The Orange County Department of Education believes that the arts are integral to a well-rounded education. The proven enduring benefits to students are increased creativity and critical thinking. Our county office’s efforts will continue to support districts’ strategic planning and teachers’ professional development that increases achievement for all students.”

– Al Mijares, Ph.D., Orange County Superintendent of Schools

Orange County Department of Education

With over 95% of Orange County school districts developing goals addressing State Priorities by incorporating arts education into their Local Control Accountability Plan, the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) has been actively involved with supporting districts with this effort to provide every student with a well-rounded education, which includes the arts. In Orange County, educational leaders understand how the arts help to prepare students to enter the workforce and succeed in the competitive global market. They recognize that students who study the arts learn how to think both critically and creatively, to persevere beyond failed attempts to reach goals, and to work collaboratively with their fellow students. The Orange County Department of Education supports the 28 Orange County school districts with the following services currently, with more to come:

OCMAA

Facilitated by OCDE, Orange County Music and Arts Administrators (OCMAA) is a monthly assembly of district and school administrators as well as arts administrators from the county’s leading arts organizations who gather to learn effective practices supported by the latest research in education.
#OCArts4All

Our social media campaign highlights the way arts education connects us throughout Orange County. Each week OCDE shares activities and then students, parents and teachers post with #OCArts4All, images are randomly selected to be spotlighted.

Creative Edge Lecture

The Creative Edge Lecture inspires arts and business leaders and educators throughout Southern California with a new understanding of what sparks creative endeavors by illuminating how the brain generates new ideas. In 2020, the Creative Edge Lecture features Jo Harjo, United States Poet Laureate, at the Irvine Barclay Theater.

Imagination Celebration

Imagination Celebration presented by Arts Orange County and OCDE is an annual countywide arts festival that celebrates children’s creativity through visual arts exhibits and family-friendly events. Selected artworks from the Imagination Celebration exhibition are featured during the Festival of Arts in Laguna Beach. Celebrating its 35th year, the theme for 2020 is “Imagination Counts!”

The Very Special Arts (VSA) Festival

VSA Orange County, OCDE, and Main Place Mall partner to present an annual countywide festival showcasing the artistic accomplishments of children and adults with disabilities. The VSA Festival includes daylong performances, various art workshops and a month long art exhibit. The goal of the Festival is to provide education, opportunity and awareness of the arts and disability community. Celebrating its 44th year, the theme for 2020 is “The SuperPower In Me!”

The Small Paintings Project

VSA Orange County’s Small Paintings Project is a seven session visual arts workshop series currently provided under a contract with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Students of all ages and abilities explore the seven elements of art while scaling a large painting down to a 4 X 6 mini canvas to be presented in a culminating presentation and exhibit. Key instructional strategies have been established using the California Visual and Performing Arts Standards, National Core Arts Standards and Common Core Standards.

VSA Intersections: Arts and Special Education Conference

In partnership with the Orange County Department of Education, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts’ office on VSA and Accessibility held their Intersections Conference at the Hotel Irvine October 28-28th, 2019. The annual conference provides professionals in the intersecting fields of art education and special education the opportunity to share current information in research, practice, programs and policy, and serve as a leading catalyst for change. Attendees build new skills, transfer knowledge, network, and ultimately help to shape the best practices to educational experiences for students with disabilities learning in and through the arts.

Poetry Out Loud

OCDE hosts this annual county competition celebrating the power of poetry and the spoken word for those high school students who are the winners of their district’s event.

OCALLKIDS Project

The OCALLKIDS Project focuses on increasing access to arts instruction for students who currently have limited or no arts instruction in their school settings as well as improving arts instruction for students in alternative education and for students with diverse needs. Our goals for this 2019 project and beyond include: changing the educational culture in districts regarding arts education, infusing arts education with UDL and increasing collaboration and integration amongst VAPA and non-VAPA educators.