

Riverside County

Riverside County Office of Education

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“At the Riverside County Office of Education, our pledge is that every student in the county will graduate from high school academically and socially prepared for college, the workforce, and civic responsibility. In the last year, this has led to a purposeful focus on providing arts education for all students by hiring the county’s first visual and performing arts administrator who is bringing innovative and proven programs to all students and districts in our county.”



– Judy D. White, Ed.D., Riverside County Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Judy D. White, County Superintendent of Schools has named promotion and expansion of the arts as one of her top priorities. In July of 2019, Louisa Higgins was hired to head up an ambitious program that will build arts as a valuable and central part of education for more than 420,000 students countywide. Louisa Higgins was formerly the Arts Coordinator for the Palm Springs Unified School District and among the senior arts administrators in California.

Featured Events

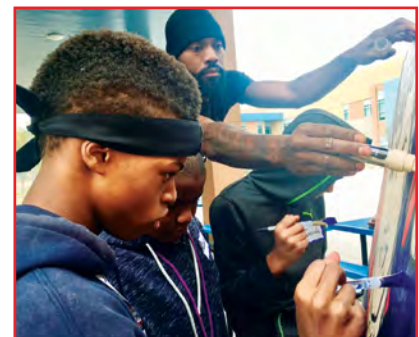
The first Annual Riverside County Honor Band presented its inaugural performance at the Richards Center for the Arts in Palm Springs on February 1, 2020. Kevin McKeown conducted the Honor Band. This band provides a stepping-stone between district programs and the state’s honor band as a pathway for serious music students. Riverside County will also be producing its first Arts Conference, *ArtsLift 2020*. This conference will take

place at the UCR ARTS on September 29, 2020. It will feature a variety of artists in residence and offer classes in art, music, theatre, dance, and spoken word integration for classroom teachers.

Strategic Plan

Now underway is a Strategic Arts Plan for Riverside County to be completed in the Spring of 2020. Working with a variety

of county stakeholders from various districts, cities, and civics and arts organizations as well as educational leadership, students, and teachers, we will build a vision for the arts for the next five years.



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New Partnerships

New partnerships have begun beginning with the Riverside Arts Council and the Inlandia Institute to promote the literary arts throughout Riverside County. The RCOE will collaborate with both organizations to promote the Poetry Out Loud competition and an online literary journal for teens.

Expanded Partnerships

Former partnerships established by Louisa Higgins during her tenure as the Arts Coordinator of Palm Springs Unified School District are now extending throughout Riverside County. The *Palm Springs Young Playwrights Festival* will be open to students throughout Riverside County. The *Palm Springs International Dance Festival* will provide a series of master dance classes and a teacher professional development workshop. The *Palm Springs International Film Festival* will hold a Student Screening Day in the area to include an additional 1,000 students into their annual student outreach programs as well as provide a teacher professional development session.

Equity Through Arts

Louisa Higgins is a social justice activist and started several programs in the Palm Springs Area that now have a new iteration at the county level. As the arts has impact on female empowerment, Riverside County is collaborating with the University of California, Riverside (UCR) program developed by Dr. Setsu Shigamatsu, *Be Your Own Kind of Beautiful (BYOKB)*. The program is taught by a group of young women that are Gluck Fellows at UCR. They will hold workshops at all eight of Riverside USD's middle schools, working with girls on self-esteem and female empowerment through the lens of cultural diversity and environmentalism.

Alternative education students are receiving arts education via two pilot programs. One of the programs involve hiring and training Artists-In-Residence

to work in court schools. A second pilot program involves the national organization *Everybody Dance Now*, which will be collaborating with two county community schools this year.



Training and Professional Development

This year saw the adoption of new California Arts Standards, and soon the framework will be finished and released. Louisa Higgins is currently designing and developing a series of workshops to roll out this information. Within her first year, there will be an *Arts Standards Training for Teachers*, an *Arts Integration Training for Teachers*, an *Arts Standards Training for Administrators*, and training on *Visual and Performing Arts Hiring* and *Evaluating Strategies for Administrators*.



Arts Leadership

Louisa Higgins has long been a speaker on the arts and education at state and local conferences, including Title I, Arts Schools Network, Models of Academic Excellence, National Association of Art Educators, and the California Association for Bilingual Education. She continues these efforts by her most recent participation as a panelist at the *Arts Now Leadership Institute* in Santa Barbara in September 2019.

Louisa Higgins is motivating her counterparts in Riverside County districts that have Visual and Performing Arts Teachers on Special Assignment or Arts Coordinators. The team of five, representing Riverside Unified School District, Palm Springs Unified School District, Moreno Valley Unified School District, Murrieta Valley Unified School District and Val Verde Unified School District meet quarterly for team building and professional development.

Truly, Riverside County is off to a grand and auspicious start, and this in only year one! As the fourth largest county in California, it is imperative for us to hit the ground running and create as many quality arts experiences for students as possible. We are building cultural capital, cultural relevance, social and emotional learning, and the true capacity to pursue all of the opportunities a young person's future can possibly offer them. This is a renaissance of arts education, and the advent of all of the ways we can use the arts as a vehicle for hope, joy, redemption and achievement.