

The Charter of the Watsonville Charter School of the Arts

Part I, Introduction

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts is a K-8 public charter school scheduled to open in September of 2001. Drawing from a cross-section of all students in the Pajaro Valley, not just the artistically talented, the Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will serve approximately 200 students in grades K-8 with a school program that is academically challenging and personally meaningful.

Mission Statement and School-wide Vision

Art is the door and self-knowledge is the key.

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts is dedicated to equipping students of the Pajaro Valley with the multiple literacies necessary to be successful in the twenty-first century. These literacies include: communication, language arts, mathematics, multiculturalism, physical education, problem solving, general and social sciences, technology, and the visual and performing arts.

The end product of these literacies will be students who have the skills and abilities to: use many different symbol systems: verbal, mathematical, visual and auditory; be critical and analytical learners, confident decision makers, problem posers and problem solvers, collaborative workers, and imaginative and creative thinkers.

There is no better way to understand and experience the diversity and commonality of humanity than through art. At the heart of art's contribution are improved attitudes towards self, citizenship, and community. Art increases our understanding of the breadth and depth of humanity inducing not only cultural awareness but also personal growth. This growth takes many forms, from motor skills development to self-knowledge to development of teamwork skills. Jason Ohler, Educational Leadership, October 2000

Five major elements comprise the program of the Watsonville Charter School of the arts:

Education where the visual and performing arts are imbedded into the curriculum of language arts, mathematics, physical education, science, and social studies.

The arts will be taught discretely, as subject matter in and of themselves. State and national standards will drive the academic and arts curricula of the school.

The school will serve a diverse population of students and teach multiculturalism to promote the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate a just, humane, and democratic society.

An extended day program will offer arts enrichment, academic support, service learning, rehearsal time, and after-school field trips.

At-risk students will receive additional support until they achieve academic and social success.

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will be unique in our community in five significant ways:

The school is devoted to the glory of the arts and all members of the school community: students, teachers, parents, and staff will share that core value.

The school will be an intentional community of learners. Each student will be treated as an individual and individual goals will be established, monitored, achieved, and celebrated.

The school is devoted to the tenets of multiculturalism: educational equity, cultural pluralism, intercultural understanding, and the development of a multicultural knowledge base.

Teachers will have the time they need for high quality curriculum planning, professional development, and collaboration within the framework of the school day, week, and calendar year.

The school will partner with other educational, arts, and community organizations to conduct research, share resources, and celebrate the arts.

Charter Elements

This charter addresses the required elements A-N set forth in Assembly Bill 544.

A. Description of the Education Program

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Students to be served

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will serve approximately 200 students in grades K-8 in the 2001-2002 school year. If the demand increases, the population may increase to 400, and one day may extend to K-12 and include a home study component.

An Educated Person of the 21st Century

The founders of the Watsonville Charter School of the Arts believe that an educated person of the 21st Century needs to:

read, write, speak, and calculate with clarity and precision
participate passionately and responsibly in the life of the community
experience, appreciate, create, and reflect upon art from many cultures

possess a positive self perception and a belief that they can succeed in what they endeavor
look beyond their needs and help others
clearly communicate ideas and emotions
be comfortable and facile in the world of ideas and know how to access and use information
feel connected to the local community and the larger society
respect the ideas and opinions of others
communicate in more than one language

How Learning Best Occurs

An optimum learning environment occurs when students come to school rested, well fed, and secure in the knowledge that they are loved. They leave their home environment and attend a school that is friendly and eager to serve them. The teachers are well prepared, highly skilled, and work as a team to address the individual needs of the students and their families. The educational program addresses the needs of different kinds of learners, and holds the belief that all children can meet high academic and social standards. All learners are welcome, and teachers are highly trained in methods of instruction that encourage students to generate multiple solutions and perspectives.

Students receive an abundance of individual attention, and are taught using research based instructional strategies and brain-compatible learning. Students work individually and in small groups, with many opportunities to engage in "real life" projects and partnerships. The arts are an integral part of the school day, and each grade has its traditions and rites of passage: a class play, a choir performance, or a service-learning project. The school year contains many opportunities to meaningfully involve parents and community.

In this way, the arts break through the true-false, name this, memorize-that, confines of public education. For every problem there may be many correct answers. This kind of reasoning is far more the case in real work, where there are often many ways to do any one thing well. An effective work force needs both kinds of reasoning, not just the standard answer. Charles Fowler, Every Child Needs the Arts

The students have many opportunities to experience life outside the classroom, through regular field trips, community partnerships, guest speakers and visiting artists. They learn that the world is larger than their school, and they work with local, national, and international organizations to help others.

Parents are an integral part of the school environment, participating in school governance, helping out in the classroom, sewing costumes or writing grants, working in ways that make sense for them. Parents feel welcome and know that their gift of time is genuinely appreciated.

The school staff, from the custodian to the directors, work together to give the students the most powerful education possible. The school is an extended family and students and teachers feel safe enough to take educational risks.

Goals of the Watsonville Charter School of the Arts

Students will demonstrate knowledge and skills leading to their achievement of these goals:

read, write, speak, and calculate with clarity and precision according to state, district and school benchmarks and standards
experience, appreciate, create, and reflect upon art from many cultures
achieve state standards of performance in dance, drama, music, and the visual arts
know the history, culture, and art forms of the inhabitants of the Pajaro Valley
clearly communicate ideas and emotions
know how to access and use information
help the local community and larger society
respect the ideas and opinions of others
communicate in two languages

By achieving these goals, it is our belief that graduates of the Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will have the strong foundation needed to become self-motivated, competent, lifelong learners.

Measurable Pupil Outcomes

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Students of the Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will demonstrate the following skills upon graduation from 8th grade:

Core Academic Skills

History/Social Studies: Students will understand and apply, civic, historical, and geographical knowledge in order to serve as responsible citizens in today's world of diverse cultures. Students will learn the history, celebrations, and artwork of the cultures that make up the Pajaro Valley: Chinese, Eastern Europe, Japanese, Latin America, and Philippine Islands.

Language Arts: Students will demonstrate strong reading, writing, listening, speaking, and presentation skills, in multiple forms of expression (written, oral, multi-media) with communication skills appropriate to the setting and audience. They will comprehend and critically interpret multiple forms of expression, including literature from various time periods and cultures.

Mathematics: Students will develop abilities to reason logically and to understand and apply mathematical processes and concepts, including those within arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and other mathematical subjects which the staff and PVUSD Board of Trustees deem appropriate.

Science: Students will successfully utilize scientific research and inquiry methods to understand and apply the major concepts underlying various branches of science, which may include physics, chemistry, biology, ecology, astronomy, and earth sciences.

Visual and Performing Arts: Students will demonstrate grade level proficiency in each of the arts discipline: dance, drama, music, and the visual arts as defined by state and district adopted arts standards. Teacher observation, school performances, portfolio documentation and/or written assessment will be the means of determining student achievement.

Second Language: Students will gain proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, and listening comprehension in both English and Spanish. Classroom instruction will be in English, with support for Spanish speaking students. All students will receive weekly Spanish instruction.

Integrated throughout each of the above subject areas will be other core skills such as:

- * critical thinking skills: looking for multiple solutions, analysis, synthesis, and application of knowledge to new situations
- * the ability to effectively use technology
- * knowledge of the elements of a healthy lifestyle and the development of physical fitness

Life-long Learning Skills

Students will develop skills and habits which will enable them to pursue their own path of learning throughout their adult lives, including:

- * proper study skills: learning how to access and use information from a variety of sources
 - o ability to plan, initiate, and complete a project
 - o ability to reflect on and evaluate one's own and others' learning

Social/Interpersonal Skills

Students will demonstrate:

- * strong citizenship and leadership skills by planning and implementing a project in service to the school and greater community

- * ability to engage in responsible, compassionate peer relationships, by participating in conflict resolution training and serving on the conflict resolution team, student leadership council, or student advisory board

- * ability to collaborate and work effectively with others in cooperative groups

C. Assessing Pupil Progress

C. Methods to Assess Pupil Progress Towards Meeting Outcomes

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will meet or exceed all statewide standards and conduct the pupil assessments required pursuant to Section 60605 of the Education Code and any other statewide standards authorized in statute or pupil assessments applicable to pupils in non-charter public schools. Students will participate in the statewide testing program, STAR, as required in Education Code 90602.5.

The academic progress of every student in the Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will be closely monitored through an innovative process. At the beginning of each year, teachers, parents, students and staff will establish growth targets for the overall population and for each individual student, using multiple measures data, teacher observational data, and other appropriate information. Students' individual growth targets will be incorporated into an annual Personal Learning Plan for every student, see attached. These Personal Learning Plans will also define specific focused instructional plans to support the student in attaining both academic and arts achievement goals. Teachers, parents and students will collaboratively review these Personal Learning Plans at regular, frequent intervals throughout each school year, modifying them as necessary to most effectively meet students' learning needs.

Prior to graduation, eighth graders will be required to complete a multi-disciplinary exhibition project that demonstrates their proficiency in two arts disciplines and a subject from the core curricula. A panel of adults and peers will score the presentations.

Methods of Assessing Student Progress

- * annual STAR test
- * district proficiency testing in reading, writing, and mathematics
- * ongoing review of personal education plans with parents and students
- * student portfolios with specific criteria and student reflection
- * ongoing teacher assessments
- * graduation exhibitions and rubric scoring
- * performance standards and benchmarks
- * TBD national, state, or regional Visual and Performing Arts Assessment Tool

All Watsonville Charter School of the Arts students will demonstrate academic competence in all of the core subjects, including the visual and performing arts. For non-special needs and non-limited English proficient students, competence will be defined as a stanine score on the STAR examination of 5 or above and grades of B or better on all

year-end academic portfolios and exhibitions. Portfolios and exhibitions will be assessed according to school-wide rubrics, with input from teachers across all content areas and outside community members. Competency for special needs and English Language Learners will be defined appropriately according to their Individualized Education Plans and English proficiency levels.

D. Governance Structure

D. The governance structure of the school, including, but not limited to, the process to be followed by the school to ensure parental involvement.

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will be a dependent charter school under the Pajaro Valley Unified School District. The Charter School will be autonomous from the District as described and set forth in this charter agreement and State law. The Charter School will negotiate for specific services from the District in a separate management letter.

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will have a Leadership Council made up of no more than nine members: three staff representatives (one from each grade level span, K-3, 4-6, 7-8), three parent representatives, two members from the arts and/or business community, and one representative from the sponsoring district (PVUSD). Members will be elected or appointed each fall to serve staggered, two-year terms. In the first year of the Charter, half of the members will draw for one-year terms. Members may be elected to consecutive terms. The co-directors will serve as staff to the Leadership Council, attending and participating in all of the meetings.

Meetings will be held monthly based on a predetermined schedule, and will be open to all interested families, community members and staff. The Leadership Council will comply with open meeting laws relating to public agencies (i.e. the Brown Act), federal laws and regulations, and other state codes. Charter by-laws will be developed prior to the opening of the school and approved by the PVUSD Board. Thereafter, by-laws may be reviewed by the Leadership Council, however amendments to the by-laws, and/or the Charter, can only be made with a two-thirds majority vote and approval of the District.

The duties and responsibilities of the Leadership Council will include:

- * adopting an annual school plan with goals and objectives for all areas of school development
- * reviewing and advising on curricular areas
- * adopting school policies
- * review, approval and monitoring of the annual and long-term budgets
- * oversight of charter accountability
- * school calendar
- * school and community affairs
- * parent participation/parent education
- * facilities planning

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts holds collaborative decision-making as one of its core values.

In all matters, the Leadership Council will attempt to reach decisions through consensus. However, when consensus is difficult to reach, a simple majority vote will prevail. The Leadership Council operates in an advisory capacity to the co-directors and the School Board.

E&F. Qualifications, Health & Safety

E. The qualifications to be met by individuals to be employed by the school.

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts staff will be composed of two administrative co-directors, an educational director in charge of educational program development and assessment, student services, including health, safety and discipline, teacher evaluation, and parent involvement; and a business director in charge of business services, including budget, district business liaison, facilities, purchasing, classified hiring and evaluation, and program evaluation in conjunction with the advisory board and the educational director.

The school will be composed of the appropriate number of teachers required to meet the Pajaro Valley Federation of Teachers contractual staffing ratios, and classified employees as necessary. All charter school faculty and staff, excluding visiting artists, shall be considered employees of the district.

All Watsonville Charter School of the Arts classroom teachers must hold a Commission on Teacher Credentialing certificate, permit, or other document equivalent to that which a public school teacher would be required to hold. The co-directors will make recommendations regarding certificated and classified personnel, which are subject to approval by the District Board of Trustees.

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will make every effort to hire credentialed instructors for teaching core arts instruction in music and visual arts. SPECTRA artists and community experts will be hired to teach drama and dance, as well as guest artists as necessary to bring the multicultural curriculum to life. High quality, professional arts expertise and strong teaching ability will be the criteria for engaging arts instructors.

We envision that the arts staff will become full time employees as the school grows. We anticipate in the first year or two of the program that the core art teachers may be hired as independent contractors through SPECTRA or the Pajaro Valley Unified School District. Core art teachers will participate in staff development along with classroom teachers.

F. The procedures that the school will follow to ensure the health and safety of pupils and staff.

Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will comply with the provisions of Education Code 44237 Private School Instruction Employee: Fingerprints and Criminal Records Summary Requirements: "Each employee having contact with minor pupils and not possessing a valid California State teaching credential must submit two sets of fingerprints to the Department of Justice for the purpose of obtaining a criminal record summary. This requirement is a condition of employment."

Employees new to the school will be required to show evidence of TB screening per existing District Policy.

A detailed plan of health and safety related policies and procedures, which comply with appropriate statutes and CAL OSHA requirements, will be adopted by the Charter School governing board.

G. Racial & Ethnic Balance

G. The means by which the school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that is reflective of the general population residing within the territorial jurisdiction of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District.

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts is committed to achieving a student racial and ethnic balance that reflects our geographical area. We are also committed to serving a range of English language learners and Special Education students. We are anxious to prove that the arts are a tremendously positive method of improving student learning for all students.

Pupils will be considered for admission without regard to ethnicity, national origin, gender or disability. The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will actively recruit a diverse student population from the district and surrounding areas who understand and value the school's mission and are committed to the school's instructional and operational philosophy of arts integration, multiple student performance measures, and multicultural education.

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will implement a student recruitment strategy that includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the following element or strategies to ensure racial and ethnic balance of students that is reflective of our district:

- * An enrollment process that is scheduled and adopted to include a timeline that allows for a broad-based recruiting and application process.
- * The development of promotional and informational materials that appeal to all of the various racial and ethnic groups represented in the district.
- * The appropriate development of promotional and informational materials in languages other than English to appeal to limited English proficient populations.
- * Outreach meetings in many areas of the district to reach prospective students and parents.

H. Admissions Requirements

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Priority will be given to students residing within the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, although admission to the school shall be open to any resident in the State of California. Prospective students and their parents and guardians will be briefed regarding the school's instructional and operational philosophy and will be given a copy or summary of the school's student-related policies. Parents will be asked to sign a letter of commitment to the school's programs to ensure a high level of parent or guardian involvement in the educational life of the student.

If the number of pupils who wish to attend the school exceeds the school's capacity, priority will be given to students currently enrolled and their siblings. Other openings shall be determined by a public random drawing, giving preference to students who reside within the Pajaro Valley Unified School District.

In the event of a drawing, the Leadership Council will make reasonable efforts in conjunction with the PVUSD Board of Trustees to accommodate the growth of the charter school and, in no event, shall take any action to impede the charter school from expanding enrollment to meet student demand.

I. Financial and Programmatic Audit

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An annual, independent, financial audit shall be conducted by the Pajaro Valley Unified School District which shall employ generally accepted accounting principles and will meet all local and state guidelines and dates. Audit reports will be available for review by the Charter School governing board, the school board and the public. Any negative audit findings or exceptions will be promptly addressed and/or corrected to the satisfaction of the Charter School Leadership Council.

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will establish procedures for fiscal management and accountability which will include monthly financial activity reports, annual financial statements, annual and long-term budgets, purchasing, etc.

The PVUSD will receive charter school operational funding from the state Superintendent of Public Instruction. The PVUSD will distribute those funds to the Watsonville Charter School of the Arts (aka WCSA). Any and all federal, state, categorical, or other funding to which the Charter School is entitled will be dispersed by PVUSD. The WCSA will negotiate a separate agreement with the PVUSD regarding services and operational costs.

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will conduct an annual program audit to review school performance and achievement of goals. The program audit will include

student assessment data, enrollment/attendance review, parent/student satisfaction survey results, health and safety policy review, facilities issues, dispute/complaint resolutions, review of administrative/ legal/governance issues, and budget/financial activity reports. This report will be made to the Charter School Leadership Council, site management team, as well as the school board.

J. Pupil Suspension & Expulsion

J. Pupil Suspension and Expulsion

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will develop and maintain a comprehensive set of student discipline policies. These policies will be printed and distributed as part of the school's student handbook and will clearly describe the school's expectations regarding attendance, mutual respect, substance abuse, safety, and work habits. Each student and his or her parent or guardian will be required to verify that they have reviewed and understand the policies prior to enrollment.

Students may be suspended or expelled from the school for non-compliance with the terms of the Watsonville Charter School of the Arts' student behavior agreement, violation of the discipline sections of the Education Code, or for causing the charter school to be in jeopardy of violation of any provision of law, or any material violation of any of the conditions, standards or procedures set forth in the charter school petition. Following the guidelines of the Education Code, the charter school co-directors will have authority over suspension or reinstatement of suspended students.

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts will follow district procedures for expulsion. All discipline matters will be conducted in compliance with constitutional due process.

K,L&M. Retirement, Attendance & Employee Rights

K. Staff Retirement System

Employees of the Charter School will participate in California's State Teachers Retirement System (STRS), Public Employees Retirement System (PERS), or the federal Social Security system depending upon each individual's eligibility. Enrollment in these programs will be monitored by the Pajaro Valley Unified School District office as part of the business service contract to be negotiated with the district.

L. Attendance Alternatives

Attendance at this Charter School is entirely voluntary on the part of the students who enroll. District of residence public schools continue to be an option for all students who choose not to attend this charter school.

M. Employee Rights

All employees of the Watsonville Charter School of the Arts are employees of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, recognize PVFT and CSEA as the bargaining agents under the jurisdiction of the Public Employees Relations Board (PERB), and are covered by the collective bargaining agreements between PVFT or CSEA and the PVUSD. Certificated and classified personnel shall retain their rights, benefits, wages, and terms and conditions of employment which are applicable under the collective bargaining agreements.

California laws regulating schools and employees are not waived by this charter application. Charter school faculty and staff for the purposes of this charter, are defined as all certificated and classified employees who serve on the staff of the Watsonville Charter School of the Arts.

No governing board of a school district shall require any employee of the school district to be employed in the Watsonville Charter School of the Arts.

N. Dispute Resolution

N. The procedures to be followed by the Watsonville Charter School of the Arts and the Pajaro Valley Unified School District to resolve disputes relating to provisions of the charter.

The intent of this dispute resolution process is to: resolve disputes within the school using the school's existing policies, minimize the oversight burden on the district, ensure a fair and timely resolution to disputes, and frame a charter oversight and renewal process and timeline so as to avoid disputes regarding oversight and renewal matters.

The staff and parents of the school and the district agree to attempt to resolve all disputes pursuant to the terms of this section. Both shall refrain from public commentary regarding any disputes until the matter has progressed through the dispute resolution process.

Amendments to the charter will be made by the co-directors and the Leadership Council and must be approved by PVFT, CSEA and the PVUSD Board of Trustees.

Disputes Arising from within the School

Disputes arising from within the school, including all disputes among and between students, staff, parents, volunteers, advisors, partner organizations, and Leadership Council members of the school, shall be resolved pursuant to policies and processes developed by the school.

The district agrees not to intervene or become involved in the dispute unless the dispute has given the district reasonable cause to believe that a violation of this charter or related laws or agreements has occurred, or unless the co-directors of the school have requested the district to intervene in the dispute.

Disputes Between the School and the District

In the event of a dispute between the school and the grantor, the staff and advisory board members of the school and district agree to first frame the issue in written format and refer the issue to the superintendent/designee of the district and co-directors of the school. In the event that the grantor believes that the dispute relates to an issue that could lead to revocation of the charter, this shall be specifically noted in the written dispute statement.

The co-directors and superintendent/designee shall informally meet and confer in a timely fashion to attempt to resolve the dispute. If this meeting fails to resolve the dispute, both parties shall identify two board members from their respective boards who shall jointly meet with the co-directors and superintendent and again attempt to resolve the dispute. If this joint meeting fails to resolve the dispute, the superintendent and co-directors shall identify a neutral third party arbitrator. The format of the arbitration session shall be developed jointly by the superintendent/designee and the co-directors, and shall incorporate informal rules of evidence and procedure unless both parties agree otherwise. The findings or recommendations of the arbitrator shall be non-binding, unless the boards of the school and district jointly agree that the decision should be binding.

Oversight, Reporting, Revocation and Renewal

The Pajaro Valley Unified School District may inspect or observe any part of the school at any time.

If the governing board of the district believes it has cause to revoke the charter, the board agrees to notify the co-directors of the Watsonville Charter School of the Arts in writing, noting the specific reasons for which the charter may be revoked, and grant the school reasonable time to respond to the notice and take appropriate corrective action.

The Pajaro Valley Unified School District agrees to receive and review the annual fiscal and programmatic audit and annual performance report. Within two months of the receipt of this annual review, the district must notify the co-directors as to whether it considers the school to be making satisfactory progress relative to the goals stated in this charter. This annual notification will include the specific reasons for the district's conclusions. If, in its review of the school's annual report, the district determines that the school is making satisfactory progress towards its goals, this charter, and any mutually agreeable amendments, will be renewed for a term of no less than five years from the original adoption date.

Other Charter Elements

Other Charter Elements

The Watsonville Charter School of the Arts:

will be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations and
will not discriminate against any student on the basis of ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, or disability;
will not charge tuition;
may request donations from time to time as may be necessary for such items as field trips, special programs, supplies, etc.;
will pursue opportunities for its students to participate in interscholastic competitions, if allowed by Board policy and regulation 303 (b) of the CIF regulation;
may apply directly for outside grants and other funding;
will work with the Pajaro Valley Unified School District SELPA to coordinate the special education needs of its students. All students who are identified and have Individualized Education Plans will be served by the Pajaro Valley Unified School District SELPA;
parents and students will be surveyed annually to determine the effectiveness of the program