



115 Pine Avenue STE 350  
Long Beach CA 90802



**Doug Otto,**  
**Candidate for Long Beach**  
**Unified School District Board of Education**  
**District 4**

Q. What will you do to ensure that every child has access to a complete education that includes the arts?

A. I am a firm believer in including arts in the school curriculum for all grades K-12. Years of research show that arts education is closely linked to academic achievement, social and emotional development, civic engagement, and equitable opportunity. I am a past president of the Arts Council of Long Beach and have a long-standing commitment to the arts.

Studies link arts education with gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, and verbal skill. Arts learning can also improve motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork. LBUSD policy states that arts education “cultivates the whole child, gradually building many kinds of literacy while developing intuition, imagination and dexterity into unique forms of expression and communication.” I support this policy.

LBUSD has an established arts education program. As a school board member, I will see that the district continues



115 Pine Avenue STE 350  
Long Beach CA 90802

to provide real opportunities for students to explore themselves and their world in the arts. I agree with Tom Horne, the superintendent of public instruction in Arizona when he said “We’re preparing kids for jobs. We’re preparing them to be citizens. And we’re teaching them to be human beings who can enjoy the deeper forms of beauty. The third is as important as the other two.”

Q. What role do you think the arts can play in supporting key priorities of the district, such as reducing the dropout rate, closing the achievement gap, and preparing more students for college eligibility and/or meaningful careers?

A. Arts education reaches students in a way that academic subjects never can. For some children that are marginalized or disconnected, artistic expression offers an option.

I have set a personal goal for my campaign of promoting equity and closing the achievement gap between students. African American and Latino students and students from disadvantaged backgrounds are scoring lower on standardized achievement tests. Cultural differences can also influence how a student learns. Offering programs in the arts as part of the school curriculum can help close the achievement gap and provide students with an opportunity to excel in non-academic areas. It provides a level playing field for students to discover and develop talents not specifically



115 Pine Avenue STE 350  
Long Beach CA 90802

tied to books, tests or classroom instruction. Students can explore their interests through dance, music, painting or drawing, photography, design or other ways.

I believe that a healthy arts curriculum plays an important role in closing the achievement gap and helping to make our students college and career ready.

Q. In light of the new funding structure for school districts in the state (i.e. the Local Control Funding Formula), how do you see arts education aligning with the eight priority areas?

A. LBUSD has established a detailed and proactive LCAP plan designed to maintain and strengthen the foundational systems of public education. LBUSD has an exemplary track record of continuous improvement and rigorous evaluation in each of the key goal areas. The district and the board have done an outstanding job of outlining an action plan to identify high priority areas and design effective strategies to address emerging and ongoing areas of concern or perceived deficiencies. I applaud the district for the LCAP plan they have prepared and I fully support their work.

Arts education is in line with the established goals and priorities of the LCAP plan and is incorporated into the coursework and general curriculum from K-12. One of the factors that makes LBUSD one of America's finest and highest performing schools is its focus on student success and continuing efforts to narrow the achievement gap. LBUSD has been particularly recognized for "sustained and



115 Pine Avenue STE 350  
Long Beach CA 90802

continuous improvement.” Arts education fits into this plan in critical and meaningful ways.

On a personal level, I believe the arts have tremendous value for students. One of my most life-enriching experiences as an LBUSD student was performing in the school play at Millikan High School.

I also believe that an important way to incorporate the arts as a vibrant part of the school experience is through partnerships with community, civic and cultural groups, arts advocates, philanthropists and business leaders that involve students in a thriving arts community. LBUSD has historically benefitted from and promoted active partnerships with LBCC, CSULB, the Port of Long Beach and a variety of volunteer, parent and civic organizations. Such a partnership is possible in Long Beach. As an example, in 2007 more than 60 arts and cultural organizations in Dallas established the *Dallas Arts Learning Initiative* with funding from the Wallace Foundation. As they stated, “DALI was created on one unabashedly idealistic, yet meticulously researched premise – that students flourish when creativity drives learning.”

Perhaps the Arts Council of Long Beach is the organization that can lead the way.