

Learning Foundations and Performing Arts

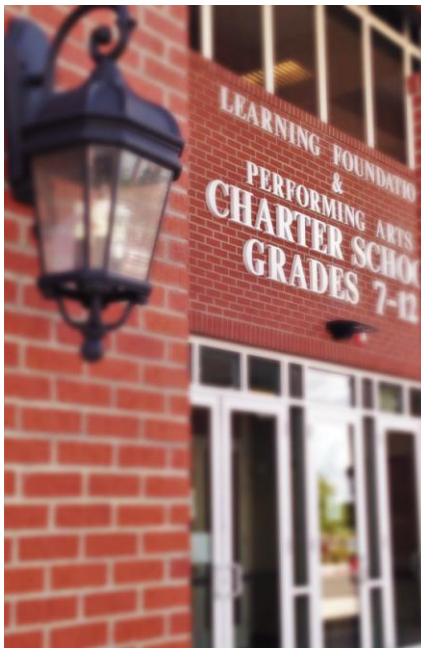
Photos and Essay by Rebekah Douglas



Above: The after-school hallway environment. *Photo by: Rebekah Douglas.*

Learning Foundation and Performing Arts (LFPA) was founded with the vision to create a school that would provide and balance strong academics and fine arts programs, providing an education that would meet and embrace the whole student.

Public charter schools are major cultural workers in Arizona. These schools are a hot and controversial topic throughout the United States and Arizona has developed a reputation for being included in this conversation. Being such a broad and multi-faceted subject, I would like to focus on one school in particular. This school, although small, exemplifies how charter schools have the potential to move away from the one-size-fits-all educational approach and toward a more individualized education. Through this approach, a culture is created that strengthens the student in their personal journey of self-discovery, encouraging creativity and a personal identity, and producing strong individuals ready to face life's challenges.



Above: Learning Foundations and Performing Arts Charter School. *Photo by: Rebekah Douglas*

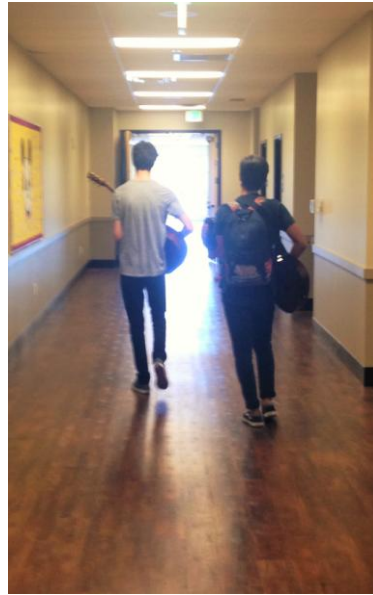
Below: Group work in an academic course incorporating the arts. *Photo by: Rebekah Douglas*



Above: Teacher and students giving feedback, taking turns in small improvisation groups. *Photo by: Rebekah Douglas*

“In a public school, classes are a lot bigger so you either get the material and pass or you don’t and you fail. I feel like, here, there’s a lot more opportunity to work one-on-one with the teacher and really understand what’s going on in class,” explains a senior student at LFPA. LFPA nurtures a culture that is focused on the individual student. The school is comparatively small and the faculty and staff really work hard to form meaningful relationships with each student. They work together to make sure each student feels they have an adult they can go to for help and support.

“This school is really non-judgmental. I think that in public schools there is bullying if you’re different or don’t fit the mold. You don’t see that here. Everyone is just themselves and it’s really cool,” another student confides. There is an all-over atmosphere of acceptance and unity at LFPA. Students are prepared to enter the world after graduation with a unique confidence and sense of self.

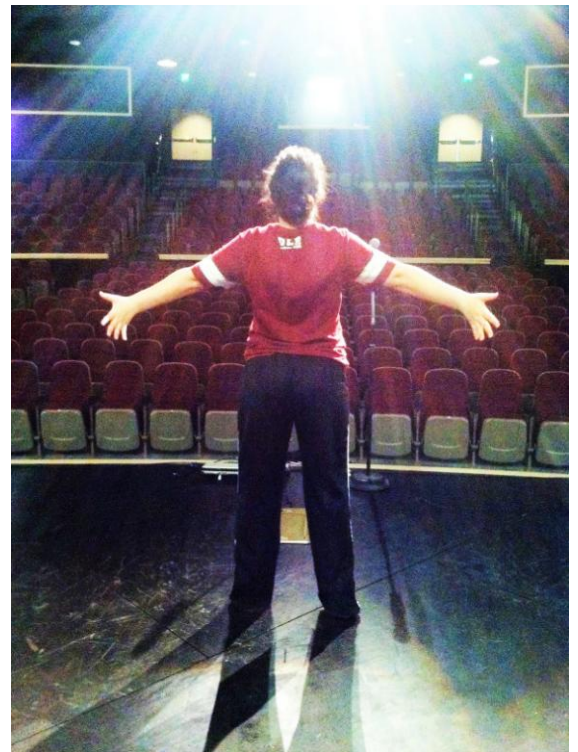


Below: Students practice on stage before a departmental showcase. *Photo by: Rebekah Douglas*

Above: Students hang out in the hallway between classes and after school. *Photo by: Rebekah Douglas*



Learning Foundations and Performing Arts, a public charter school, is indeed a great cultural worker here in Arizona. LFPA provides a choice to students in their educational journey. Students are able to cater their education to their interests and desires; to explore different avenues of creativity at a school where a variety of academic and artistic courses are available; and, are immersed in a specific school culture that encourages individuality, learning, growth, unity, and communication. LFPA promotes an individualized approach to education and illustrates the potential for public charter schools to facilitate this kind of cultural work.



Above: Kathryn Douglas, a former student, takes center stage before a final performance. *Photo by: Haley Anderson*