

Creative Campus expands to El Verano

Launched at Dunbar, the popular program now supports more students

By DANIEL JOHNSON
INDEX-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Gail Chadwin, director of development for Sonoma Valley Education Foundation, popped into El Verano Elementary School recently to check on its newly implemented Creative Campus arts program, and was thrilled at what she found.

“One of the students said, ‘I love art! I wish I could do this all day!’” Chadwin said. “Students love this program. Whenever I talk to them about it, their faces light up and they immediately tell me how much they love art class.”

Creative Campus is a revised and expanded version of dunbART, which was piloted at Dunbar Elementary School’s classrooms last school year. It is being offered at Dunbar again in 2022-23, as well as to second-graders at El Verano.

The program aims to enhance student access to in-depth, quality arts education that actively combats social isolation, increases academic engagement and celebrates the diversity and talent of students. It is a collaborative effort involving the two schools, the Sonoma Valley Education Foundation and Kimzin Creative, a Sonoma County arts and equity consulting group.

“Our pilot year at Dunbar proved successful in creating the strategy and documenting data,” said Nikko Kimzin, founder and lead consultant for Kimzin Creative. “With that data, we now have revised processes and programming to best serve all. With those new processes, we have expanded to El Verano, as we know its deep history of the arts. We are asking, ‘How can we come alongside and support the deep traditions of the arts that exist here?’”

Conveniently, Katie Hahn, who served as principal at Dunbar in 2021-22, is now principal at El Verano.

“I am thrilled to be partnering with Creative Campus and working once more with our friends to bring such robust and



Second-grader Melanie Victor Ramirez works on a Creative Campus art project at El Verano Elementary School this fall.

enriching art experiences to our El Verano students,” she said. “While at Dunbar, we were fortunate to see how arts programming and English Language Development offered students an opportunity to explore different mediums for self-expression, education and exploration. We look forward to seeing all the ways children can develop their strengths through the arts with Creative Campus.”

Kimzin says that in 2021-22, the program at Dunbar increased student engagement in art classes and continued throughout the day and improved students’ confidence, leading to increases in them speaking up, volunteering and exhibiting retention in diverse

way through the arts.

He noted some important changes that was made to the program this school year.

“Last year, we found a vast discrepancy in arts programming hours offered to each grade level — grades three to five had the most hours — and the lack of diversity in art forms presented to students,” Kimzin said. “This year, we have expanded from 2D art forms into theater and dance, and have right-sized hours for our lower-level students as well as our (Special Day Class) students to ensure an equitable balance between art forms and hours received.”

Sonoma Valley Education Foundation provided the program with \$50,000 in funding, which

is about half its total cost at the two schools. The funding covers program costs, including stipends for partner organizations, art supplies, professional development for teachers, and project management and coordination.

Again this year, Sonoma County nonprofit art organizations are partnering with Creative Campus by each leading a series of art programs and courses with a specific theme. They last from two weeks to a full semester. The following groups are participating:

■ Sonoma Community Center: “Becoming an Artist” series (in-school).

■ Luther Burbank Center: “Dance and Movement” program (in-school).

■ Boys & Girls Clubs of Sonoma Valley: Multiple after-school programs, including “Introduction to Ceramics,” “Introduction to Sewing,” and “Fine Arts Tools & Techniques.”

■ Art Escape: “Journey Through Self-Expression” (in-school arts and crafts program for Special Day Class students).

■ Flockworks: Community mural project (in-school).

■ THTR: After-school theater arts program.

Elizabeth Stevenson, principal of Dunbar Elementary School, lauds the impact of the programs.

“Watching the joy and pride that emanates from students as a result of these programs fills my heart with joy,” she said. “They help support the whole student, do not leave any student behind and offer success to students who don’t always feel it.”

Layla Pinos Tene, a second-grade student at El Verano, says she enjoys being learning about lines, shapes and patterns as she creates her own art.

“I like painting my own stuff and learning more about art,” she said. “I feel happy in art class because it makes me wonder about what other kinds of art I can make.”

Sonoma Valley Unified School District leaders, Sonoma Valley Education Foundation and Creative Campus are collaborating to determine how and when the program can continue to expand across the district.

“The program is truly a model of what Sonoma Valley can provide for local children through collaboration,” Chadwin said.

“It has the potential to influence future arts programming for Sonoma Valley Unified School District and future investment priorities for Sonoma Valley Education Foundation as we look to leverage our community’s assets to meet students’ needs.”

Kimzin added, “Our hope is to work in strategy with the district and individual school administrators to assess the art offerings and see where there is sufficient momentum for collaboration.”

Reach Dan Johnson at daniel.johnson@sonomanews.com.

SANTA ROSA SYMPHONY

Resident Orchestra Green Music Center



FRANCESCO LECCE-CHONG Music Director

Classical Concert Series
underwritten by
Anderman Family Foundation

2022
2023

come be
inspired!

FEB
18, 19
& 20

Bruno Returns!

Santa Rosa Symphony’s Conductor Laureate **Bruno Ferrandis** returns with music from his homeland and works that celebrate the natural world! Enjoy two works by **Lili Boulanger**, **Claude Debussy’s** inventive and evocative ode to the sea and—delivered with the exquisite mastery of **Jon Nakamatsu**, a Van Cliburn Competition Gold medal winner—**Ravel’s** delightful, even humorous Piano Concerto and **Philip Glass’, The Canyon**.

Buy your
tickets now for
best seats!

srsymphony.org
(707) 546-8742

Sat & Mon 7:30 pm,
Sun 3:00 pm

Discovery Rehearsal:
Sat 2:00 pm

All performances at
Green Music Center

Sponsored In memory of Jim and Charlotte Lamb
Guest Conductor Bruno Ferrandis sponsored by
The Alan and Susan Seidenfeld Charitable Trust
Discovery Open Rehearsal Series sponsored by
The Stare Foundation and David Stare of Dry Creek Vineyard
Pre-concert Talks sponsored by Jamei Haswell
in memory of Richard Grundy
Season Media Sponsor: *The Press Democrat*

Photo of Lecce-Chong by Susan and Neil Silverman
Photography, Ferrandis by Colin Talcroft
Programs, prices, dates and artists subject to
change.

“I love trying new activities with my mentor.”

— Sonoma Valley Mentee



IMPACT A YOUNG LIFE.
BECOME A MENTOR.

Mentoring
is **One hour/week**
of your time with your Mentee,
on their school campus.

Next Mentor Orientation:
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23

Take the next step and
SIGN UP NOW:
Visit sonomamentoring.org
Email info@sonomamentoring.org
Call **707-938-1990**



MENTORING AND EMPOWERING OUR YOUTH
SO THEY MAY THRIVE IN LIFE.