**School Programs and Processes Narrative**

Lexington Junior High School offers a dynamic visual and performing arts program (VAPA), the breadth of which is unusual for a junior high or middle school: Multilevel courses are offered in art, band and percussion, choir, dance, drama and stagecraft, guitar, multimedia production, and photography and yearbook.

The program is distinct within the Anaheim Union High School District for its variety of course offerings, high level of community engagement, and the number of students who are involved in the VAPA program. Seventy-four per cent of Lexington students, including half of identified students with disabilities and 9% of the school’s EL populations, are enrolled in at least one VAPA class. A significant number of students take two or three VAPA classes: While the school’s enrollment is 1,480 students, total VAPA course enrollment at Lexington is 1,552.

**Program Administration and Accountability**

The Lexington visual and performing arts (VAPA) department meets twice a month to share what is happening in their respective programs, to share information from site administration and district leadership, and to discuss departmental and program needs and issues. The minutes of these meetings are shared with school administration, the entire Lexington faculty and staff, and the Anaheim Union High School District’s VAPA curriculum specialist using Google Docs. This provides open communication and accountability.

VAPA teachers also take seriously their accountability to the community. This accountability drives the frequency of public exhibitions and performances, and VAPA student activities and achievements are highlighted regularly in the principal’s weekly Monday Memo, which is sent to all of Lexington’s faculty and staff members, parents, and students.

**Curriculum and Instruction**

All the arts courses offered at Lexington are aligned with the California Visual and Performing Arts Standards. The alignment with this curriculum and the collaboration between Lexington’s teachers and their colleagues at the feeder high school create a pipeline and smooth transition for students who enroll and complete the high school’s career pathways.

**Assessment**

VAPA teachers use a variety of assessments that are appropriate for their respective creative disciplines.

**Art.** In Art 1 and 2, students are assessed using “hard” rubrics, which are printed objective points of what is expected of students on a given assignment, and “soft” rubrics, in which the teacher reinforces learned concepts and skills and evaluates how students are integrating these concepts and skills into subsequent art works they produce.

**Band.** Students are assessed in multiple ways. Traditional pencil-and-paper tests are used for assessing students on musical notation, while individual and group performances are used as authentic assessments for students’ playing proficiency and achievement of various musical standards.

**Choir and Guitar.** Choir and guitar students are assessed using sight-singing and sight-reading quizzes, two written pieces, group projects such as singing Valentine Grams, and on their performances. Students are given rubrics of what is expected of them during performances, and they have several performance opportunities each year, including the Anaheim Union High School District choir festival.

**Dance.** Dance students are assessed on their performances, both individually and in small groups. These performance assessments include reflective and collaborative components in which students set goals for themselves and determine the criteria mastery of these goals, then self-evaluate the degree to which these goals were met. Students are also assessed using technique quizzes, a choreography research project, and the individual students’ Reflective Dance Journals that include diagrams and notation.

**Multimedia Production.** Multimedia students complete written reflective self-assessments and peer reviews, and the multimedia teacher assesses students’ products using a rubric. Students also receive feedback from educators across the Anaheim Union High School District as part of the district’s film festival and through juried film festivals in the greater community.

**Photography and Yearbook.** Yearbook students are assessed on their ability to meet deadlines, their proficiency using Adobe InDesign, and their overall ability to communicate themes through photojournalism, prose, and graphic art. Rubrics are provided in the form of checklists for what the yearbook pages need to be correct and complete.

The photography class is a new elective at Lexington this year. Photography students are assessed on their demonstrated ability to use DSLR cameras and utilize principles of photography to compose their images. Rubrics are provided that reflect several levels of developing mastery to help students set goals for their work. Students also write reflections on their work; this aspect of the photo assignments allows students to evaluate their ability and effort against the finished art product, as well as set goals for subsequent assignments.

**Student Support**

VAPA teachers provide many opportunities to receive support outside of class.

The art, choir, photography, and multimedia teachers open their classrooms every day before school and at lunch so students can come in, get additional help, and work on projects. The drama teacher also makes himself available at students’ requests. The band room is open for daily music practice after school, and once a week, the dance teacher hosts an open studio for dancers to come in, practice dances learned in class, develop their own choreography, and receive feedback.

Students also receive support in being proactive learners. The art teacher guides students in building capacity for proactive self-sufficiency. Students build this capacity as they reflect upon their work, problem-solve areas of needed improvement, and determine the best resources for help (e.g. Internet, teacher, peers).

VAPA students are also encouraged to look to peers as support resources. The multiple levels of the art, band, choir, dance, drama, and photography programs facilitate peer mentorships and discipline-specific role models.

**Professional Development**

The VAPA teachers engage in a range of professional development activities. All of the teachers participate in VAPA-specific workshops at the Anaheim Union High School District’s annual professional development day.

The band teacher attends the Southern California School Band Orchestra Directors Association conference each year. This conference includes sessions on specific instrumental education and inclusion. The band teacher also is in partnership with the National Association of Music Merchants and takes part in the Midwest Clinic, the largest professional development gathering of music educators in the country. This annual conference features clinics on current best teaching practices and inclusion class management strategies. The band teacher also participates regularly in training for field and indoor concert band festival adjudication with the Southern California Band and Orchestra Association. At these clinics, he assesses junior high and high school band groups in their musical performances, providing feedback and advice to these musical groups.

In January, the drama teacher took part in a theatre educator workshop at the Laguna Playhouse at which he collaborated with other theatre teachers on acting pedagogy, and last spring, the multimedia teacher attended the Computer Using Educators (CUE) conference in Palm Springs. The dance teacher participated in a director’s workshop with Chance Theater.

Several VAPA teachers are practicing artists and engage in professional development as they engage in and network through their art form. The band director performs professionally with several musical ensembles and drumlines. The choir teacher performs music professionally. The drama teacher has acted in commercials and in professional theatre productions, and he has served as guest director at the Los Alamitos and Westminster Community Playhouses.

The photography teacher is pursuing a Ph.D. at Chapman University and uses art as a research methodology. Through her scholarly engagement, she regularly interacts and collaborates with artists and scholars who use art in their work.

In addition to continue their learning as educators, Lexington’s VAPA teachers share their knowledge and pedagogies with others. The photography teacher has presented on utilizing art across the curriculum at several of the AUHSD annual professional development days, and the photography, dance, drama, and multimedia teachers presented at the California Educational Research Association conference, sharing an interdisciplinary arts capstone program that they had developed and designed for Lexington students.

**Community Involvement and Collaboration**

As art is meant to be shared, Lexington’s arts program is characterized by community outreach, performance, and collaboration.

**Art.** The work of Lexington artists can be seen regularly at art exhibitions throughout Orange County, including the AUHSD’s Color and Light art show and the City of Cypress Art Show. Lexington artists are also regularly featured in Orange County’s Imagination Celebration. Their work was displayed at South Coast Plaza, and the works of several Lexington artists were selected for the student exhibition at the elite Laguna Festival of the Arts.

**Band.** Lexington’s band has a full performance calendar each year. In addition to their annual holiday concert and springtime Concert on the Green, band students perform at a nearby elementary school’s Veterans Day ceremony, Disneyland, and the annual AUHSD Band Spectacular. In September, Lexington’s advanced band played the national anthem at a Los Angeles Angels baseball game. Band members also perform for their peers at all-school assemblies held on campus.

As part of articulation with the feeder high school, the band students perform with the Cypress High School marching band at one of their home football games. The Lexington and Cypress bands also meet together for special clinics, in which the high school musicians mentor and play music with their junior high counterparts. This exchange builds relationships between young musicians who will play together in the future, lets the Lexington students meet and work with the high school director, and allows the junior high band gain a sense of what they will experience at the high school level of band.

Bringing the community into the classroom, the band teacher regularly welcomes guest musicians to Lexington. These special guests share their experiences as working professional musicians and workshop music with the band students.

**Choir.** Lexington’s choir performs at many community events and in diverse venues including Disneyland, Knott’s Berry Farm, the City of Cypress holiday celebration and tree lighting, the Katella Senior Living Community, and with the Korean Master Chorale. Additionally, students who participate in the extracurricular Show Choir compete at local and regional competitions.

Lexington’s choir program is a seamless pipeline to the feeder high school’s vocal music program, which includes a show choir.

**Dance.** Lexington’s dance program takes advantage of many opportunities to connect with its community. Lexington’s dancers collaborate with dancers from other schools and perform at the annual Anaheim Union High School District Honor Dance Festival, and they perform at the district’s annual STEAM-A-Palooza fair. The dancers will also be coordinating a dance crew talent show with the school’s Best Buddies club.

Lexington’s dance program has a strong connection with its feeder high school. Lexington’s dancers performed with the high school’s Urban Dance Club and dance classes in the school’s homecoming football game half time show, and the high school dancers, in turn, joined Lexington’s dancers on stage at Lexington’s recitals. For several years, the high school’s dance teacher has served as a judge for “Lexington’s Best Dance Crew.”

Community members share their knowledge with Lexington’s dancers as well. Local make-up artists provided theatrical make-up training to the students for their “Thriller” and Dia de los Muertos performances. Lexington’s dancers benefit from the professional expertise of guest choreographers from local dance studios, Young Americans, and CSU Fullerton who work with the classes on a regular basis. The opportunity to work with guest choreographers is also available to any Lexington student through the school’s Saturday Academy program.

**Drama and Stagecraft.** The drama classes give several public performances a year. Their fall and spring theatrical productions are open to the public, and they present a student-written scene at the district’s annual theatre and dance festival each year. Additionally, the drama students have gone “on tour” to perform plays at middle school assemblies in other school districts, and they have hosted special performances for feeder elementary schools, in which they perform their play and afterward offer a question and answer session about theatre arts.

Stagecraft classes support choir and dance by providing lighting and sound tech at their performances throughout the year. The stagecraft students also have built studio flats and set pieces that are used by high school theatre programs throughout the Anaheim Union High School District.

**Multimedia.** Over the years, the multimedia class has hosted industry professionals, including an Imagineer from the Walt Disney Company, who have discussed career possibilities where students can apply the skills they have learned.

There is a strong pipeline between Lexington’s multimedia class and the video production and graphic design class at the feeder high school. This collaboration and coordination ensure a smooth transition from the media arts at Lexington to the CTE career pathway in high school.

**Yearbook and Photography.** Yearbook staff members are omnipresent at the school events they cover, but they also engage in service to the school as they provide regular photographic content for the principal’s weekly Monday Memo and host photo booths for students at the Welcome Back Party, the Halloween dance, the Dia de los Muertos celebration, and the Tolerance Summit. Yearbook students also dressed as Santa Claus, elves, snowmen, reindeer, and the Great Pumpkin to provide a meet-and-greet experience at Lexington’s holiday dance.

The yearbook class collaborated with other yearbook staffs from our school district at a leadership conference. Additionally, they hosted a social and training for the Cerritos High School yearbook staff, teaching the high school students principles of photojournalism. The yearbook class collaborated with Lexington’s dance classes on “10 Minute Challenges,” based on the work of fine art dance photographer Jordan Matter, in which the yearbook students were given 10 minutes to creatively pose and photograph the dancer students as many ways possible in a setting with significant restrictions (in this case, the school hallways and quad under natural light). Later this year, the yearbook students will facilitate photography lessons and photo walks for students in Lexington’s special day class.

**Resources, Facilities, and Funding**

Considerate forethought and planning, general resourcefulness, and a knack for community engagement has helped Lexington procure and maintain resources and facilities for its VAPA department.

**Facilities and Equipment.** Lexington was built with a multipurpose room which includes a sizeable stage. The drama department outfitted this stage with a professional level sound and lighting system which includes a sound booth, wireless microphones, and radio headsets that allow for communication between the sound booth and backstage. This theatre space is used for drama and choir practice and productions, dance classes and productions, band clinics with the feeder high school, drum line rehearsals, and various meetings throughout the year.

The drama classroom is an additional theatre space on campus. The stage, built by the stagecraft classes, is ADA compliant and is complete with wings, dressing rooms, and stage lighting.

The multimedia production, photography, and yearbook classes share a professional studio lighting set-up, including lights, three backdrops, and a green screen. The green screen allows multimedia students to move the settings of their films beyond the school grounds to unlimited locations. The yearbook and photography classes use the lighting set-up for studio portraiture and photo booths at the Dia de los Muertos celebration and Tolerance Summit.

Lexington’s productions are extremely popular in the community. In fact, this popularity has resulted in several performances outgrowing the available spaces at the Lexington school site. These performances have since been held at the nearby Kennedy High School Performing Arts Center.

**Funding.** Lexington’s VAPA department supports its programming with funding from several sources. The department is included throughout Lexington’s SPSA, enabling the teachers to utilize funding through LCFF. Teachers have applied for grants which have purchased equipment and technology to support VAPA programs. The VAPA programs also receive funds from the Lexington Foundation and the school’s annual Fun Run fundraiser, as well as from crowdsourcing programs such as Donors Choose.

The yearbook program is self-funding through profits from book sales. Through careful saving, the yearbook program has been able to purchase laptop computers, photo production software, and additional cameras that keep the yearbook program’s technology current as well as support the new photography course.

Individual programs have developed ways to support themselves. Both the choir and dance programs generate program funds through the sales of performance tickets. Choir raises money through sales of singing Valentines Grams. Drama utilizes Box Tops for Education to fund royalties, licensing, and materials to produce shows. Band and Percussion are supported by a very active parent booster program, which raises funds to cover uniforms, instruments, transportation, and all other ancillary costs of the instrumental music program.