



Fontana Unified School District

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NEWS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Dance Program Receives \$50,000 Grant to Fund Creative Partnership with Maloof Gardens

FONTANA, CA – A.B. Miller High School dance students will receive an opportunity to expand their creative horizons while learning to choreograph, perform and film new work uniquely designed for a specific location, thanks to a \$50,000 grant from Southern California-based nonprofit homeLA, which will be used to fund a master class held at the Maloof Foundation Gardens in Rancho Cucamonga.

The project, called inSITE, is available to A.B. Miller Dance Level 1 and Conservatory of Dance Level 2 students and will combine dance and film, as students work with professional film and dance artists to develop choreography that is site-specific to Maloof Gardens, working towards producing a live performance and an accompanying video by the end of the semester.

A.B. Miller Conservatory of Dance director Nicole Robinson worked with homeLA to revive a similar project begun in 2020 that was curtailed due to the pandemic. That project also involved students creating dances specific to the Maloof Gardens that were to be viewed by the public. During the 2022-23 school year, the project concentrated on producing a site-specific video.

“This year, with the \$50,000 grant, we will do both versions of the project,” Robinson said. “The goal of inSITE is to allow our dancers to share their artistic expression and have the community experience art in a different way. It’s important for our students to get this opportunity to work with outside entities, where they can receive practical and real industry experience.”

The homeLA grant helps to expand A.B. Miller’s dance career technical education (CTE) pathway, giving students a chance to work with local organizations and receive hands-on mentorship, while getting a better understanding of the technical aspects and business side of the arts, crucial components for students looking to pursue a career in the arts, or beyond.

Among the inSITE teaching artists are former A.B. Miller media teacher and 2021-22 FUSD Teacher of the Year Leo Rivas, who will assist students in finding locations and documenting their work on film, as well as A.B. Miller Class of 2012 graduate Aisha Shauntel Bardge, who will work with students to create their performance pieces.

The Maloof Foundation Gardens was chosen for its bucolic landscapes, wealth of native California vegetation and ties to indigenous culture. Students will receive a tour of the gardens by a native representative of the Tongva nation, who originally inhabited the land. Cucamonga is derived from a Tongva word meaning “shady place.”

“Our primary goal is to provide safe, creative spaces where students can use dance as a vehicle of expression and tool to view the world around them,” Robinson said. “This collaboration with homeLA and the Maloof Foundation is ideal for our program, as it also opens the doors for our students to learn about new cultures and artistry while empowering them to incorporate these elements into their art.”

A.B. Miller began its dance program in 1995 and established its Conservatory of Dance in 2009, the first step in a Dance Collaborative Pipeline that makes dance education available to Fontana Unified K-12 students, with dance enrichment/programs available at Juniper, Locust, Mango, Virginia Primrose and South Tamarind elementary schools, and Wayne Ruble, Alder and Almeria middle schools.

“Congratulations to Nicole Robinson and A.B. Miller High School for fostering these extraordinary partnerships with homeLA and the Maloof Gardens,” Fontana Unified Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. “As we seek to develop our students into future leaders, universal skills like critical thinking and problem solving are greatly enhanced by arts education, which can lead to success in a variety of careers.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

FUSD_ABMILLERDANCE: The A.B. Miller High School dance program received a \$50,000 grant from nonprofit homeLA to fund a master dance class for the 2023-24 school year that will give students an opportunity to expand their creative horizons while learning to choreograph, perform and film work specifically designed for the Maloof Gardens in Rancho Cucamonga.

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