

## Program Elements

Young Producers Group has been implementing an innovative, effective program for the last six years in K-12 schools throughout LAUSD and across the city. The YPG curricula, methods and materials are directly in line with the overarching goals of LAUSD outlined in its 2016-19 strategic plan. More specifically, our music technology curricula directly help low-income students and foster youth as they develop graduation, college, and career readiness, improve their attendance and reach higher proficiency under the “Proficiency for All” objective. More broadly, having Young Producers Group teaching music at a school engenders parent, community, and student engagement, a more positive school climate, and promotes whole child wellness for the students. The curricula inspires mastery-based learning for the 21st century and personalizes linked pathways to students’ graduations through exploring music technology.

The Young Producers Group project-based, standards-aligned curricula focus on making and performing original music with the use of various forms of technology. The structure of the classes and the dynamics fostered by YPG instructors as their students move through the curricula develop the skills students need to be ready for graduation, college and their future careers. The curricula for elementary schoolers focuses on fundamental principles of music production and songwriting. But the ability to work together as a group and support each other as they generate and refine ideas offers a critical soft skills foundation that students will be able to build on for the rest of their lives. Students regularly surprise themselves and their peers with natural talent and songwriting acumen. When students leave the class with a song, or even several songs, that they have participated in creating, it sends a message that they can make anything they want if they just learn how. Please take a look at the Key Elements of the YPG Guide to Writing and Recording Songs with Elementary Students in Appendix 2 to get a better sense of the songwriting process.

The middle and high schoolers in YPG classes develop essential media literacy, creative confidence, and skills in critical thinking and collaborating as they move through the YPG project-based curriculum. Students are motivated to gain mastery of the challenging and technical concepts because the material that results is culturally relevant to their lives and means something to them personally. Because they are connected to the content, students are motivated to “reach proficiency in content knowledge” and in the process they “build their critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and digital skills” and get “ready to activate their goals in the 21st Century.”<sup>3</sup> Not all students that sign up to take the YPG music technology elective know that they will be challenged on a technical level by the material. Students will develop the ability and confidence to persist when concepts get tough by facing these challenges. YPG instructors work hard to provide scaffolding as students construct their structures of knowledge and ensure all students leave the class with a solid technical understanding of the specific software and of

how a computer works generally. YPG students gain a refined set of skills as a musician and producer ready to make music, score a movie, sound design a commercial, and so much more. Please take a look at the Key Elements of the YPG Project-Based Curriculum in Appendix 3 to get a better sense of the curriculum.

Instructors are also trained on how to engage different types of learners as they move through the curriculum. Knowing that students are comprised of a combination of auditory, visual and kinesthetic learners, the YPG teaching methods are specifically designed to work with a diverse pool of learners. The pedagogy also takes into account that many students within LAUSD are speaking English as a second language. With so many technical terms and concepts, all students are able to learn to speak music technology as a new language. Keeping all of this in mind, YPG instructors always write down, clearly explain, and demonstrate any new concepts or techniques. Any order of operations is projected for students to follow as they implement a new concept. There is always plenty of work time for students to work through the concepts themselves and ask questions. Making sure to approach all new concepts from multiple learning and teaching angles, YPG instructors give all students the opportunity to synthesize their new knowledge together into a song or a performance.

No matter what kind of learner a student might be, performing can be a life-changing experience. Some students have not yet discovered they like to perform while others are well aware they are performers. At YPG shows, young people perform their original music for friends, family and anybody else in attendance. Culminating performances serve as powerful symbols of the transformation students undergo in a YPG class. Many students start off the year too shy to perform in front of their peers. By the end of the year, many of these students are up on stage sharing their original works.

All middle and high school YPG classes have a performance project. Whether or not a student ends up performing on stage in a culmination performance or not, each student will perform something in the class. This project comes later in the year once the class culture has been firmly established and students have a baseline of skills to draw from. Just like in every other listening party, the YPG instructor and the class share what they think the student did well and what that student could do better next time. Students are in a constant state of evolving and refining their work as composers and performers. They are also constantly pushed to connect their work and that of their peers to larger social and cultural frameworks and convey meaning within those contexts. With electronic music being so intimately connected to students' lives, many of them make these cultural connections automatically. The YPG instructors encourage the students to reflect on those connections and expose them to new sounds and ideas as they grow.

YPG curricula have been aligned with Visual and Performing Arts Standards since the program's inception in 2013. As the Standards have developed since that time, they have moved closer to the YPG methodology. Composition and technology continue to receive more emphasis as the Standards develop. The new 11 Anchor Standards are directly in line with the



YPG K-12 curricula. Anchor Standards 1, 2, and 3 are all about creating. K-12 students are constantly coming up with ideas, refining those ideas, and infusing their compositions with their personal experiences and tastes. Anchor Standards 4, 5, and 6 are all about performance, a pillar of the YPG curricula. Anchor Standards 7, 8, and 9 concern the students responding to work. The listening parties that come at the end of each project are designed to foster students' ability to analyze, interpret, and critique the work of their peers and the artists they listen to. All the while, students are connecting their new knowledge to their cultures and personal experiences in line with Anchor Standards 10 and 11, deepening their understanding of the material. See Appendix 4 for a list of the Visual and Performing Arts Anchor Standards.

The data gathered from YPG programs over the last six years demonstrates that being in a YPG class can positively influence students more holistically than just in musical ways. Every class where YPG has gathered data has shown a net positive growth in students' outlooks of their schools and future prospects. While a job in a creative field might not be right for every student in a YPG class, being creative will benefit a student on any career path they choose. The collaborations, performances, and listening parties offer students a judgement-free space to find their creative voices and refine their tastes. As students move from project to project, the YPG instructor works to develop community amongst the students as they all experiment alongside each other. The development of a student's creative confidence and sense of artistic identity in YPG classes serves as a conduit for that student to develop their identity in general. This focus on the wellness of the whole child, not just their ability to meet standards, establishes "healthy relationships where students feel emotionally safe, respected and valued" in the classroom and helps "build student resiliency."<sup>4</sup> When students feel free to be themselves, make mistakes, and explore their creativity, a safe space is created and a beautiful community can form. This is evident in YPG classes, regardless of what the rest of the school is like outside the classroom.

Having a creative community at a school where every student plays a vital role inspires better attendance from the students in that group. For many students, school can feel deeply impersonal. A creative community where students share original music is a powerful antidote to feelings of disconnectedness from the rest of a school. Several students have shared with YPG instructors over the years that they would be coming to school less if they didn't have YPG classes. Muse Research was performing a survey of students at Jordan High School and several students shared with them that the YPG classes they were taking were their favorite part of school. It sounds obvious, but it bears emphasizing: having a class that students love will increase their attendance levels. Many of the schools currently working with Young Producers Group did not have any music before setting up YPG's music technology program. None of the schools had digital media arts programs. The more schools with high-quality arts programs like Young Producers Group, the better attendance rates would be across the district.

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<sup>4</sup> LAUSD Strategic Plan 2016-19, Page 16

These are some student quotes from the Muse Research report<sup>5</sup>:

*"The music connection is great. I like to rap over the beats I make so it is like a good way to like let out my emotions on a song."*

*"It does relieve some stress and all that, especially when I get to learn like new pieces of music and stuff."*

*"We get to express ourselves... Me, personally, I have always loved music but I never got a chance to express it, never got into suffering with that, so the music program was a really good way for me to get involved with... many things using the software and getting creative with myself and expressing myself in different ways and getting my music out there."*

The persistent advocacy of YPG founder Lawrence Grey for increased access to music education in public schools and the tireless work of his team to put the curricula into practice makes YPG a strong contributor to the "proficiency for all" objective of the district. Under this objective, LAUSD hoped to have "quality arts instruction accessible to every child in 100% of schools by 2018-19."<sup>6</sup> We have helped contribute to these efforts, setting up music technology programs in 13 LAUSD schools over the last six years. Many of these schools did not offer any music at all before partnering with Young Producers Group. For many schools, the cost of purchasing and maintaining an orchestra's worth of instruments is prohibitive. By taking advantage of the free, professional level software YPG is able to provide to its schools and students, the only expenses for the school is an instructor and headphones for students. Making music education more affordable and in harmony with student interests has allowed Young Producers Group to make a major impact on LAUSD students' lives at schools throughout the district.

Sadly, the last semester of the 2018-19 school year is coming to a close and the 100% access goal has not been met. The dogged work of the folks at the LAUSD Arts Branch has greatly improved the situation, but there is still a long way to go. Many schools still don't offer music to their students. Many principals have expressed to the YPG team that they would love to offer music at the school, but that they don't have sufficient funds. Other principals currently offering YPG programs have warned that the 2019-20 budget is the smallest they have seen in years and they might need to cut down or get rid of YPG music classes. This grant offers an essential source of funding that can help continue the great programs offered by Young Producers Group and other high-quality arts organizations across the city.

Young Producers Group methods and materials are designed to get all students involved and amplify their voices. Having a space to make the music that is meaningful to them, in a tradition that is culturally relevant to their lives, gives YPG students the ability to "engage in

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<sup>5</sup> Muse Research, Jordan High School Principal Interview and Teacher and Student Focus Group Feedback, February 6, 2018

<sup>6</sup> LAUSD Strategic Plan 2016-19, Page 9



deeper learning and [persist] through challenging tasks and text.”<sup>7</sup> When students feel the power that comes from having their voices amplified through speakers and by sharing their music online, it motivates them to contend with the technical language, math-laden concepts, and overall focus on complex digital systems that the YPG curricula requires. Young Producers Group has worked with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated youth, foster youth, and students within the district’s classes, recording rappers, singers, and vocalists of all sorts. When their original music and recorded performances are shared on YPG pages and on any additional avenues the artists choose, these young people’s voices are given the space to be heard. Whether a student is behind bars or at a classroom desk, that empowerment can make a big difference in their ability to face great obstacles, express themselves, and find even greater success.

YPG earns the trust of students and their families when they feel that empowerment and begin to see the positive results. When folks know that their school is looking after the whole child wellness of its students and there are songs, videos, and performances to prove it, a strong community develops amongst the student body and the surrounding community.

The YPG program at Florence Griffith Joyner Elementary is a perfect example of how this arrangement can build engagement. The program got started when Lawrence Grey met with the music teacher and the assistant principal at the school along with Rubi Fregoso from the Partnership for LA Schools. They worked out a year-long plan where YPG instructors would work with every third, fourth, and fifth grade class to write two songs. Over the course of the school year, each song has been posted to the [Young Producers Group SoundCloud](#) page and the link was shared with the teacher of the class. The teachers then share that link with the students’ families. Students regularly listen to their songs at home and hear the ideas and voices of their peers across the city in the songs on the SoundCloud page. The students’ songs also work their way into the social fabric of the school, being played in assemblies and in classes. A culminating dance party celebration took place at the school on May 9th. Lawrence Grey came to the school, set up a big sound system at lunch on the school’s playground and blasted all of the students’ songs from the year. After the students finished their lunch, they came out and danced to their peers’ original music. Some parents and community partners were also in attendance, witnessing the celebration and joy. Students heard their voices amplified and saw other students enjoying and dancing to their music.

Lawrence also worked with the team at Joyner to set up a specialized program for kindergarten, first, and second graders who were being consistently sent to the office for behavioral issues. Referred to as the CHAMPS program, these young people participated in a variety of workshops where they wrote original songs and played music games with Lawrence. Instead of being trapped in a cycle of going to the office and back to class, these music workshops offered a welcome change of pace, encouraging creativity and expression while reinforcing positive behaviors. Making something as a group gives every student the chance to

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<sup>7</sup> LAUSD Strategic Plan 2016-19, Page 10

be successful in their own unique way. Whether it's only contributing ideas during the ideation phase of the songwriting process or getting up in front of the class and recording, all the students are engaged in the process of making a song. For that hour, they act as a big band. And like musicians in a band, a strong connection can be formed as students work together on a piece of music and record it. This camaraderie goes a long way toward building engagement. Being able to collaborate several times a week over the course of a year would build even more engagement from all the students and foster a much more positive school climate.<sup>8</sup>

Young Producers Group has also partnered with the organization artworxLA to work with students in the district's continuation schools. For the last three years, Young Producers Group has facilitated after-school classes at artworxLA's downtown office. Just like the other students that elects to take a YPG classes, artworxLA students explore their creative interests and write the music that they love. YPG instructors have found that students in the artworxLA classes particularly resonate with the content and material. Students who have difficulty navigating the traditional school environment often find solace in the freedom they have to explore within the rigorous structure of the YPG project-based curricula.

Young Producers Group works with all different types of schools so the instructors encounter a variety of school cultures. Some of them are very supportive environments, and many of them are not. YPG instructors are determined to deliver excellent instruction regardless of the school climate. It can be very difficult to create a culture inside of a class that is unaffected by the larger school culture. It takes consistency, high standards, and an investment by the instructor in the whole child wellness of the students. Once a strong, positive class culture has been built, the class can then begin to impact students in other contexts and radiate throughout the school.

The YPG program at Edwin Markham Middle School is an example of a challenging school culture being overcome by a group of students, the PE teacher, and YPG instructors. According to the Principal, Markham is listed as the LAUSD middle school with the third highest need on the Student Equity Need Index. Walking onto the campus, there are bright spots of activity where the school and community partners are making improvements, but the joy of learning is not in the air as one moves through the campus. It took months for two YPG instructors, the PE teacher, and several administrators and counselors at the school to get the YPG class on a good track. A positive culture began to form through the consistent reinforcement of expectations, high standards, and an engagement with the needs of individual students. Students are now finishing all of their projects, collaborating well, and some are even recording raps on their tracks and sharing them with the class—displaying motivation and engagement that would have been inconceivable at the beginning of the year.<sup>9</sup> The YPG middle

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<sup>8</sup> For more info about the work YPG does at Florence Griffith Joyner Elementary, reach out to Cathryn Deering (music teacher) at [cad1638@lausd.net](mailto:cad1638@lausd.net) and Sara Leimbach (AP) at [sara.leimbach@lausd.net](mailto:sara.leimbach@lausd.net).

<sup>9</sup> For more information about the Young Producers Group program at Markham Middle School, please contact Fernando Castillo (PE Teacher) at [fernando.castillo@lausd.net](mailto:fernando.castillo@lausd.net) and Alex Kim (Principal) at [atk0680@lausd.net](mailto:atk0680@lausd.net).



school curriculum is a combination of the project-based curriculum and the elementary material, using pedagogical methods in line with the developmental needs of middle schoolers.

The music technology program at Jordan High School speaks to all of the evidence presented thus far regarding Young Producers Group's ability to meet the objectives of the Partners for Student Success RFP. Carlos Montes,<sup>10</sup> the principal in charge when Young Producers Group began its work at the school, connected with the mission of the program and hired an instructor to come five days a week, for four periods a day, in the program's second year at the school. That consistency and investment by the school has fostered a really strong program. Students are learning a great deal and many of them are making incredible music. There are also several students at the school that exemplify all the socioemotional benefits of studying music technology with YPG. One of those is a 10th grader named Jeffery.<sup>11</sup> The YPG instructor noticed that Jeffery and his friends were coming in during lunch to work on their music and record. The energy and creativity they demonstrated at the school, and their dedication to making music outside of class time, earned them All-Star status in YPG. They were invited to a special opportunity for All-Stars to record at a professional studio.

In the process of coordinating with the families of the students involved, Jeffery's mother expressed her concern about his low GPA. The YPG team worked out an agreement with Jeffery and his family that if he was going to get the opportunity to go to a professional studio, he would need to commit to bringing his grades up. Over the last couple months since the session, Jeffery continues to improve as a rapper and as a student. He has a long way to go, but with the cohesive support of the school, his family, and the YPG team, his prospects look good. His attendance has also improved, as a result of being deeply involved in music. The Muse Research surveys referenced above demonstrated that Jeffery wasn't alone in having music be a major motivator for positive attendance.

Young Producers Group is also in the process of setting up a recording studio at Jordan High School. It will be one of the few schools, public or private, in all of Los Angeles with high-quality recording capabilities. This will give talented students like Jeffery the ability to share their talents with the rest of the world, without having to rely on the kindness of someone who owns a professional studio. Several other individuals and organizations have contributed to the effort. A band called The Glitch Mob went on tour and raised money for the studio at many of their stops. Another huge EDM artist named Bassnectar ran a campaign that entered people into the running for free tickets to the festival he was throwing in Mexico. A few private donors who have been supporters of YPG from the start also made donations to the project. After almost a year of fundraising, there is over \$10,000 to set up a professional level studio at the school. Having facilities like this at the school will do more than boost the music technology program. It sends a message to all of the students that there are brilliant minds at the school that people need to hear. A studio is a place full of potential energy. Putting one in a school

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<sup>10</sup> Carlos Montes can be reached at [cmont3@lausd.net](mailto:cmont3@lausd.net)

<sup>11</sup> Jeffery's real name has been changed to protect his privacy

acknowledges the ability of the students to tap into that energy, and honors their taste and opinions.

The amazing development happening at Jordan is a direct function of investment from the school, the hard work of the YPG team, and the groundwork paying off in connecting with effective partners. Under the Partners for Student Success grant, YPG could replicate this at several schools throughout the city.

This RFP will help schools purchase the necessary equipment to kickstart a music program. Computer labs are already sitting in every LAUSD school and free software is at the ready, so schools only need to purchase headphones and a pair of speakers. If a school has a higher budget, they could also add a microphone and an audio interface. YPG has helped all of its schools identify the highest quality equipment possible within their budget. These pieces of technology become powerful tools that students use as they create their art and form their creative identities. These tools also develop the media literacy, creative confidence, and socioemotional skills of the students while they grow as musicians. These materials are factored into the fully-burdened hourly rates presented in the price proposal.

Young Producers Group has a proven track record on using music technology to help the most underserved students in LAUSD develop their graduation, college, and career readiness, improve their attendance rates, develop proficiency for all, all while creating parent community, and student engagement, and a more positive school climate. The Partners for Student Success RFP could help bring YPG's powerful program to many more schools, filling the district with the sounds of students' original music.



**Price Schedule**

Young Producers Group offers different options depending on the instructional and material needs and preferences of the school. See below:

Item Options	Semester Rate	Year-long Rate
YPG Instruction in K-12 Classes. School already has equipment; no additional equipment purchases chosen by school for instruction.	\$70/hr	\$70/hr
YPG Instruction in K-12 Classes. School does not have equipment; speakers and headphones provided by YPG at school's request.	\$85/hr	\$80/hr
YPG Instruction in K-12 Classes. School does not have equipment; speakers, headphones, microphones, audio interface, and other equipment provided by YPG at school's request.	\$100/hr	\$90/hr

## Vendor Virtual Services Plan

Due to school closures, approved vendors on the Partners for Student Success bench that have a signed contract will need to submit their *Vendor Virtual Services Plan* to D'Sonya Oakley at [dsonya.oakley@lausd.net](mailto:dsonya.oakley@lausd.net) from the Office of Partnerships and Grants. The plans will be vetted and shared with eligible schools to select the services they are interested in and follow up with vendors. Any new approved vendors that are in the process of signing their contract will also need to fill out the below form.

### Things to Consider:

- Currently, certificated staff are required to supervise any services rendered to students by a third party.
- Recording and pictures of students is prohibited.

Vendor's Name: Young Producers Group, Inc.	Submittal Date: 8/7/20
Schools Planning to Serve: Roosevelt High School (Confirmed), Markham Middle School (Pending) Possibilities include Jordan High School, Marina Del Rey Middle School, Florence Griffith Joyner Elementary School among others.	
List the services in your agreement that can be provided virtually:	Music technology classes and curricula. We will be using a program called Soundtrap that is free for all LAUSD students and available as an app within Schoology and Google Classroom. We have asynchronous materials including videos, assessments, and glossaries that will be available. Our instructors are all trained and ready to provide instruction through Zoom and other online means.
List the services in your agreement that cannot be provided virtually:	--
List the platforms you plan to use for delivery of virtual services:	Schoology, Google Classroom, Zoom, Soundtrap.
Provide a brief description of how you plan to deliver each of your services virtually (i.e. coordinate with school to schedule 30 minute session once a week, etc.):	It will look different at each school, but our goal is to have two Zoom sessions a week with each class for at least 30 minutes. The first session will go over expectations for the week's work and answer any questions before students get started. Then students will get rolling through Schoology or Google Classroom, making use of our asynchronous materials to learn and exercise new concepts. Students will share



## Partners for Student Success – Partner Matching Fund

	their work and the YPG instructor will lead discussion in the second Zoom of the week.
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- District's [Code of Conduct](#) is expected when interacting with students