenience sampling. County arts leads self-selected to be interviewed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These county arts leads represent individuals holding administrative credentials in K-12 education.

In August 2023, all 58 county arts leads were sent a survey by email as a part of Phase One of the study. A total of 58 invitations to complete the survey were sent over email. Of these, 33 surveys were started, and 26 were completed with a 44.8% response rate where $N = 58$, and a 79% completion rate of those who responded $n = 26$. The county arts leads who indicated they would be interested in being interviewed were invited to participate via email. Of these, 12 county arts leads consented to be interviewed. This protocol is described in Chapter Three. Tables will be used to present both the demographics of the participant sampling and the findings from the study.

The participant pool was diverse in several ways. Those interviewed belonged to four age ranges: 22–30, 40–49, 50–59, and 60–69. Seven county arts leads were in the 50–59 age range, three administrators were in the 60–69 age range, one was in the 40–49 age range, and one was younger than 30. All participants were women, 11 identifying as white and one Latina woman. See Figure 7 below.

Figure 7.

Participant Age Ranges.

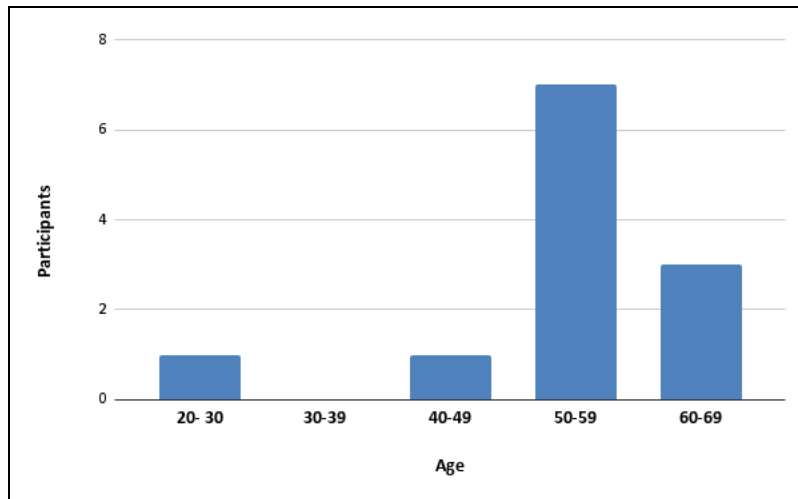
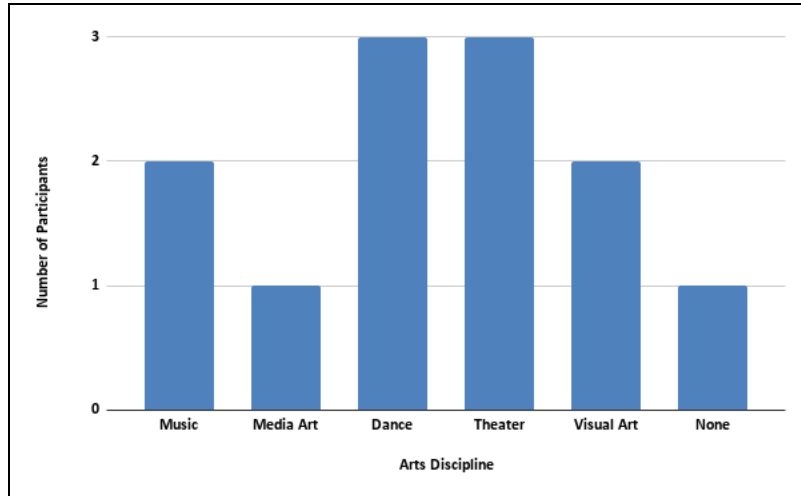


Figure 8 illustrates a breakdown according to personal art practice. Of the five arts disciplines reflected in the California arts standards for public schools, prekindergarten through grade 12 (CDE, 2022), one arts lead has no arts practice, one practices a media art discipline, two are musicians, two have a visual art practice, three have a theater background, and three are dancers.

Figure 8.

Participants' Personal Arts Discipline.

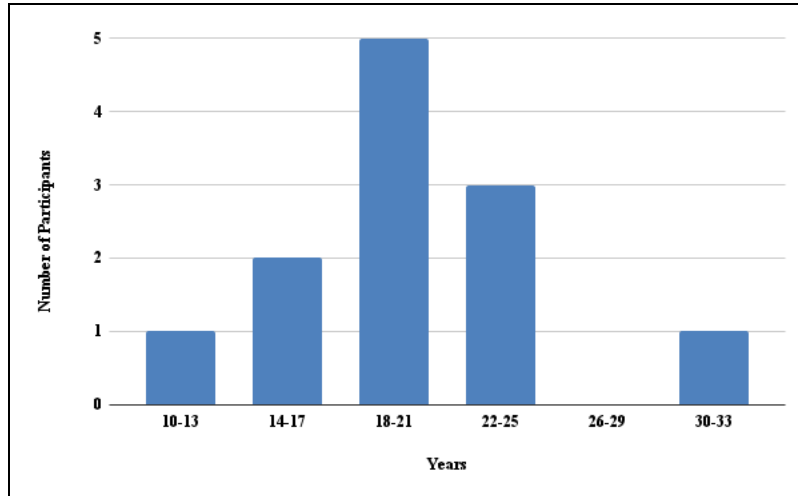


The participants' total years of experience in education can be described thusly:

One administrator has between 30 and 33 years of experience, one has between 10 and 13 years, two have between 14 and 17 years, three have been in the education field between 22 and 25 years, and five administrators have 18 and 21 years of experience in education. (See Figure 9 below.)

Figure 9.

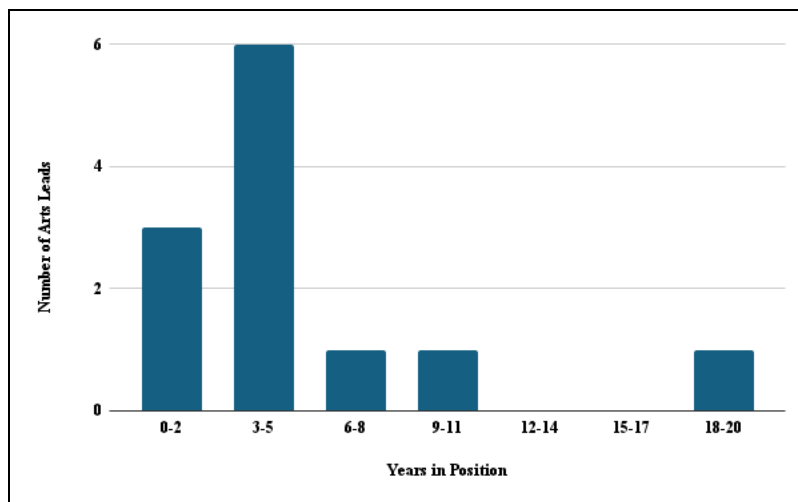
Participants' Years in Education.



In terms of years in their administrative positions, one county arts lead has been an arts administrator in the 18–20-year range, one has been in their position in the 6–8-year range, one has been in their position in the 9–11-year range, six administrators in the role in the 3–5-year range, and three administrators in the 0–2-year range. (See Figure 10 below.)

Figure 10.

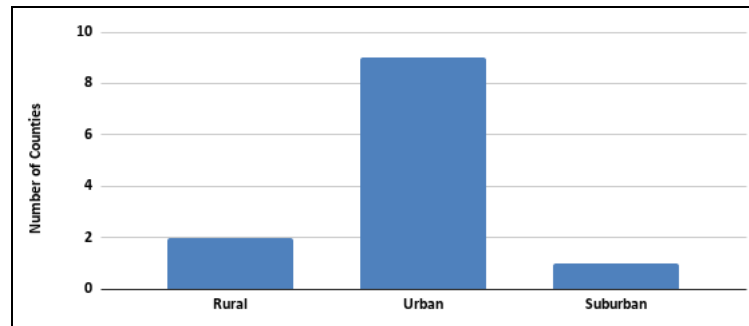
Participants' Years as County Arts Leads.



The county arts leads counties represent three different types of descriptions of the counties based on their population density. Three of the counties are rural, five are urban, and four are suburban. (See Figure 11 below and Appendix F).

Figure 11.

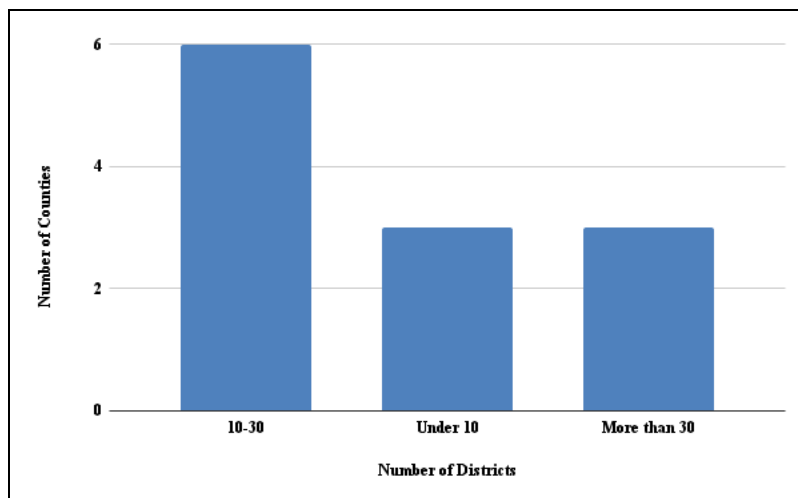
Participants' County Designation.



The county arts leads serve a diverse range of districts: three have more than 30 districts, three have fewer than 10 districts, and six counties have between 10 and 30 districts. (See Figure 12 below.)

Figure 12.

Number of Districts in the County.



In general, when the county has a large rural component and a small number of districts, the designated county arts lead may have other duties assigned to them. County offices of education with more districts are more likely to have a dedicated arts administrator and a more robust support system for arts education. (Benge et al., 2022). Within this study, six county arts leads occupy a dedicated role, with six administrators having other duties besides their arts responsibilities.

Data Collection

The primary research data source is 12 women who are or were employed as county arts leads in the county office of education. The initial survey in Phase One collected demographic information, and participants shared their beliefs, attitudes, and experiences about the impact of arts education on high-needs students. At the end of the survey, participants indicated their availability to be interviewed. These one-on-one interviews followed a semi-structured protocol and were transcribed, analyzed, and manually coded for emerging themes. The interview questions were considered against the three research questions with particular attention paid to youth experiencing homelessness and students in foster care, the primary focus of this research. The initial survey questions can be found in Appendix A, and the semi-structured interview protocol can be found in Appendix B.

Data and Analysis

After the interviews were completed, all interviews were coded manually using open coding in which each line was coded. The researcher entered the transcripts initially in Nvivo, but the software was inadequate for creating data visualizations on an Apple computer, so the researcher shifted the transcripts and codes to Dedoose for further analysis.

There was a second round of analysis comparing the codes generated by interview questions aligned to a particular research question.

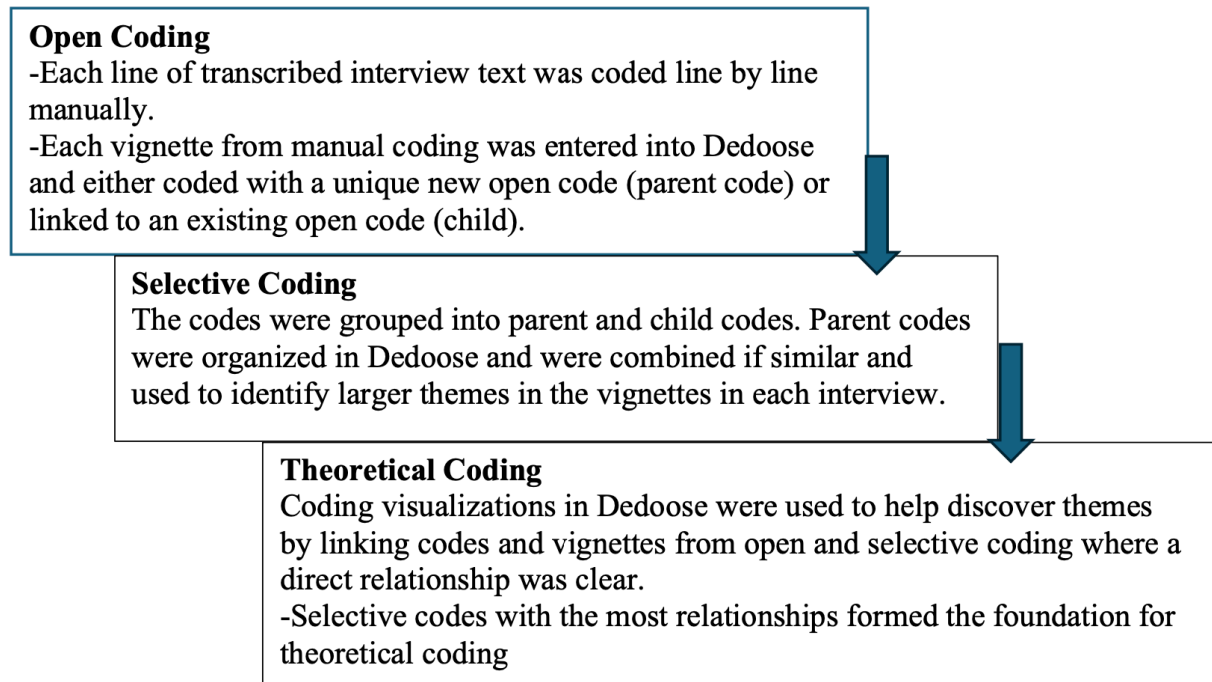
The researcher used the Dedoose data visualization tools to identify the code counts for the frequency level. Charts related to code application and presence within each interview emerged. Some larger categories emerged.

The emerging patterns and codes were grouped and regrouped into larger categories using the Dedoose software in a process called selective coding. Thematic codes were manually generated and processed through the software to produce the final outputs.

Three themes appeared from the analysis of the parent and child codes in Dedoose, derived from theoretical coding. The researcher used the code charts to understand the relationships between the open and selective codes through the charts of the frequency, co-occurrence, and application of the codes in the interviews. The charts were a visual aid to support the three levels of analysis. (See Figure 13 below).

Figure 13.

Data and Analysis Process.



Findings

After engaging in three levels of coding—open, selective, and theoretical—three main themes emerged from the analysis. The major themes that developed out of the researcher’s analysis are related to the research questions:

RQ1: What are county arts leads’ beliefs, attitudes, and experiences about the impact of arts education on high-need students?

RQ2: How do these beliefs, attitudes, and experiences vary among county arts leads to better characterize differences in beliefs about the impact of arts education on high-need students?

RQ3: How relevant are these beliefs, attitudes, and experiences to the impact of arts education on foster youth and youth experiencing homelessness in particular?

The first of the three themes is student belonging due to participation in the performing arts. The arts leads referenced the positive social-emotional effects of the performing arts participation in music ensembles, theater, and dance (Participants 1001, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1002, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1003, personal communication, October 24, 2023; Participant 1005, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1007, personal communication, October 23, 2023; Participant 1008, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1009, personal communication, October 27, 2023; Participant 10012, personal communication, October 26, 2023). The second theme is cultural arts as a bridge to self. Culturally responsive arts were a recurring theme across the cases (Participants 1001, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1002, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1004, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1005, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1007, personal communication, October 23, 2023; Participant 1008, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 10010, personal communication, October 27, 2023; Participant 10011, personal communication, October 30, 2023). Students and families feel included in the K-12 system when they see teachers and curricula that honor their home cultures. The third theme is the arts as multidisciplinary learning strategies. Arts-integrated strategies as a multipronged platform have been connected to universal design for learning (Glass et al., 2013), and the Kennedy Center defines them as legitimate and effective ways for students to demonstrate their learning through other content areas (Neal & Duma, 2020).

Additionally, cross-case analysis and synthesis of the data were conducted utilizing the theoretical framework, leading from the middle (Fullan, 2015a). Fullan's theory is that the players in the middle of a system, not its designated leaders, can be the ones to build coalitions of allies to increase the capacity of those in charge and ensure the sustainability of the innovations taking place (Fullan, 2015a). Top-down leadership interrupts sustainable change and because of that leadership model, Fullan deems governmental entities as less effective at leading change (Fullan, 2015a). The basis of making sustainable change lies in building rich relationships with those around you, linked positive student outcomes and a cycle of continuous improvement for instruction, a cyclical learning model in which everyone learns from each other, and procuring the necessary resources for the work to continue (Fullan, 2015a).

Yin (2018) describes a process by which each case retains its integrity and is compared across the set of cases to identify patterns within the cases. The county arts leads' description of their behaviors related to their organizational roles formed the foundation of this comparison. The two themes that emerged were (1) the role the county arts leads play as a bridge to districts, and (2) county arts leads as systems change agents in the K-12 school system through the lens of Fullan's theoretical framework.

Themes From the Research Questions

Belonging was the broad classification with subtopics such as creative self-expression, being seen and heard, safe space, and student voice and choice. A second group of codes came under the umbrella of arts as a means of expression of self. These codes included the intrinsic value of the arts in which the arts are a means of teaching aesthetic sensibility,

persevering through adversity, and an individual pursuit for excellence. The participants had much to say about the arts, offering strategies and thinking routines for students to express their learning. For high-needs students, the arts can support their academic achievement and ways to forge connections to school. Study participants asserted that the arts were not extra or on the side, and meaningful participation could be critical for the success of multilingual learners, students experiencing homelessness, youth in foster care, migrant youth, and students receiving special education support.

Theme 1: Student Belonging as a Result of Participation in the Performing Arts

Participant 1009 is a woman in her fifties with three decades of experience, first as a music teacher and then as a county arts administrator. Her county is urban, diverse, large, and situated on the coast of southern California. She is a White woman, a trait she shares with eleven of the 12 participants. Here, the values in the arts are deeply rooted in a finely honed equity lens, a principle she shares with the other participants in this study. In this excerpt, Participant 1009 shared her beliefs about the way the arts allow students to be communicative, joyful, and celebratory:

(The arts are) a wonderful way to communicate. It helps us, helps students, helps every human being to express who they are, express their thoughts and feelings, (and) communicate with one another. It brings us joy, helps us process emotions, helps us celebrate events in our life or whatever kinds of experiences we're having. (It's just an important part of human experience (Participant 1009, personal communication, October 27, 2023).

Being seen and heard and making unique contributions to a group arose as a component of belonging and creating a safe place. Of the participants interviewed, 10 of 12 talked of belonging as a critical component of arts participation:

I think at the end of the day with these particular students, it's because they're being seen. They're given a safe space to share something about themselves to contribute to something in a way that is challenging and requires grit. It really pushes them but if the environment is nurturing enough, (it) can be great and it pushes them (Participant 1008, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

Participant 1008 is an arts lead in a small, rural county. She is a White woman who has 20 years of experience as an arts administrator and is a visual artist. Her county is in central California in the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Her arts programs serve high-needs youth, and her arts practice is rooted in trauma-informed practice. In this excerpt, she focused on creating an inclusive environment as a critical component that built toward a strong sense of belonging and student choice:

(I)f the environment is nurturing enough, it puts them through the paces, but in a way that makes them feel good about it at the end of the day, and in a way that's reflective of something they want to do. They're choosing to be there, and they feel seen, and they get to be seen the way they want to be seen (Participant 1008, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

In a school, the arts teacher is often the only teacher in their content area, and they teach all the levels, beginning through advanced and different grade levels. As such, students may have the same teacher for several years, and the teacher may come to know a child's parents and siblings. Participant 10012 is also a White woman in her fifties with more than 20 years of experience, first as a music teacher and then as a county arts administrator. The county she serves is large, urban, and very diverse. She talked about the ability to form close relationships with students over multiple years of teaching the same students:

I had several students (where) I knew their families. They were in my program for 8 to 10 years. I had a very strong relationship with many of my students, especially at the beginning of my career. We would go to the football games together and I (taught) all their brothers and sisters and their cousins (Participant 10012, personal communication, October 26, 2023).

Strong bonds were formed with families over time. These opportunities circled themes outside of school and the arts class with events that produced connections between families and school. Participant 10012 elaborated on the ways she built an inclusive culture in her classroom:

(W)e had a good relationship and that was (a) part of that community that we had around music. I made the concerts about ‘bring everybody, bring your family, bring the babies, bring everybody’. Let’s have a Halloween concert and ASB (note: associated student body) is going to do trick or treating in the quad, and you can dress up. (The concert) will be 45 minutes and not any longer, so you can go and have dinner. You know, just try to have a good time (Participant 10012, personal communication, October 26, 2023).

In the next passage, we meet Participant 1001, an arts lead who taught for more than 20 years as a theater teacher. Her county is located on the northwestern coast of California in an area dominated by redwood forests, beaches, and rivers and is designated as rural. A characteristic of the belonging theme as related to arts participation is that the performing arts make it possible for youth to distinguish themselves with their creative voice as a part of the creative product. Participant 1001 has this to say:

I think most humans seek to be seen and heard and valued. I don’t think that we can truly recognize and realize our own personal agency to be all that we can be without a foundation that we believe ourselves to be valid for ourselves. Like ourselves not as the archetype of ourselves, but that we exist and who we are is enough, right? And who we are matters. If you believe you matter, then I think that that allows for your agency to matter and your advocacy to matter (Participant 1001, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

This arts lead begins to pivot from a sense of belonging and self-confidence built by arts participation to advocacy and student voice and empowerment. The arts can be a vehicle for creating a strong sense of self and self-reflection so that a student can become a productive part of society:

If you want to advocate for the animals at the animal shelter because you yourself have felt like a lost puppy at times, it matters if you believe that you, as the lost puppy, matter. I also think that personal self-expression allows students to visualize what they may have been thinking on the inside, but it's hard to reflect on it if there's no tangible product. Feelings are easily entangled and hard to interpret. I think art that allows for visualizing what you're experiencing, (and) then makes it external enough that you can look at it and reflect on it and see whether is this where I want to be, is this who I want to be, or is there an opportunity for change? (Participant 1001, personal communication, November 17, 2023)

Participant 1001 went on to discuss how she created a classroom environment that permitted students with diverse needs to engage in a way that allowed for space for the students to be themselves, a crucial element to producing an inclusive space. As with the theme of belonging, 10 of 12 arts administrators identified arts participation in arts classes as safe spaces for youth to be self-expressive and be authentic:

(At) the comprehensive high school (where) I taught, they often used the arts classes as the classes for integration for (autistic students), students who were otherwise separated from the general population for various given reasons, or had a shortened day, whatever the case may be, as well as students that, for whatever reason, "we don't know what to do with them so we're gonna stick them in your theater class" (Participant 1001, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

Arts classes are often used for student placements in schools where the arts are often seen as therapeutic options for high-needs students without giving the necessary training or support to teachers (Kárpáti, 2024). Nonetheless, this former theater teacher can guide students by teaching theatrical skills and techniques to connect with an internal emotional landscape:

(O)ne of the things that that particular artform (theater) allows for is being able to play a character, so you get to (interact) with other humans but not necessarily as yourself so the pressure of how to behave in a certain way was lifted. And it's kind of like getting a script. You get a script! (Participant 1001, personal communication, November 17, 2023)

The act of being a different person allows students going through the awkward process of growing up in a stressful world a place to explore their feelings and their identities with a positive reinforcement that is not always available in their personal lives:

You get to know what to say to the other person and you can have an interaction that's positive! And then all the other assets come out: your phenomenal ability to make facial expressions, your phenomenal voice, your phenomenal ability to understand positionality on stage and work the audience and humor. All of that comes out because you know what you're supposed to say. I saw huge social growth within a lot of my autistic students (Participant 1001, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

Students experiencing homelessness were also able to ground themselves through theater games and activities and to feel safe in an inclusive community that was created in the classroom:

I also had several students who were experiencing homelessness. The theater was a place where they could let their guard down in a different way that they couldn't in their outside environment, where for many of us we sort of like, take off the mask and flop into our pajamas when we get home, right? But if home is where you have (to have) maximum vigilance because home is not safe, wherever that home may be that day, then where do you get to flop down and be in your mental pajamas, right? (Participant 1001, personal communication, November 17, 2023)

Theme 2: Cultural Arts as a Bridge to Self

Representation was a recurring theme when participants discussed the need to bring culturally relevant programming to students of color in their schools. There was a self-consciousness about instilling a Euro-centric culture in students in general:

I'm (a) dual language immersion (teacher) in Spanish. I was working on having conversations with third and fourth graders on equity and social justice and being that there is a way for you to communicate that with our students so that it's not assumed that it's (going to) be teaching CRT (note: critical race theory), right? (T)he way we went about it is, we were just looking at images throughout history and (asking), what are you noticing about this art piece? (Participant 1004, personal communication, November 17, 2023)

As a young teacher in the early part of her career, this arts lead integrated the arts to examine contemporary issues and sociocultural events for young students because she felt the arts made these complex issues relatable.

So, it could be something as a painting of Barack Obama or looking at, any piece and just seeing what they're observing from that and then having those conversations to engage them and now see what's happening today. Let's compare some of the issues that might be going on (such as) race and look at how people are being treated based on their skin color or where they're coming from and being able to bring that in and seeing how we can think about what a third grade or fourth grader can do to support or to fight for equity (Participant 1004, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

Students were taught the styles and techniques of contemporary artists to explore race, gender, and cultural identity through the lens of an inclusive classroom culture.

And so, we eventually turned it into an art project similar to what (other) artists have done, showing their expression. This is how they demonstrate their support or how they stand for peace, or liberation (Participant 1004, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

These excerpts from participants contained multiple themes. This county arts lead, a Latina educator who had been a middle school teacher in a school with many multilingual students in a rural part of her county, began with integrating visual arts images with socio-political events in current events. These images were a vehicle for teasing out her students' racial consciousness. In this excerpt, the young teacher connected self-portraits to gender, student identity, cultural background, and creating a space of belonging.

(T)hey were able to do self-portraits and they were able to also add to their self-portraits part of their identity, sharing things like these are my preferred pronouns and this is my preferred name and I'm coming from this background where we celebrate holidays this way or we have certain foods this way...just being able to provide that in the classroom and have that displayed. I think that was a win for students, feeling like they definitely belonged in the classroom (Participant 1004, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

Another recollection related to high-needs students from this participant highlighted the need to conduct classroom activities in students' home language as a way of connecting with her students and their connection to the school. Scaffolding the learning in both languages is highlighted in this excerpt:

I'm thinking about a couple of students that were newcomers and also considered homeless because they were living out of a hotel. The school was able to provide some resources for them and they only spoke Spanish. And as far as being able to have art during Spanish time by providing the vocabulary for the students, again, that was for everybody, and this was during Spanish time. This is an opportunity for that student to feel like, 'Oh okay. Well, I understand the Spanish, so I have access there. I understand what this means and now I have the tools to be able to express myself.' So that way providing the scaffolding, both for the language aspect, the vocabulary, and the directions...everyone's doing this together in the same language, that you're able to talk with us. I think it helps that student feel more connected in the classroom (Participant 1004, November 17, 2023).

Another arts lead in a different county from the central part of the state shared a story in which she brought her students of color to the ballet, *The Nutcracker*, and the awareness she felt about their understanding of the ballet and a disconnection of the content for her students.

I think the first thing (is) my own love for *The Nutcracker* does not mean all kids are (going to) love *The Nutcracker*. It's a very traditional story, very traditional ballet...cultural responsiveness means providing arts experiences, arts lessons, all of the things that are connected to who the student is. Or make sure they can see themselves in whatever art form you're providing (Participant 1002, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

She described a teaching artist of color, an African American man, who looks like her students. Her students are intrigued by John because they can see themselves in him and think it is "so cool" that he can sing the way he does.

(The) example I would give is the music go round program we've done with the local orchestra. The education facilitator, John, is a person of color...I was sitting with (the students) because I always like to sit with the kids because I like to hear what they're saying. They're my audience. I want to know, okay, you're the toughest audience, tell

me what you think, right? (Participant 1002, personal communication, November 17, 2023)

Participant 1002, now an upper-level county administrator, was transported back to her time in the classroom. Inviting her students to give her feedback on the relevancy of the arts programming reflected her deep experience in teaching students of color in her district. Her racial equity lens is an integral part of the work she does today.

Two of the boys looked at me and they were like, ‘Miss Smith, he’s Black,’ (and) “that’s so cool.”...I think that is one of the key things that we really have to focus on is our well-rounded experiences that represent different cultures, different ethnicities, and different lifestyles (Participant 1002, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

In the example above, black students saw themselves in John, the singer-teaching artist. Students can connect to these compelling arts experiences. The arts can bridge their public selves with their private, reflective selves. These arts activities can be impactful for their audiences as was the case in this spoken word showcase for families and educators in this arts lead’s large, urban county:

I had this one student, and she was really terrific, and I loved her poem. It was about the experience of being black in the classroom...and what (it) feels like when your teacher starts to talk about slavery. It was just very interesting but also a little bit funny; she was just amazing...I was judging with another very experienced poet and she (asked), ‘Do you think that’s too edgy?’ I (said), ‘Well, it’s a little bit edgy, but that’s kind of the point, right? I’m not (going to) censor that (Participant 10010, personal communication, October 27, 2023).

Another participant arts lead from a Central Coast county office of education spoke about how participation in arts allows students to express their thoughts and emotions:

Relevancy, engagement, connection, art education provides all of that (through) building community, collaboration, (and) critical thinking. It gets to the (students’) untapped funds of knowledge...(M)aybe it should be called art and cultural education, (because) it’s a critical piece when our students see themselves represented (Participant 1005, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

This participant elaborated on her thoughts by pointing to a specific example of a cultural Día de los Muertos altars, in her context with a county-operated school (court and community schools under the jurisdiction of a county office of education):

Several of our Alt Ed (note: alternative education) sites created exhibits for Día de Los Muertos... critically important and significant whether they're creating sugar skulls or altars to their people- their loved ones who've left. One of our sites worked with the woodworker to create a bridge that was at Blue Lagoon Museum in Holmes Valley and had all these beautiful lanterns that had pictures of loved ones hanging because it had this arch and then this bridge you could walk over ...the bridge represented walking from one place to another...it was exquisite... (Participant 1005, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

Theme 3: Arts as a Multidisciplinary Learning Strategy

The arts can also be employed as a learning strategy for improved academic outcomes. Arts participation has been shown to have a positive impact on increased attendance, improved school climate, fewer discipline referrals, and higher standardized test scores (Catterall et al., 2012; Powell Russell, 2015). One arts lead, a woman with 20 years of experience with a focus on supporting multilingual learners, said:

I think the impact on multilingual learners is significant. It gives parents and families a way to engage their children in linguistic skills and cognitive skills. If I am a parent, maybe I don't speak English. Maybe I'm not literate in English or in my native language. But I can work with my kid and say, 'What do you think is happening in that picture? (W)hat do you see that makes you say that?' And I hope that my kid becomes a reader in whatever language. It's empowering for families. We haven't said it, but you're talking about arts integration (Participant 1003, personal communication, October 24, 2023).

This arts lead pointed out that visual art and reading readiness in the early elementary grades have been linked in the research (Brown et al., 2010; Burger & Winner, 2000).

(Let's think) about learning how to read and learning how to write. (When you ask these questions:)What do you think is happening? What do you see that makes you say that? These are reading skills. (M)y mom was a preschool teacher and used to show me how you can tell if a kid is ready to read by looking at what the kids are

drawing. (If they draw a person that) only has a head and 2 arms and 2 legs, they're not ready for writing. Once they've added eyes and eyebrows and hair and detail(s), that (lets) you know that this is a kid who's ready to start with writing (Participant 1003, personal communication, October 24, 2023).

The value of arts integration is further elevated by Participant 1004, an arts integration specialist with elementary experience in her small, coastal county. Arts-integrated strategies can be a critical teaching strategy for high-needs students receiving support in special education:

I was (teaching) science and (we were) looking at informational text, giving the students opportunities to identify (and use) academic vocabulary (about) parts of the ecosystem. (Next, the students were) being able to express that through art pieces, whether we're going to use clay or we're going to use sketches and be able to paint things out. (W)hen it comes to integration it's being able to have that balance of leveraging the content area, but also understanding that art in itself has its own framework. (Arts integration is) being able to use both tools at the same time so that they balance each other out in the classroom (Participant 1004, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

Arts-integrated strategies can be a critical teaching strategy for high-needs, neuro-diverse students:

When we did arts integration, we were all in the classroom: our orthopedically impaired students and every autism class, which again, I did more learning in those three years of teaching than (at) any other time. I just keep going back to, especially in arts integration, what I would say the biggest learning (took place for) a lot of our traditional teachers. If they're teaching, even if they are really great teachers, they're integrating techniques. The arts allow kids to express themselves differently (Participant 1002, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

Arts integration was equally effective in teaching multilingual learners:

We had an English learner, when we were doing arts and integration, that really had very little language and the teacher and I were working on it. She was doing a unit on dinosaurs...I said to her, "Okay, let's see if the student, Anthony, can demonstrate his learning through a drawing." I said, "He's got pretty amazing drawing skills based on what we've been doing in class. Let's see if you ask him to, you know, see if he can draw for you some of the things that...he's hearing and learning about dinosaurs. Could he do that?" (Participant 1002, personal communication, November 17, 2023)

Arts integration is not just using drawing skills, dance movement, or music to augment the lesson. Successful arts integration is a co-equal treatment of both the arts and the other content areas (Neal & Duma, 2020). In this case, arts was integrated with science as a method to have a non-verbal elementary student demonstrate his learning:

So, we put together a rubric and a lesson. And I'll tell you what, this little man's drawing was stellar. He had all of the pieces in there. He had the dinosaurs that were eating the foliage. He had this little tree, and the Brontosaurus is eating that. And then he's got the T. Rex chasing after the other little dinosaur. He really understood what she (the teacher) had been teaching about the different kinds of dinosaurs, what they eat, and what their habitat was like. And he drew it. (It was just this beautiful thing to see. He can't necessarily give you the words, but he understands what we're talking about here (Participant 1002, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

Cross Case Analysis – Fullan

A cross-case analysis was also conducted as a final analysis, with each participant representing an individual case whose characteristics were described and analyzed earlier in the Sample section. An analysis across cases will describe emerging patterns (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Yin (2018) calls this a case-based approach to multi-case analysis. Fullan (2015a) defines leading from the middle as:

A deliberate strategy that increases the capacity and internal coherence of the middle as it becomes a more effective partner upward to the state and downward to its schools and communities in pursuit of greater system performance.

Top-down leadership interrupts sustainable change, and because of that leadership model, Fullan deems governmental entities as less effective at leading change (Fullan, 2015a). The basis of making sustainable change lies in building rich relationships with those around you, linking positive student outcomes, and a cycle of continuous improvement for instruction to form a cyclical learning model in which everyone learns from each other and gathers and connects to resources for the work to continue (Fullan, 2015a).

Looking through Fullan's leading from the middle, the county arts leads are change agents in the middle of an educational governance system specific to the K-12 system in California. This separate and distinct analysis of the role county arts leads play as change agents in the K-12 educational system in California is informed by Michael Fullan's theoretical framework (2015) (See Figure 2, p. 19).

In this study, the themes that emerged that have a bearing on the context for arts education in California were: 1) the role the county arts leads play as a bridge to districts, and 2) county arts leads as systems change agents in the K-12 school system through the lens of Fullan's theoretical framework. While the first part of the qualitative study examined county arts leads' beliefs about the impact of arts education for high-needs youth, this part of the study examined the role of county arts administrators, leaders in the middle, and the ways they can support equitable arts programs for students, teachers, schools, and districts in their respective counties. Every participant discussed their roles, regardless of the size, location, or geographical designation of their counties, and the ways they each leveraged their networks and resources to support arts education programs in their counties.

Cross Case Analysis Theme 1: The Role the County Arts Leads Play as a Bridge to Districts

When examining the interviews through the theme of arts lead as a bridge to districts, one participant, a woman began a second career as an elementary school teacher after pursuing a career in interior design. Participant 10010 is a poet herself, and that guided her to do a spoken word project with youth in the county. In the passage, this county arts lead is referencing a youth of color, a young woman in foster care who had been in an intervention program she ran for high-needs girls in school. She had this to say:

I'm a poet from way back and run poetry salons and used to be really into being published and so it's just been a big part of my life for years and years... (When) I came to (the) county, I started a teen poet laureate program, and I started a spoken word competition and ... the four winners of that (go on) to perform at our Equity Alliance Summit. I like that tie-in, and they have to write...I spend a lot of time prepping them to be (in the) room and to stand and deliver (Participant 10010, personal communication, October 27, 2023).

When asked for a story about a particular youth in foster care, she told this:

I'm the one who introduces them, and they come up on stage...I said to all the kids, "Give me some fun facts, give me some things to work with, what's your walk-on song? What am I going to be saying about you when your picture is up there (on the screen)?" This girl says to me, "I want you to know that I'm a foster student, foster youth, but I'm doing great. And I'm okay." And she said, "And I know that I have so much to offer the world and I cannot wait to do that and I'm just super excited about this opportunity." And that's exactly her words (Participant 10010, personal communication, October 27, 2023).

This participant reflected on her role and her position as the arts lead and her impact as both a bridge to districts and the power she has as a change agent in the K-12 system for this child:

Well, so, basically, I felt like I did this whole (thing) because of my love of poetry. It veered me towards this creative project. I would have done all of that work just for this one kid. Just for that magic that happened around that. And then I told her, please apply to be a teen poet. She also made the cut on that. So, yeah, that was one example where it was just a tremendous success, and it was just amazing what happened because of her participation and going for it (Participant 10010, personal communication, October 27, 2023).

Another arts lead from a small county on the central coast talked about how her role grew from when she came to the county office of education. She underscored her role as a bridge to districts:

When I came here there was nothing and I started part time, half time. It's been a great fortune to grow it, to check in with our community, with our district partners, and all our community partners and figure out what we want to build and how we want to build it. One of the key pieces was developing an arts plan with 50 constituents (Participant 1005, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

An arts lead of a large county with a complex educational ecosystem described her position, and the description of her role represents the fundamental duties of what all county arts leads who have a dedicated position do:

I am an arts integration and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) specialist. I support the rest of the team with arts integration for English learners, foster and homeless youth. I also support the visual and performing arts which could include professional learning for teachers in our districts as well as technical assistance for strategic planning, program evaluation, and implementation of Prop. 28 (Participant 10012, personal communication, October 26, 2023).

County arts leads often hold positions supporting arts education outside of their regularly assigned positions. This is the case with this arts lead, a longtime music teacher who has been a board member of a state-level arts advocacy organization. She very clearly described her leadership from the middle between county office leadership and districts and arts organizations:

In addition to all that, I am the region lead for the California County Superintendents Arts Initiative and I volunteer as chair for Creativity Rules. What else do I do? You know, duties as assigned. communications with upper management on the work that's being done, supporting our school districts and communication with our partners like the local arts council (Participant 10012, personal communication, October 26, 2023).

Another participant is an arts lead but manages other curricular areas in a larger role at her county office. In her mind, the role as a bridge to districts is very clear:

(In) my role, responsibilities change sometimes over time depending upon what else I'm involved in outside of arts education. In general, I support our schools and districts within the county with professional learning requests, with adopting instructional materials, and answering questions. I connect them with resources both locally and throughout the state. I provide information on what's happening at the federal and state and local levels, around any kind of changes in laws or funding sources. There's several other things, but a lot of what I do is I'm connecting people and providing information and helping them. I make sure they are best able to serve students (Participant 1009, personal communication, October 27, 2023).

Another arts lead oversees various duties and responsibilities related to county-operated schools, in addition to supporting the arts. She told of the success of her county office in central California as a connector of districts to local arts organizations. She shared this reflection when asked what is working in arts education in her county:

I think the collaborative efforts (are) working regionally. It's huge (and) working really well. We have Dr. Haverford who runs the arts community of practice, which is the arts leads, and then some artists, arts (organizations). And that has built a lot of relationships. And then Joshua and I also lead a meeting for just the district art leads monthly. And they have shared (that) it's their favorite time. So that ability to say hey and now I just see it's so informal, you know, "Oh, I am using this artist." Then another district partner will say, "Yeah, I got their contact from you and I'm using them too." Right? So, sharing resources, sharing ideas...that collaborative nature. Building that with intentionality - I think that is really working (Participant 1002, personal communication, November 17, 2023).

In addition to connecting arts organizations and teaching artists to districts, her county office of education operates teacher and administrator credential programs. Her role combines both themes as a change agent in providing a more diverse teacher and administrator workforce and connecting districts to resources and partnerships they would not have ready access to.

How we help kids see themselves in the art is simultaneously growing and building our small nonprofits to be able to bring (artists of color) into the classroom. Because a lot of our arts teachers currently all looks like me. I would guess that they are about 70% White, probably, but that's not our student population. The community arts organizations help bring in other (cultural) perspectives. How do we keep those programs growing? (Participant 1002, personal communication, November 17, 2023)

The excitement about the new supplemental funding for teachers in the arts and music in schools funding was a source of excitement across all the interviews. Participant 1002 summarizes that excitement in this passage. This new supplemental funding continues to

shape the role of the county office in guiding districts in best practices to implement the funding in support of the instructions from the CDE:

With this new Prop. 28 monies, we're working on a pipeline to create arts teachers. Artists could, if they want, work for three years as an artist; they can also become a CTE teacher with an option for us to get them into a financial aid program. With intentionality, we're focusing regionally, building those relationships, and building our small nonprofits and arts organizations so that we really are creating a pipeline for the arts. (Participant 1002, personal communication, November 17, 2023)

Cross-Case Analysis Theme 2: County Arts Leads as Systems Change Agents in the K-12 School System

In SRI's report on county offices of education impact on arts education (2022), the recommendations highlight county arts leads' unique position in the arts education ecosystem, particularly for those leads with a dedicated arts role (Benge et al., 2022). Curricular alignment of arts resources, the facilitation of partnerships between districts and community-based partnerships, and connecting districts to community-based organizations are some of the ways county arts leads can have a significant impact, particularly for high-needs students in county-operated schools (Benge et al., 2022). There was a remarkable alignment of beliefs among this study's participants regarding arts education's intrinsic value for students, especially for high-needs students. All the arts leads were pleased to advocate for arts education programming and were optimistic about the passage of Proposition 28 (Participant 1001, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1002, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1003, personal communication, October 24, 2023; Participant 1004, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1005, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1006, personal communication, October 27, 2023; Participant 1009, personal communication, October 27, 2023; Participant

10010, personal communication, October 27, 2023; Participant 10011, personal communication, October 30, 2023).

Now that we have the Proposition 28 funding, it's really reinvigorated so many more districts and schools to start programs, especially elementary programs where they've had nothing unless you happen to be in someone's classroom where the multiple subject teachers felt comfortable teaching one or more of the arts disciplines, you didn't get it. So that's been really, really, really exciting to see that huge expansion overnight almost and then people planning what's to come next. (Participant 1009, personal communication, October 27, 2023)

The supplemental funding afforded by the passage of music and arts in schools (Proposition 28) has changed the focus of the support for arts education. County arts leads have served as resources for connecting districts to funding opportunities, curricular support, and generalized technical assistance as well as the delivery of professional learning in their respective counties. Their presence in the K-12 hierarchy has the potential for a positive impact on students at the district level. It can be a resource for district leadership in supporting state priorities in districts' LCAPs. (Benge et al., 2022).

County arts leads belong to the county superintendents' Arts Initiative Curricular and Improvement Support (CISC) Arts Committee, which meets five times a year. Its mission is to create a safe, affirming, and enriched environment for participatory and inclusive learning in and through the arts for all students (California County Superintendents, 2024). This network of arts leads stays current on the arts and music in school measure and the arts initiative builds the capacity in the state for arts education leadership and support to districts.

Since Prop. 28 passed, I have changed direction a little bit in that all of my professional development is focused on building capacity. (What) if the district doesn't have a TOSA (note: teacher on special assignment) what's happening? Then what can I do with the multiple subject teachers? How can I start to build them up slowly so that they have dance techniques, theater techniques, or music techniques? I'm also doing a couple of workshops...strictly for teacher wellness through creativity

because I think that's an important component. (Participant 10010, personal communication, October 27, 2023)

Cross Case Analysis: Similarities and Differences Across Demographics

There are several differences and similarities across the cases. There is an even split of six county arts leads with a dedicated arts education role and six arts leads with other roles in their respective county offices but are designated arts leads. The roles of the arts leads include teachers, learning support specialists, coordinators and directors in educational service departments, executive directors, assistant superintendents, and county superintendents. In the study, the roles included an arts council director, visual and performing arts coordinators, program managers, consultants, and an assistant superintendent. Of the 12 arts leads, 10 have administrative credentials and two are in classified positions. The greater the number of districts in a county, the higher the likelihood that the arts lead role is dedicated to the arts (Benge et al., 2022). In this study's sample, six counties serve many districts; five have arts leads in dedicated roles. Of the six smaller districts, four arts leads have other roles, with one lead employed by the local arts commission. One is a classified employee in a dedicated arts position. In the last year, one of the county arts leads left her county position to become a school principal.

Conclusion

This study examined the beliefs of county arts leads and the impact of those beliefs on participation in arts education for high-needs students. This chapter contained the analysis of the sequential explanatory qualitative design results. In Phase One, a survey was conducted to identify potential subjects for the study, and 12 participants were willing to be interviewed in Phase Two.

All participants were women, with 11 identifying as White and one identifying as Latina. The primary research data source is 12 women who are or were employed as county arts leads in the county office of education. Regarding the number of years in their respective administrative positions, one county arts lead had 18–20 years of experience, one has been in their position in the 6–8-year range, one has been in their position in the 9–11-year range, six administrators were in their roles for 3–5 years, and three administrators had served as county arts leads for less than two years.

Transcripts from 12 participants were analyzed to uncover 64 codes. Three themes and an analysis of arts administrators as change agents in systems change were discussed. There were three levels of analysis: (a) open coding, (b) selective coding, and (c) theoretical coding. At each level of analysis, the codes were filtered into overarching categories that resulted in themes connected to each of the three research questions. Three themes emerged from the analysis of the transcripts through the lens of the three research questions: a) student belonging because of participation in the performing arts; b) the cultural arts as a bridge to self; and c) the arts as multidisciplinary learning strategies.

Additionally, cross-case analysis and synthesis of the data were conducted utilizing the theoretical framework, leading from the middle (Fullan, 2015a). The two themes that emerged were: 1) the role the county arts leads play as a bridge to districts and 2) county arts leads as systems change agents in the K-12 school system through the lens of Fullan's theoretical framework.

While there were some differences in levels of experience as county arts leads, geographical designations of their respective counties (rural, urban, suburban), whether they

were dedicated arts leads, differences in the number of districts served with a diverse set of counties from across the state represented in the sample, there was a remarkable alignment of beliefs about arts education's intrinsic value for students, especially for high-needs students across all cases.

The passage of Proposition 28 in November 2022 and the implementation of the supplemental categorical funding of arts and music in schools have provided a unique opportunity for county arts leads to engage in conversations about compliance with districts that make their roles in the K-12 educational system an even more critical part of the transformation of arts education in California. Chapter Five will include a summary of a discussion and an in-depth analysis of the five emergent themes.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study aimed to examine the beliefs of county arts leads and the impact of those beliefs on the participation of high-needs students in arts education programs. This chapter will include a discussion of the significant findings related to the literature on the beliefs of administrators in the arts, the impact of arts education participation, the limits of the educational bureaucracy on school reform, especially as it relates to arts education reform in the state of California with the recent (2022) passage of Proposition 28, arts and music in school categorical funding.

Data from the study's sequential explanatory qualitative two-phase design was analyzed and organized according to these research questions:

RQ1: What are county arts leads/administrators' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences about the impact of arts education on high-need students?

RQ2: How do these beliefs, attitudes, and experiences vary among county arts leads/administrators to better characterize differences in beliefs about the impact of arts education on high-need students?

RQ3: Are these beliefs, attitudes, and experiences about the impact of arts education relevant to foster youth and youth experiencing homelessness in particular?

Three themes emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts through the lens of the three research questions: (a) student belonging due to participation in the performing arts; (b) the cultural arts as a bridge to self; and (c) the arts as multidisciplinary learning strategies.

A cross-case analysis and synthesis of the data were conducted utilizing the theoretical framework, leading from the middle (Fullan, 2015a). The two themes that emerged were: (1)

the role county arts leads play as a bridge to districts and (2) county arts leads as systems change agents in the PK-12 school system.

Significance of the Findings

The Context

This is a time of extreme global conditions. Researcher, Andy Hargreaves (2024), said it succinctly when he named the forces currently affecting our lives as The big five: COVID-19, climate change, threats to democracy, racism, and war. While these factors are present today, the participants' interviews focused on the effects of the pandemic on education and culturally competent teaching and learning.

As this study goes to publication, the world has weathered four years of a global pandemic, which is now in its endemic phase. Students have been back to in-person schooling in California since the spring of 2021, and the effects of remote learning are still being felt: increased mental health issues, higher chronic absenteeism, and delayed development in academic and social-emotional growth. These effects are exacerbated for high-needs students in our schools: youth living in poverty, youth in foster care, students experiencing homelessness, and other highly mobile youth. Most high-needs students in California are students of color (Bishop & Howard, 2024).

Leading From the Middle

Two findings are the themes related to the role of the county arts leads: as agents of change within the education system in California and as a bridge to districts as intermediaries of the CDE staff, the top of the educational hierarchy in California (Benge et al., 2022). The SRI researchers identified the responsibilities of the county arts leads to include curricular

support and professional learning to districts, countywide student programs, facilitation of partnerships between community-based organizations and districts, strategic arts planning services, and assistance with funding opportunities (Benge et al., 2022). With the changing role of the county offices of education related to funding, the local control funding formula of 2013, and, more recently, the passage of Proposition 28 providing categorical funding for arts teachers (the proposition had not passed when the SRI team was writing their paper), SRI's recommendations were to leverage training in the California arts standards and framework, build relationships with districts, deliver arts strategic planning, and support differentiated assistance to districts (2022). The robust funding climate in K-12 arts education in California supports these recommended actions, but funding alone is not a panacea for the inequities reflected in the lack of access for high-needs students in schools.

County Arts Leads as a Bridge to Districts

County offices of education play several roles in supporting school districts. The California educational system has three tiers: the CDE is the top tier, giving guidance to schools; the county office of education is the second tier, supporting state guidance with districts; and the school district is the third tier, enacting the guidance with the support of the county office of education (Armstrong, 1987). This study shows that the county arts leads act as a bridge between the state department of education and districts. County arts leads offer technical assistance on a variety of topics related to arts education: assistance with interpreting the language of Proposition 28, developing arts strategic plans, cultivating relationships with arts organizations, county arts commissions, and municipal entities, and connecting districts to these organizations, delivering professional learning in the arts to

support specific student groups with pedagogy such as universal design for learning and the arts, and arts integration. With the passage of Proposition 28, county arts leads have also been working internally with their departments that serve districts regarding differentiated assistance and the development of districts' LCAPs. They are uniquely positioned to help districts interpret information from the CDE and connect districts to local resources in the arts. This study does not adequately capture the role of county arts leads with other positions in their organization and the degree to which the county arts leads can devote their time to the arts. What is captured in this study is that county arts leads have a variety of tasks that range from running countywide arts events serving multiple districts, contributing to districts' arts strategic planning, providing technical assistance in supporting a comprehensive arts education, coaching, arts professional learning, working with arts partners and city, county and state level partners in service of a sustainable arts education in the PK-12 school system.

County Arts Leads as Change Agents Within the PK-12 System

Given their role as a bridge to districts, county arts leads can be effective change agents within the California educational system. Hargreaves (2024) discussed the tensions of serving in the middle in terms of a top-down and bottom-up approach to the work. County arts leads synthesize these two approaches, and the success of their implementation is seen in their work. Two examples from the interviews are the spoken word showcase that connects students to college admittance (Participant 10010, personal communication, October 27, 2023) and the coalition work between districts and community partners to build youth programs (Participant 1002, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1003,

personal communication, October 24, 2023; Participant 1005, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1006, personal communication, October 27, 2023; Participant 1008, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 10010, personal communication, October 27, 2023; Participant 10012, personal communication, October 26, 2023). Top-down leadership alone does not create sustainable or impactful change (Fullan, 2015a, 2015b; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2019; Hargreaves, 2024). The curriculum support function of the county office service is a voluntary engagement for districts. They choose to engage curriculum specialists when they define a need in this service model. County arts leads must navigate this ecosystem with care. Large-scale change can occur only when educational change is a part of social transformation (Hargreaves, 2024). Top-down leadership is often personality-driven and dependent on an individual and autocratic, while bottom-up innovation is associated with local autonomy and stays localized and isolated (Hargreaves, 2019). Engaging a middle tier and fashioning it as a balance point between the top and the bottom creates credibility and coherence (Fullan, 2015a, 2015b). When the middle sags, the infrastructure weakens (Hargreaves, 2024). The ideal role of the middle is to maintain local control, whereas, in education, middle managers are often used to nullify the bottom tier. Hargreaves calls this leading in the middle when initiatives are still directed with a top-down approach and connections between the different tiers are superficial (Hargreaves, 2024).

Leading from the middle requires seeing the middle level as an activator, a catalyst for cultivating authentic relationships between partners. These relationships are grounded by a common goal or set of goals and build leadership capacity for those at the top, in this case,

the CDE. The top gives direction and resources to the middle. One participant said, “You know, I understand that I have a privilege in that our superintendent is going to retire at the end of the school year, but he has for this six and a half years been like, go forth and talk about these hard issues that make people uncomfortable,” (Participant 1009, personal communication, October 27, 2023). The SRI researchers identified opportunities for county arts leads to create impactful change (2022). What they did not recognize is the lens through which county arts leads can frame their work to inject intentionality and build on the skills that support the sustainability of arts education in their counties - thinking strategically, the ability to communicate to a broad representation of constituents, the ability to convene groups around a shared goal, relationship-building skills and advocacy skills built over the years of teaching the arts in the classroom.

Leading in the Middle and Leading From the Middle

Hargreaves (2024) argues that there is a difference between leading from the middle and leading in the middle. In the PK-12 education system, it is customary to consider the staff at the county offices of education as middle managers. In a market-driven mindset, the middle can increase efficiency, improve communication, enhance performance, and increase coherence by aligning the whole system to government policy. Hargreaves points to a study in Massachusetts in which they identified four elements that were critical for the “middle tier”:

- to provide targeted support to schools and monitor compliance
- to facilitate communication between schools and the center
- to encourage inter-school collaboration

- to moderate community resistance to change by making the case for a different future (Barber & Day, 2014)

This type of leadership is a version of the top-down leadership that Fullan denigrates (2015) as *bad leadership*. “Top-down leadership doesn’t last even if you get a lot of the pieces right because it is too difficult to get, and especially to sustain, widespread buy-in from the bottom” (Fullan, 2015a, p. 24). It produces the opposite result of leading from the middle: “This idea of a middle tier is part of an explicit effort to minimize local democratic control and the public’s possible opposition to central government policies,” (Hargreaves, 2024, p.45). This researcher would argue that the qualities of leadership that top-down leaders value are more clearly aligned with a transactional mindset. Soft skills such as passion, experience, advocacy, consensus-building, care, and relational skills come from a place of authenticity and are essential for leading from the middle. A comparison of the two frameworks can be seen in Figure 14 below:

Figure 14.

Leading in the Middle vs. Leading From the Middle

<i>Leading in the Middle</i>	<i>Leading from the Middle</i>
Level, Layer or Tier	Center, Core and Heart
Improving Performance	Transforming Learning & Well-being
Better Systems	Stronger Communities
Coherence and Connection	Collective Responsibility
Implementing Initiatives	Taking Initiative

Note. Adapted from Hargreaves & Shirley, 2019

Leading from the middle begins with the heart and means leading from a place of authenticity, while administrators leading in the middle voice the directives for the upper management without a visceral connection to the vision or direction. Leading in the middle comes from a transactional mindset in which the leader aligns the work to specific deliverables without considering building consensus with the consumers. Leading from the middle, because the actions come from conviction and connection to the purpose, creates transformational change through authentic relationships, building stronger communities where everyone feels a sense of ownership for the results and takes initiative in creating a transformative process.

One may observe the transactional, competitive nature of the leading-in-the-middle approach. This model is prevalent in schools today and fits well with a compliance mindset. Leading from the middle, on the other hand, creates a more authentic system with the goal of transformational change using the soft skills described above. Adhering to the seven principles of leading from the middle, described later in this chapter, will build a system in which the county arts leads can have a sustainable, equitable impact on student outcomes for high-needs students in California.

To provide a historical context, this model was developed in 2012 in Hargreaves' work and named by Fullan in the schools in Ontario, Canada, and, in some ways, the infrastructure to support that project mirrors the three-tiered structure in California: centralized leadership at the top providing governmental funding and a vision to lead school districts to create an inclusive education for students; a lead team of retired superintendents to connect districts and build a team sensibility between the participating school districts in the middle (like the

county office of education); and an accountability structure in which the districts report out to each other in an in-person convening at the bottom of the hierarchy (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2019).

However, leading from the middle requires an infrastructure to support it. Hargreaves identified seven principles that must be present when leading from the middle to support system change in education. The system must be responsive to diversity. Embracing diversity allows districts and schools to maintain a sense of identity distinct from their communities by honoring the variety of their needs. The district is accountable for and feels responsible for its students' successes by working in professional learning communities, being data-driven, and having educational experts come together to address the needs of their students. In this system, educators are free to take the initiative to create an academic environment in which their students will thrive. There is also an alignment, here called integration, with governmental priorities, like California's ten state priorities in service of improved student outcomes. The district operates transparently and shares its results in service to a continuous improvement cycle for its schools. The climate is one of collegiality and openness. Humility and non-competitiveness are the sixth principle of the leading from the middle model. The districts are committed to learning from each other. The seventh principle is design, in which the districts work together to ensure that the six principles are enacted in the design and implemented across all the schools (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2019). See Figure 15 below.

Figure 15.

Seven Principles of Leading From the Middle



Note. Adapted from Hargreaves & Shirley, 2019.

Networks figure prominently in implementing work through the lens of leading from the middle. Hargreaves defines networks as “ways to describe how people already interact with others in organizations, communities, and societies” (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2019, p. 88).

The county arts leads operate within a network at the state level, with each of the counties grouped into regions, and a county lead may also be a region lead. There has already been a discussion in the previous chapter about the differing roles of each lead, the variety of geographical designations (urban, suburban, rural), and differing locations within the state.

While this variety of differences between counties might be seen as an obstacle, it can also be

viewed as an opportunity. Networks are a tool to mitigate these differences and have become more central in education, where they were once seen as outlier structures that connect the most disparate groups. Since the turn of this century, networks have gained more traction and are seen as the new middle (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2019).

Two organizations within the arts education ecosystem in California have maintained critical networks and continue to support the principles seen in leading from the middle: Create CA, the state arts education advocacy organization with their arts now networks of districts and counties and their policy council network of educators, community arts partners, and arts education professional organizations; and the California County superintendents' arts initiative, Curricular and Improvement Support Committee (CISC) Arts Committee, which convenes the county arts leads five times a year and builds the capacity for the arts leads to work together to support arts education initiatives across counties and regions and share important information from the CDE and model strategies through communities of practices and professional learning opportunities (Benge et al., 2022).

Limitations

This research followed the qualitative framework based on interviews with county arts leads. This type of study is often not considered rigorous compared to a mixed-method or quantitative analysis due to a bias towards robust research as that which is grounded in numerical data (Yin, 2018). Still, capturing the nuances of each county arts lead's experiences and beliefs was necessary, and the researcher has collected a substantial amount of data to fuel future research. The qualitative study was the best way to capture and analyze such nuanced, rich information.

The researcher is a county arts lead and a colleague of the administrators who participated in the study. Among the participants, 67% know or have worked on projects with the researcher as a part of the county superintendents' arts initiative. While every effort was made to remain objective, triangulate the information, and validate the results, there is some degree of bias. Each participant self-selected to participate in the study. It was not a random or controlled sample grouping representing geographic location, county size, or constituent demographics. While the sample size of the arts leads was small relative to the total population—twelve interviews were collected, transcribed, and analyzed out of a total of 58 county arts leads—a study of this caliber has not been conducted previously and a large amount of information has been gathered.

From the perspective of the demographics of the interviewees, the predominance of white women in the sampling is notable. The researcher could find no data for the demographics of administrators. Still, among teachers, according to the CDE (n.d.), 61.2% of the teacher workforce is White, and 73.3% are women, according to data from the 2018–19 school year. In this study, 100% of the participants are women, and 92% are White.

Future Directions

The Connection Between Belief and Practice

While this researcher explored the beliefs of a cohort of county arts leads in California, measuring the correlation between beliefs and practice would be a topic for further research. A belief is “a person’s subjective probability judgments concerning some discriminable aspect of his world; they deal with the person’s understanding of himself and his environment” (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975, p. 7). Beliefs originate from direct experiences and

information from external sources like the media, friends, and family. Ajzen wrote that a belief is formed as soon as it is linked to an attribute (1975) and that the attitude one has is a function of one's beliefs (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The attitudes that county arts leads brought to their work were formed, in part, by beliefs about their childhood experiences with a personal arts practice. Among the county arts leads, 11 had a personal practice in the arts. Their experiences with their arts practice influenced their chosen profession, producing experiences that brought stories about the impact of arts on their students. For example, a music teacher can build deep relationships with families by teaching students and their siblings over successive years at a middle school (Participants 10012, personal communication, October 26, 2023).

County arts leads' belief about students' increased sense of belonging was present in ten participants' transcripts: in music (Participant 1009, personal communication, October 27, 2023; Participant 10012, October 26, 2023), theatre (Participant 1001, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1007, personal communication, October 27, 2023; Participant 10010, personal communication, October 27, 2023), dance (Participants 1001, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1003, personal communication, October 24, 2023), and visual arts (Participants 1008, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 10011, personal communication, October 30, 2023). The performing arts-theatre, dance, and music- are collaborative activities in which students work together to produce an artistic product (a theatrical production, a musical piece, or a dance performance). Collaborating in performing arts activities in a group builds a strong sense of belonging and teamwork, and student performers have a group of

friends with whom they belong and identify (Heath, 2016; Powell Russell, 2015). Brice Heath even calls out an “Acceleration of empathy and a sense of caring—for others within the ensemble, as well as for instruments and about relations between the music and the audience” (Powell Russell, 2015, p. 79). While there is research about the increase in socioemotional health and a positive school climate for students, there is no research on the benefits of targeted support in the arts for youth experiencing homelessness or youth in foster care related to in-school programming. All the research focused on studying arts education's impact on students experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care has been conducted in community settings outside of school hours. Education data shows that there is an intersection between youth in poverty, youth experiencing homelessness, and youth in foster care. A topic for further study would be the outcomes for youth in foster care and youth experiencing homelessness participating in PK-12 arts programs during the school day.

These positive classroom experiences have inspired the county arts leads to be effective administrators. A significant part of the county arts leads' role is advocating for an equitable and sustainable arts education. Every county arts lead told stories of their years of positive student outcomes as teachers, especially for high-needs students (Participant 1001, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1002, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1003, personal communication, October 24, 2023; Participant 1004, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1005, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1006, personal communication, October 27, 2023; Participant 1007, personal communication, October 23, 2023; Participant 1008, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1009, personal communication, October 27,

2023; Participant 10010, personal communication, October 27, 2023; Participant 10011, personal communication, October 30, 2023; Participant 10012, personal communication, October 26, 2023). Those positive experiences, combined with the advocacy skills they developed as arts teachers around the importance of the arts, the organizational skills of creating student performances and showcases, and the fundraising muscle for procuring materials and supplies, have given the county arts leads who were arts teachers a diverse set of skills with which to navigate the educational landscape as an arts administrator at the county level. The interviews emphasized each person's experiences as they relate to the arts. A further study could explore county arts leads' experiences by recruiting arts leads who are not dedicated to the arts and play other roles in their county office. Delving deeper into different aspects of their roles, especially for those not in dedicated roles, would be an excellent next step in deepening knowledge on this topic.

A second theme from the qualitative data is the cultural arts as a bridge to the self for students. Every county arts lead has experience teaching high-needs students and students living in poverty. In California, 78% of students are youth of color, approximately 40% have a home language other than English, and 63% are socioeconomically disadvantaged. The arts taught in the public schools are representative of the Western canon: classical music, dance, visual arts, and theatre through a European lens. In the researcher's art practice, music, there have been, until recently, few African American and Latinx orchestra musicians, prompting researcher Lisa DeLorenzo (2012) to write an article on that topic.

Music educators tend to connect the term diversity with different kinds of music, as in programming a concert to include a variety of genres or teaching music from a global perspective. Rarely does the conversation branch into issues of diversity among musicians themselves... (p. 1).

A Black professional violinist, Aaron Dworkin, started a string (violin, viola, cello, bass) competition for Black and Latinx string players in 1997. It became a non-profit organization that seeks to change the ethnic diversity of symphony orchestras, the Sphinx Organization (n.d.) in Detroit. The educational system has been slow to adapt to a changing and more diverse student population in California, and there is a thread running through the interviews that underscores the urgency of bringing in culturally relevant curricula taught by teachers that mirror the diversity of their students. A future study could be conducted on the percentage of cultural arts programming in each county and the impact of that programming on the state priorities that districts must address in their LCAPs.

The third theme from the county arts leads' interviews validated the notion of the arts as a multidisciplinary teaching strategy. Much research has been conducted on this topic with such institutions as the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Project Zero (2024) and the Kennedy Center's Ensuring the Arts For Any Given Child (The Kennedy Center, 2024). There are local examples of these kinds of programs. Alameda County Office of Education partnered with researcher, Lois Hetland, senior research affiliate, Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a cohort of arts specialists, classroom teachers, and community teaching artists to design training for teachers and teaching artists based on the studio habits of mind (Hetland et al., 2007). The ultimate result was the integrated learning specialist program. Educators learned strategies for designing engaging curricula by integrating the arts across all content areas by incorporating performance-based assessments in a collaborative curriculum design (ACOE, 2014; McNeal, 2016). Another example is a project that the Sacramento County Office of Education funded through the Student Support

and Academic Enrichment (SSAE - Title IV) Grant in 2018. This project encompassed district partners with a cohort of local arts partners in a community of practice, and professional learning opportunities were offered through the county office of education to implement arts education in their districts (Sacramento County Office of Education, 2019). Topics for further research could be creating a pilot in-school program in a county using an arts-integrated model with a district partner and a cohort of arts organizations with targeted outreach to youth in foster care, students experiencing homelessness, and youth in carceral settings.

Research to Make Deeper Connections Between Beliefs and Other Variables

A possible area for further study is county arts leads beliefs about students' social and cultural capital. What is the definition of culturally relevant teaching and learning in the arts, and what are the applications of an integrated approach to teaching at the elementary level? The secondary level? A recent study on using project-based learning and advanced placement (AP) history classes showed increased test scores on the final AP exam across five districts where most students were Black and Latinx (Saavedra et al., 2021). A study of a combination of culturally relevant teaching and learning strategies through the arts in a co-equal treatment of arts and other content areas could be an area of further study

Another area for further study could be an exploration of county arts leads beliefs as they relate to their own capacity for leading teachers through a culture of change through innovative arts practices and the study of the impact on student outcomes, particularly students experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care. The integration of the studio habits of mind (Ritchhart et al., 2011; Ritchhart, 2021; Meier, 2005; Gettings, 2016; Hogan

et al., 2018) with math or English language arts or an improved sense of belonging or levels of socioemotional learning in students experiencing homelessness would be a compelling area of study in districts particularly with additional funds afforded by Proposition 28. There has been little to no research on in-school arts programming for students experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care.

A related topic of study could be county arts leads' beliefs about the impact of arts education and increasing their capacity to lead site principals in using the arts to connect students and families through a cultural arts lens. There is a richness of frameworks between Harvard Project Zero and the integration of the studio habits of mind, project-based learning, and the Kennedy Center's research on arts integration across 28 communities in the nation, including four California cities. Universal design for learning has also been linked to arts learning early in the development of this framework (Glass et al., 2013). Applying Fullan's framework of leading from the middle to a study led by a county arts lead or a cohort of county arts leads in the application of the theory of change to a district of several districts in a variety of counties, large and small, would make for a natural extension to this study's work. Work with the California county superintendents' arts initiatives could incorporate the principles of Fullan's leading from the middle as a lens to accomplish the work of the regional county arts leads.

Recommendations: Avoiding Missed Opportunities and Unnecessary Roadblocks

County arts leads have various tasks to complete in their roles, especially if their arts education work represents a small percentage of their total assignment. One recurring frustration for county arts leads in the middle is that the work is beset with obstacles

(Participant 1001, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 1003, personal communication, October 24, 2023; Participant 1007, personal communication, October 23, 2023; Participant 1008, personal communication, November 17, 2023; Participant 10010, personal communication, October 27, 2023). Hargreaves (2024) discussed leadership as a complex entity full of paradoxes and that obstacles are opportunities for growth in a system. As we lead from the middle, our role as county arts leads is to reframe those obstacles as opportunities to embrace within our locus of control. County offices of education have oversight of our most vulnerable students: expelled youth, youth in foster care and those experiencing homelessness, youth in alternative and incarcerated settings, as well as English learners and those with special needs (California County Superintendents, 2024). This is an opportunity to work across siloed internal departments whose roles intersect with county arts leads to support students who require additional support in our educational system, leverage the additional funds the arts and music funding provides by creating and increasing partnerships with departments overseeing special education, and alternative education, operating county and community schools in designing arts-integrated programs for their students, and explore the intersectionalities in research and practice to support the work of the departments working with districts in developing their local control and accountability plans to support multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and youth living in poverty.

The passage of Proposition 28 gives county arts leads an opening to work with districts in developing district arts education plans that include culturally specific art forms. Proposition 28 is built on a school's site expenditure plan, guided by the principal with the input of their school communities. There is an opportunity to leverage the arts and arts learning in the

school plan for student achievement (SPSA), a budget plan for school sites that informs the development of the district's LCAP. It also uses a community process for development and is often led by the school site council, comprised of teachers, community members, students, and partner organizations (CDE, 2024b). Being proactive in shaping arts education policy and vision at the district level ahead of the need to create a site expedition plan is an effective use of time and can incorporate a research-based approach that shows positive outcomes for students. County arts leads are part of the arts education ecosystem that can support academic success for students, especially for our high-needs students, youth in foster care, and young people experiencing homelessness. Schools have the potential to institutionalize a sustainable arts and culture programming infrastructure. Programs like African drumming and dance, mariachi music programs, and ballet folklórico dance programs exist in schools, but they do not always have the infrastructure to be sustainable. Positive gains can be made in incorporating cultural arts in a school setting for family and community engagement, addressing local control funding formula priorities 3, 4, 5, and 6 (Aguinaldo et al., 2022).

Finally, it is critical to hear the voices of the youth themselves. “Nothing about us, without us” (United Nations, 2004) was adopted from the slogan of empowerment by the disabled persons organization on international day of disabled persons in 2004 by the University of California at Los Angeles Center for Transformation of Schools for their study on youth voice, power, and participation in East Side Union High School District in Santa Clara County (Casar et al., 2022). A further area for study would be to conduct research with high-needs youth about their beliefs about the impact of arts participation on them. Youth

voice was a missing piece of this puzzle and would serve to provide a balance and substantiate and enrich the educators' stories.

Conclusion

Research on arts education notes the positive impact of arts education on educational outcomes for students, particularly students of color, students in poverty, and students needing additional academic support (Bowen & Kisida, 2021; Brown, 2017; Fried, 1988; Kelly, 2013; Morasco, 2013; Powell Russell, 2015). High-needs youth have less access to arts experiences in school and have a critical need for these intensive arts experiences (Catterall, 2012). Youth experiencing homelessness, youth in foster care, students living in poverty, English learners, and students receiving special education services are the focus of school funding in the local control funding formula and the California systems of support. The county offices of education directly oversee and support these student groups.

The county arts leads interviewed for this study were passionate about the arts' positive impact on students' educational experiences and were, without exception, deeply committed to serving at-risk youth. Their insights about their arts education work could fuel a dozen articles. The interviews also shed light on the events and projects they organize for students. They are experienced educators with a decade or more of experience in the classroom and adept at convening diverse groups of people to sustain arts education in their counties and the state. This study could not exist without their contributions to arts education.

Leading from the middle (Fullan, 2015a) is an important lens for sustaining the work of the county arts lead. An apt metaphor for understanding this concept is the string quartet. A string quartet is made up of two violinists (soprano and mezzo-soprano voices), a violist (alto

voice), and a cellist (tenor/bass voice). The quartet is only as strong as its middle voice, the violist. The violist is the balance point upon which the other voices circle.

Leading from the middle describes a framework to understand county arts leads' work as they follow the guidance of the CDE at the top and support districts, schools, and teachers with professional learning and advocacy related to arts education. A specific set of conditions or principles must be present for the system's change to be sustainable, or the work will be superficial, transitory, and built on inauthentic, transactional relationships springing from a top-down approach to management or bottom-up leadership, which is not sustainable beyond the teachers or parents who support it.

Another compelling implication of this study is the misalignment of the demographics of the population of school-aged youth and the arts educator workforce. In *Dreamkeepers*, Ladson-Billings (2022) discusses how successful teachers in California bring cultural competencies to the fore in students' lives. Toward these ends, Ladson-Billings found that a teacher's ethnicity was less important than that person's strong sense of cultural competence in making a difference. With almost 80% of students of color in California (Ed-Data, 2024), the disparity between the teacher workforce, 61.2% White, and student demographics is significant. Cultural competence in teaching is critical for engaging students, families, and their communities. Guided by prior experiences with students of color and a rich curriculum, arts educators at the school site and county offices of education can make a difference in multiple outcomes.

County arts leads can be effective change agents because they can access fiscal resources, cultivate networks of local and state arts and governmental partners, and leverage several

successful cultural and integrated arts program models. They are an experienced and dedicated network of administrators passionate about their work, who care deeply about the socioemotional health of the students they serve, know how to build networks to support a sustainable arts education, and are equipped with arts-integrated strategies that can lead to transformative change in education.

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Appendix A

Arts Leads Survey

Survey Instrument

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE SURVEY

Your completion of the online survey indicates your willingness to participate voluntarily. View and download the consent notice [here](#) (hyperlink).

I have read the consent notice, and I agree to participate in the online survey.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No [prevent from proceeding]

Pre-Q1

This study plans to conduct follow-up interviews with some survey participants. Would you be interested in participating in a brief, 30-minute follow-up interview over Zoom at a later date? You will also have another opportunity to answer this question at the end of the survey

- ☐ Yes
☐ Maybe. I'll decide at the end of the survey
☐ No

Part One: Arts leads' beliefs about the importance of arts education

Focus on arts education's impact on the general population.

1. Arts education is part of a well-rounded student's education.
2. Arts education is a student's civil right.
3. Arts education is important for social-emotional learning.
4. Arts education provides pathways for student creativity.
5. Arts education provides strategies for students to demonstrate what they have learned.
6. Arts education provides opportunities for student voice.

Focus on high-needs, foster youth, and youth experiencing homelessness.

7. Students who participate in arts experiences demonstrate more confidence.
8. Students who participate in arts education are more likely to stay in school.
9. Students with an arts education are more likely to pursue a professional career.
10. Students who participate in arts experiences are more likely to graduate from high school.
11. Students who participate in arts experiences demonstrate a stronger sense of belonging.
12. Students who participate in arts education develop coping strategies and leadership skills that transfer to other areas of their lives.

(Outcome Space: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

Part Two: Demographics by Respondent

13. At which county office are you employed? (Dropdown Menu)
14. Have you ever been employed as a county arts lead in California?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
15. Are you currently employed as a county arts lead in California?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
16. Describe your school county.
 - a. Rural
 - b. Suburban
 - c. Urban
 - d. Other (please specify) [text box]
17. How many districts are in your county?
 - a. (Please specify) [text box]
18. How many students are enrolled in your county?
 - a. 500 or fewer
 - b. 500–6,000
 - c. 6001–31,000
 - d. 31,001–105,000
 - e. 105,001–300,000
 - f. 300,001–above
19. Estimate the percentage (%) of your county’s student population who qualify for free and reduced lunch.
 - a. 10% or less
 - b. 11%–25%
 - c. 26%–50%
 - d. 51%–75%
 - e. More than 75%
20. Estimate the percentage (%) of your county’s student population who are in foster care.

- a. Less than 1%
 - b. 1%–5%
 - c. 6%–10%
 - d. 11%–25%
 - e. More than 25%
21. Estimate the percentage (%) of your county’s student population experiencing homelessness.
- a. 10% or less
 - b. 11%–25%
 - c. 26%–50%
 - d. 51%–75%
 - e. More than 75%
22. How many district “arts leads” in your county exist approximately?
- a. 1–5
 - b. 6–10
 - c. 11–15
 - d. 15 or more
23. How many years have you worked as a county arts lead?
- a. Text box _____
24. What is the highest degree you have earned?
- a. Associate’s degree
 - b. Bachelor’s degree
 - c. Master’s degree
 - d. Ed.D. or Ph.D.
 - e. Other (Please specify) [text box]
25. Are you a National Association for Music Educators (NAfME) member?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
26. Are you a National arts Education Association (NAEA) member?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
27. Are you an American Educational Theatre Association (AETA) member?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
28. Are you a National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) member?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

29. What is your gender?
- a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Non-binary
 - d. Prefer to self-describe [text box]
 - e. Prefer not to state
30. What is your race/ethnicity?
- a. American Indian/Alaska Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black/African American
 - d. Hispanic or Latino/a/x
 - e. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - f. White
 - g. Prefer to self-describe [text box]
 - h. Prefer not to state
31. What is your age?
- a. Younger than 30
 - b. 30–39
 - c. 40–49
 - d. 50–59
 - e. 60–69
 - f. 70 or older
 - g. Prefer not to state

Part Three: Exit Questions

32. Were there any questions on this survey that were unclear?
- a. Yes (Please identify the specific question[s] and explain) [text box]
 - b. No
33. Did you have enough time to complete all the questions?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
34. What type of device did you use to complete this survey?
- a. Smartphone
 - b. Tablet
 - c. Laptop
 - d. Desktop
 - e. Other [text box]

35. Do you have any suggestions for improving the survey?

- a. Yes (please explain) [text box]
- b. No

36. Would you be willing to further discuss these survey topics in a follow-up interview?
(Interviews will be conducted virtually through Zoom and last no longer than 30 minutes)

- a. Yes
- b. No

37. If you would like to participate in the interview, please list your preferred contact email here. Your email address will not be shared. [text box]

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Title: Leading from the Middle: A Case Study of the Impact of arts Administrators' Belief About arts Education for High-Needs Students

The interview protocol will be conducted by the PI on Zoom or by phone in a closed room for confidentiality. The PI will use their password-protected laptops or voice recorder to capture interview data.

The researcher will read the following statements aloud and answer questions with participants before the interview begins:

What the research is about: "You have been asked to participate in a research study investigating how the beliefs of arts Administrators can impact high-need, highly mobile students. The study is being conducted to learn more about arts Administrators' beliefs about the impact of arts education on supporting high-needs youth, particularly youth in foster care and students experiencing homelessness.

Procedures: "You will be asked to sign a consent letter and answer five semi-structured interview questions. The interview questions will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Once the interview has been transcribed, you will have the opportunity to read the transcription. No real names will be identified for this study. Pseudonyms will be used, and the name of your school and district will not be identified."

Procedures: "Participating in this study may involve minor risk. It is possible that re-telling of stories and experiences about your former students may trigger uncomfortable emotions such as anxiety or sadness. At any time during the interview, know that you can stop the interview."

Potential Benefits: "Participants may benefit from knowing they are assisting SJSU researchers in learning more about how art and music teacher's classroom practices impact high-need, highly mobile students."

Compensation: "There is no compensation for participation."

Confidentiality: "Primary sources of data from the study will be kept confidential within the research team at all times. However, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed since

results and findings from the study may be published, and the data may be shared for use in future research. The name of your school and district will not be given in disseminating the research results. You may choose a pseudonym or use your real name. No data will be presented in educational contexts without your permission. All written and audio records will be stored in a secure, locked office and on a password-protected computer.”

Participant rights: “Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative effect on your relations with San José State University or Alum Rock Union School District. You also have the right to skip any question you do not wish to answer. This consent form is not a contract. It is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to participate. You will not waive any rights if you choose not to participate, and there is no penalty for stopping your participation in the study.”

Questions or problems “You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study, please contact Sofia Fojas by phone at (408) 372-7583 or by email at Sofia.Fojas@sjsu.edu.

Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Brent Duckor, Chair of the Dissertation Committee and/or Dr. Ferdinand Rivera, at 408-924-3634 of the Lurie College of Education, San José State University.

For questions about participants’ rights or if you feel you have been harmed by participating in this study, please contact Dr. Mohamed Abousalem, Vice President for Research and Innovation, at 408-924-3318.”

The researcher will ask if there are any additional questions. If not, the researcher will invite the participant to sign the consent form – paper (in-person) and DocuSign (by phone). A copy of the consent form will be given to the participant.

Semi-structured interview Protocol

Introduction & Consent to a tape-recorded interview

I am Sofia Fojas, a graduate student in Educational Leadership at San Jose State University. You have been asked to participate in a research study investigating how the beliefs of arts administrators can impact high-need, highly mobile students. The study is being conducted to learn more about arts administrators’ beliefs about the impact of arts education on supporting high-needs youth, particularly youth in foster care and students experiencing homelessness.

I appreciate that you have taken the time out of your busy schedule to help me continue to explore this topic. Before I begin, I would like to record this interview so I can devote my full attention to our conversation. Portions of

this interview and your responses may be included in my dissertation, or future publications based on this research. Still, no identifying characteristics will be included in any published document. Did you receive and review the informed consent that I emailed? Do you have any questions? If you concur, please sign and return that document via email so I have a written record of your consent to participate voluntarily.

May I have your verbal consent to participate in this recorded interview today? Thank you. Now, I would like to begin with a couple of questions about you.

Demographics

Could I ask you to please state your name? What is your current position and title?

What is the length of time that you have been in this position?

Thank you. Now, I will ask you some questions about several themes related to the impact of arts education on both general and specific populations of students in California.

The interview will begin, and the following questions will be asked.

1. Tell us a personal story about your success this past year with some of your high-need students related to art and/or music.
2. Have any of your art and/or music students experienced housing insecurity, been in foster care, or suffered other adverse circumstances during the pandemic?
3. Do you think your art and music programs played a role in helping these students succeed? If so, can you give us a few examples?
4. What do we need to be doing more of with arts and music education for these young people? What is working, and what should we be doing more of, in your opinion?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share about arts and music education's positive impacts on high-needs students in your school or district?

Interviews will last 45–60 minutes.

Warm Up/Introduction

Q: Tell me about your role at the county office and the different responsibilities you have as an arts lead.

Probes:

Can you say more about 'X'?

Can you tell me about

General Population

Context: In the survey, I asked several questions about the importance of arts education in serving all students.

Q: As an arts leader, can you talk about how arts education changes the lives of children?

Probes:

Can you say more?

Can you give me some examples from your personal experience?

Q: As an arts teacher, can you talk about how you advocated for arts in your classroom and school?

Q: As an art leader, do you have experiences integrating the arts into other content areas or as interventions for high-needs students?

Special Populations

Q: As an arts leader, can you talk about how arts education changes the lives of youth in foster care? The lives of youth experiencing homelessness?

Probes:

If yes, can you say more?

Can you give me some examples?

If not, can you share how high-needs students are impacted by participation in arts-rich experiences?

Q: As an arts leader, can you talk about how arts education changes the lives of youth experiencing homelessness?

Probes:

If yes, can you say more?

Can you give me some examples?

If not, can you share how high-needs students are impacted by participation in arts-rich experiences?

Closing

Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your perspective or experiences in assessing the school climate in your district?

Thank you for your time and willingness to help me with this study

Appendix C

Survey Consent Notice

Request for Participation in Research

LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE: A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF ARTS ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION FOR HIGH-NEEDS STUDENTS

NAME OF RESEARCHERS

Sofia Fojas, Ed.D. Candidate and Graduate Student Researcher, San Jose State University
Dr. Brent Duckor, Ph.D., Faculty Advisor, Lurie College of Education, San Jose State University

CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information about the study, please contact Sofia Fojas (sofia.fojas@sjsu.edu or 650-339-5596) or Dr. Brent Duckor (brent.duckor@sjsu.edu or 510-375-1910).

PURPOSE

This study examines leaders' beliefs about the impact of arts education on student outcomes. These leaders are situated as county-level administrators/arts coordinators, and each has a direct impact on shaping and implementing policy. By learning more about county-level art leaders' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences, we can understand how county arts administrators can be more effective change agents for those students who have been historically harmed in education.

PROCEDURES

County arts administrators are invited to participate and will be emailed a link to an online survey that will ask you to respond to questions about your beliefs about the impact of arts education on students, particularly high-needs students. This survey should take between 10–15 minutes to complete. Participants who indicate on the survey that they are willing to participate in a follow-up interview may be contacted following the completion of the survey.

POTENTIAL RISKS

There are no identifiable risks associated with this study, which involves no more risk than what participants would encounter in everyday life.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Participants may benefit from the reflection on their beliefs about the impact of arts education on students, particularly high-needs students. Aside from the individual benefits, the information from these reflections will help the researchers better understand the role county arts administrators may play in access to arts education for high-needs students, particularly youth in foster care and students experiencing homelessness.

COMPENSATION

There is no compensation for participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Survey responses will be kept confidential. No directly identifiable information will be collected during the survey unless you choose to share your email address for the purpose of indicating your willingness to participate in a follow-up interview (in which case, you may be contacted by email). No potentially identifying information will be accessed or reported in the final study. Where data are reported, they will be reported in aggregate with no identifiable information included. Only the researchers listed above will have access to the data collected from this study.

YOUR RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University. You also have the right to skip any question you do not wish to answer.

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE SURVEY

Your completion of the study indicates your willingness to participate. Please keep this document for your records.

Appendix D

Interview Consent Notice

Request for Participation in Research

LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE: A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF ARTS ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT arts EDUCATION FOR HIGH-NEEDS STUDENTS

NAME OF THE RESEARCHER

Sofia Fojas, Ed.D. Candidate and Graduate Student Researcher, San José State University
Brent Duckor, Ph.D., Ph.D. Faculty Advisor. Lurie College of Education, San José State University

PURPOSE

This study examines leaders' beliefs about the impact of arts education on student outcomes. These leaders are situated as county-level administrators/arts coordinators, and each has a direct impact on shaping and implementing policy. By learning more about county-level art leaders' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences, we can understand how county arts administrators can be more effective change agents for those students who have been historically harmed in education.

PROCEDURES

You will be asked to answer seven semi-structured interview questions about arts administrators' beliefs about the impact of arts education on students, particularly students experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care. It should take 45 minutes minimum and no more than 60 minutes. The interview will be video and audio recorded. Transcription will be completed by the Graduate Student researcher using both Zoom's built-in transcription and Otter.ai transcription, a third-party vendor accessible via SJSU authentication.

POTENTIAL RISKS

There are no identifiable risks associated with this study, which involves no more risk than what participants would encounter in everyday life.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

This study examines leaders' beliefs about the impact of arts education on student outcomes. These leaders are situated as county-level administrators/arts coordinators, and each has a direct impact on shaping and implementing policy. By learning more about county-level art leaders' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences, we can understand how county arts administrators can be more effective change agents for those students who have been historically harmed in education.

COMPENSATION

There is no compensation for participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All reported information will be confidential. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative effect on your relations with San José State University or any other CSU campus with which you are affiliated. As such, you may “opt out” of the interview at any time, and you may choose not to answer specific questions.

Where data are reported, no personally identifying information will be used and your individual confidentiality will be maintained in the final study and any resulting publications. Interview transcriptions will be edited, and identifying information will be deleted before analysis begins.

YOUR RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University. You also have the right to skip any question you do not wish to answer.

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE SURVEY

Your completion of the study indicates your willingness to participate. Please keep this document for your records.

Appendix E

Recruitment Emails

Initial email (8/15/23)

Subject line:

Important Study on CA County Arts Leads and Impact of Arts Education for High-Needs Students

Dear Fellow County Arts Lead,

My name is Sofia Fojas, and I am a graduate student in Educational Leadership at San Jose State University, as well as a county arts lead with 27 years of experience in the arts education

field. This year, I am beginning my doctoral research on the impact of arts education on high-needs students, particularly youth in foster care and students experiencing homelessness. Please note: this study is not connected to work at the Santa Clara County Office of Education or to the work of the California County Superintendents' Arts Initiative.

The purpose of this email is to invite you to participate in my study, which aims to explore how the beliefs of Arts Administrators can impact high-need, highly mobile students. The title of this study is **LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE: A STUDY OF ARTS ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION FOR HIGH-NEEDS STUDENTS**.

By participating, you will help me better understand County Arts Leads' beliefs about the importance of arts education for high-needs students, especially youth in foster care and students experiencing homelessness.

You do not need to be highly knowledgeable of multi-tiered support frameworks to participate in this study. You do need to be a practicing county arts lead or have been a county arts lead in the last 2–3 years and be employed or have been employed by a county office of education in California to participate.

In a few days, you will receive an email with a link to the survey sent through the Qualtrics survey platform on my behalf. The survey link can be accessed and used from any device at any time during September 2023. The survey link is anonymous, and your name or email will not be collected unless you indicate that you are willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview.

I know that you are incredibly busy. Your perspective is important to understand county arts better leads' beliefs about arts education for high-needs students. I look forward to hearing from you and capturing your voice in this study.

Thank you for considering this request. If you have any questions, please email

me. Sofia Fojas

Doctoral Candidate,
Educational Leadership
Program
San Jose State University

First survey link email (8/22/23)

Subject line: Take the CA County Arts Leads Survey on the Impact of Arts Education on High-Needs Students

Dear Fellow County Arts Lead,

I am writing to follow up on my previous email inviting you to participate in my research on County Arts Leads' beliefs about arts education for high-needs students. As a county arts lead in California, your perspective is important to understanding county arts lead beliefs about the impact of arts education for high-needs students. The study is being conducted to learn more about the Arts Administrators' beliefs about the impact of arts education on supporting high-needs youth, particularly youth in foster care and students experiencing homelessness.

This survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and you can access it online here

{LINK TO SURVEY}. The survey will be open for the month of September, and I will be sending reminders periodically throughout the data collection process to include as many County Arts Leads as possible.

If you have any questions about this study (LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE: A STUDY OF ARTS ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION FOR HIGH-NEEDS STUDENTS), please email sofia.fojas@sjsu.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sofia Fojas
Education
Doctoral
Candidate San
Jose State
University

First follow-up email (8/29/23)

Subject line: REMINDER: CA County Arts Leads Survey on the Impact of Arts Education on High-Needs Students

Dear Fellow County Arts Lead,

Last week I invited you to participate in my study on the impact of arts education on high-needs students, and I wanted to be certain that you received my message. As a county arts lead in California, your perspective is important to understanding arts administrator beliefs on the impact of arts education for high-needs students.

This survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and you can access it online [here](#)

{LINK TO SURVEY}. The survey will be open for the month of August, and I will be sending reminders periodically throughout the data collection process to include as many County Arts Leads as possible.

If you have any questions about this study (LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE: A STUDY OF ARTS ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION FOR HIGH-NEEDS STUDENTS), please email sofia.fojas@sjsu.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sofia
Fojas
Education Doctoral
Candidate San Jose State
University

Second follow-up email (9/7/23)

Subject line: Your Voice is Needed! CA County Arts Leads Survey on the Impact of Arts Education on High-Needs Students

Dear Fellow County Arts Lead,

Earlier this month, I invited you to participate in a survey {LINK TO SURVEY} of California County Arts Leads designed to capture your beliefs related to the impact of arts education on high-needs students, particularly youth in foster care and students experiencing homelessness. The responses that have already been submitted are excellent contributions to this research that will further support meaningful dialogue. However, your perspective is still needed.

As a practicing county arts lead, I understand how busy your schedule is. Your perspective is essential to this study (LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE: A STUDY OF ARTS ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION FOR HIGH-NEEDS STUDENTS). Please add your voice by completing the survey today.

With
appreciation,
Sofia Fojas
Education Doctoral
Candidate San Jose State
University

Final follow-up email (9/14/23)

Subject line: Last Chance to Add Your Voice! CA County Arts Leads Survey on the Impact of Arts Education on High-Needs Students

Dear Fellow County Arts Lead,

I know you are very busy with the start of the new school year, but the survey on school counseling multi-tiered support interventions will be closing soon. I encourage you to add your voice today.

I urge you to participate because your perspective will help me gain an accurate picture of County Arts Leads' beliefs about the impact of arts education on high-needs students. The findings from this study have the potential to contribute significantly to the research about arts education.

Please take 15 minutes to share your perspectives here – {LINK TO SURVEY}. The survey will close at midnight on September 30, 2023.

If you have any questions about this study (LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE: A STUDY OF ARTS ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION FOR HIGH-NEEDS STUDENTS), please email sofia.fojas@sjsu.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sofia
Fojas
Education Doctoral
Candidate San Jose State
University

Interview request email

Subject line: Interview Request – Important Study on the Impact of Arts Education on High-Needs Students

Dear {Name},

My name is Sofia Fojas, and I am a graduate student in Educational Leadership at San Jose State University. This year, I began my research on the impact of arts education on high-needs students. You participated in the first phase of my study (LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE: A STUDY OF ARTS ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION FOR HIGH-NEEDS STUDENTS) by completing my survey for County Arts Leads in California. In the survey, you indicated that you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview, which I very much appreciate, and this is the reason for my email today.

I would like to invite you to participate in a 45-minute interview. The purpose of this interview is to explore some of the findings from the survey and to allow participants to further expand on beliefs about the impact of arts education on high-needs students. Your additional insight is important to this study.

To schedule an interview, please respond to this email and indicate days or times that are best for your schedule. The interviews will take place virtually over Zoom. If you have any questions about this study, please email sofia.fojas@sjsu.edu.

Thanks very
much,

Sofia Fojas
Education Doctoral
Candidate San Jose State
University

Follow-up interview request email

Subject line: Interview Request – Important Study on the Impact of Arts Education on High-Needs Students

Dear {Name},

As I mentioned in my previous email, The purpose of this interview is to explore some of the findings from the survey and to allow participants to further expand on beliefs about the impact of arts education on high-needs students. Your additional insight is important to this study. Your additional insight is important to this study (LEADING FROM THE

MIDDLE: A STUDY OF ARTS ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION FOR HIGH-NEEDS STUDENTS).

I know you are incredibly busy, and I would be grateful for any time that you might be able to offer. Please reply to this email if you are available for a virtual interview over Zoom.

Sincerely,

Sofia Fojas
Education Doctoral
Candidate San Jose State
University

Appendix F

California County Caucuses

