



For Immediate Release

ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS (OCSA) CHARTER IS APPROVED BY ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Orange County Department of Education becomes OCSA's new charter authorizer, replacing Santa Ana Unified School District

Orange County, Calif.—March 4, 2020—This morning, Orange County Board of Education (OCBE) voted to approve the Orange County School of the Arts charter renewal petition for the next five-year term (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2025). This marks the beginning of a new partnership in arts and education between OCSA and the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE), which will serve as the school's charter authorizer. In January, OCSA filed the petition on appeal after the Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD) effectively denied their petition in December 2019.

Ralph S. Opacic, Ed.D., OCSA founder and executive director said, "The Orange County School of the Arts community can now breathe a sigh of relief knowing that the school they cherish is here to stay. While I always had faith that the quality and impact of our program would be recognized, I am grateful to the Orange County Board of Education and the Orange County Department of Education for becoming our new partner. Together, we will continue to provide life-transforming education to the next generation of artists and scholars."

Over the past 33 years, OCSA has grown from a local program to a regional program, drawing students from more than 30 cities in Orange County and more than 100 cities across Southern California. Therefore, a charter held by the county may be a more appropriate partnership at this point in the school's history.

"Thousands of children, their families and the greater community benefit from the Orange County School of the Arts' commitment to excellence in academic and arts education," said Mari Barke, OCBE representative of the second district. "Because of OCSA, students from many different backgrounds are prepared for higher education and future careers both in and outside of the arts."

In December 2019, the SAUSD Board voted on a conditional approval of the school's charter renewal petition, which was contingent upon OCSA's agreement to address findings provided in the SAUSD staff report. OCSA determined the staff report to contain mischaracterizations supported by outdated materials, misrepresented data and outside sources, rather than by the petition itself or actual practices. Additionally, SAUSD included language in their resolution that

enabled them to retroactively change their conditional approval to a denial after OCSA's window to appeal the decision would have closed. At the direction of OCSA's Board of Trustees, OCSA rejected the findings in the SAUSD staff report, rendering the SAUSD Board's decision a denial.

On Jan. 8, OCSA submitted a charter renewal appeal to OCBE. A public hearing was held on Feb. 5, where OCSA had the opportunity to present its case for appeal with hundreds of members from the OCSA community in attendance. On March 4, OCBE voted to approve the charter, rendering OCDE the new charter authorizer beginning on July 1 of this year.

"Throughout the appeal process, OCSA leadership has exhibited willingness to work collaboratively in meeting the diverse needs of our student community," continued Barke. "The Orange County Department of Education looks forward to being the charter school's authorizer for many years to come."

About Orange County School of the Arts

Established in 1987, the nationally recognized Orange County School of the Arts (OCSA) provides an unparalleled arts and academic education in a creative, challenging and nurturing environment to a diverse student body passionate about the arts, preparing them to reach their highest potential. As a tuition-free, donation-dependent public charter school, OCSA serves more than 2,200 students in grades seven through 12, providing college-preparatory academics and pre-professional arts training through 16 different conservatory programs.

OCSA has been recognized as the No. 1 Charter High School in California by Niche. The U.S. Department of Education and National Endowment for the Arts have recognized OCSA as a model arts education program. OCSA has received the distinction of "Exceptional Charter School in Special Education" by the National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET) for 2017, 2018 and 2019. OCSA's counseling program is the first 7th-12th grade program in California to be named as a nationally Recognized American School Counselor Association Model Program (RAMP).

OCSA has been named as one of California's Gold Ribbon Schools for 2017 and is an Arts Schools Network 2017-2022 Exemplary School. OCSA is consistently named one of America's Best High Schools by U.S. News & World Report and is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). For additional information, visit www.ocsarts.net.

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