



Valley Arts & Science Academy
1637 West Morris Avenue
Fresno, CA 93711

Dr. G. Bradley Huff, Project Director
phone: (559) 930-1786
fax: (559) 438-1260
email: vasadirector@netscape.net
Frank Sandall, Business Manager
Founding Advisory Committee:
Jim Richardson, Chair
Becky Richardson
Cheryl Chancellor-Freeland
Paula Farris

The Vision of the Valley Arts and Science Academy

The vision of the Valley Arts & Science Academy (VASA) is for its students in small, single-sex classrooms in grades K-6 to achieve proficiency in the two core skills of reading and mathematics featuring a program rich in the arts and science and with active collaboration with the Fresno Metropolitan Museum of Art and Science, arte americas, the African-American Museum, Valley Public Television, and the Fresno City and County Historical Society.

The ARTS – Visual and performing arts experiences stimulate non-verbal awareness, create a common bond and make school more human. Works of art serve to stimulate verbal skills through discussions and writing. Singing and/or playing music together, dance and the dramatic arts are shared experiences that both reinforce and enhance an understanding of language, mathematics and cultures.

SCIENCE – Elementary school students are innately curious about the natural world. Research shows that science instruction stimulates and reinforces reading, math and thinking skills.

The VASA curriculum will also offer its students strong programs in history, physical education, thinking skills, and writing:

HISTORY – Children love stories. Although it is well established that elementary school students' sense of time and place is focused on "here" and "now," historical stories develop character, citizenship, and a recognition of important people and events in the history of the community, California, the United States, and the cultures of the world.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION – VASA will incorporate a program of physical education focusing on fitness, health, nutrition and recreation. Plato's writings emphasize that the goal of education is to produce good citizens; the best education focuses on exercise and virtue. Regular exercise is good for the mind as well as the body, and, when supervised by competent, trained physical education instructors, learning disabilities and subtle indicators of developmental problems can be detected early and addressed appropriately. Studies show that learning is much tougher if a student is sick, tired, or just out of shape. Schools with more physically active students tend to rank higher on California's Academic Performance Index, according to a report published in April, 2005 by the state Department of Education's "Getting Results" project. A consultant for the state Department of Education estimates nearly 80 percent of California schools are skimping on physical education -- in violation of state law -- to make more time for academics.

THINKING SKILLS – Creative thinking and problem solving at all ages can be greatly enhanced by using strategies developed by such programs as Odyssey of the Mind/Destination Imagination.

WRITING – It is difficult to write clearly without thinking clearly and without being able to experience the writing of others through listening and reading skills. Research-based techniques and strategies will be explored in the planning phase and/or developed on-site to accelerate students' abilities to listen, speak, read and write effectively.

TARGETED POPULATION – The targeted population is students in the downtown core of Fresno attending one of the four schools in this economically depressed area: Susan B. Anthony, Columbia, Jefferson, and Lowell, all of which are scoring in the first decile on the Academic Performance Index and are designated Program Improvement schools.

It is the goal of the school's founders to attract at least 60% of the students from the four overcrowded, low performing schools in the immediate vicinity of the proposed location of VASA. The remaining 40% of the student population is anticipated to be children who live in more affluent neighborhoods and who are attracted to the school by its educational program.