

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0533

July 14, 2015

The Honorable Arne Duncan, Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave. S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-3100

Dear Secretary Duncan:

I am pleased to write in support of arts education in schools. As you may know, I represent the 33rd District in California in the U.S. House of Representatives. This district includes much of Los Angeles and the surrounding cities, where several entertainment industries and arts organizations are located. As such, our district uniquely demonstrates the value that arts provide to the community.

The arts are an integral part of a well-rounded elementary and secondary education, contributing significantly to the academic and social growth of students. The inspiring personal story of actor and performer Harry Shum Jr. (Glee; Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: The Green Legend) perfectly illustrates the powerful impact the arts have on students. I urge you to learn about Harry's story here: bit.ly/1pduxFG.

Research demonstrates that involvement in the visual and performing arts is correlated with success in other academic areas. A well-known study conducted by the University of California at Los Angeles found that students who had received arts education in school scored higher on standardized tests than students who had limited exposure to the arts. Furthermore, research shows that including arts programs in schools keeps students engaged and facilitates creative and innovative thinking.

While arts education has proven to benefit a wide variety of students, it is especially important for low-income and minority individuals. According to a report by the National Endowment for the Arts, high school students of a low socioeconomic status were three times more likely to obtain a bachelor's degree if they were involved in the arts. However, federal funding for programs, such as the Department of Education's Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination Grants Program, have experienced cuts in recent years. Low-income and inner-city schools are disproportionately seeing the consequences of low funding manifested in the gradual disappearance of their arts programs. Also troubling is that the increased presence of testing and focus on STEM education can lead Title I schools to

deemphasize the arts. If we hope to eventually close the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers at schools that have more resources, promoting a strong arts education system through public funding is a vital first step.

Arts education programs clearly provide academic, economic, and social benefits that enhance the lives of students in and out of the classroom. Thank you for your past and current support for arts programs. I urge you to continue focusing on this area in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ted W. Lieu". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress