

CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE FOR ARTS EDUCATION



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Sibyl O'Malley
626.578.9315 or sibyl@artsed411.org

CELEBRITIES AND CANDIDATES COME TOGETHER FOR ARTS EDUCATION

Celebrities Jack Black, Ben McKenzie, Malcolm Jamal Warner, Taylor Dayne and others joined the two candidates for State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Assemblymember Tom Torlakson and Larry Aceves, at a forum to discuss the future of arts education in California.

Los Angeles: The California Alliance for Arts Education and the Music Center: Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County presented "Education, Creativity and California's Future" at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion today, Wednesday September 29th. The forum featured celebrities including Jack Black, Ben McKenzie and others discussing arts education and asking questions of the two candidates for State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Assemblymember Tom Torlakson and Larry Aceves.

The goal of the forum was to discuss the plight and promise of arts education in California public schools. Debbie Devine, Artistic Director for the 24th Street Theatre, opened the event by introducing her former student Jack Black. Black spoke about the importance of arts education in his life remarking, "[My life was quickly swirling around the toilet bowl about to be flushed] I don't know what I would have done if I if I hadn't met Deb Devine, my first drama teacher, who inspired me and for the first time gave me a reason to really love going to school and really opened my mind and soul to an exciting world of literature and communication." He continued, "Because it's theater ... I never thought of it as straight up education, I thought of it as an incredibly exciting, fun experience, and all of sudden I knew all these new things and had this incredible education."

Laurie Schell, Executive Director of the California Alliance for Arts Education, said, "Every one of the panelists that appeared today is a former student of the arts and is now a working

professional artist. This forum was a great opportunity to shine a spotlight, literally, on the role arts education plays in developing well rounded, creative individuals who can become actors and musicians but who more often become engineers, teachers, parents, internet entrepreneurs or business leaders.” Schell went on to say, “We are grateful that both candidates for Superintendent of Public Instruction, Torlakson and Aceves, made a commitment today to maintaining a central role for the arts in California’s education system. And lest they forget, the Alliance and our partners will be here on November 3rd, the day after the election, to make sure that commitment is kept.”

Both candidates expressed their support for arts education. Assemblymember Tom Torlakson said, “I’m here because I do believe, like you that we can turn things around and bring back that well-rounded experience, to create well-rounded graduates who have the opportunity to explore their talents in many dimensions.” Larry Aceves, a former school Superintendent said, “The arts are not an add-on that you cut, the arts are part of how children learn. The problem-solving, critical thinking and creativity are not an extra, they are how children learn.”

“Students need to have access to all subjects so they can find out what they are passionate about and pursue it, because it’s going to be hard work whatever you choose, but if you don’t love it it’s going to be really hard work,” said Ben McKenzie star of “Southland” and former star of “The O.C”. He continued, “[We need to] Keep arts education as a core part of any child’s education, as opposed to some kind of supplemental extra curricular thing that we can cut at whim.”

Legendary Motown writer/producer Lamont Dozier said, “We all know that if you help nurture a passion for the arts in kids, it’ll keep them off the street and give them something to dream about and reach for.” Actor, director and musician Malcolm Jamal Warner said, “People are coming together and trying to make sure that the next Superintendent of Public Instruction really understands how strong we all feel about the importance of arts education.”

In addition to the California Alliance for Arts Education and the Music Center: Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County the forum sponsors and partners included: California State PTA, Ovation, The Boeing Company, the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM), Yamaha, Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and NBC Universal.

Attendees included:

- LARRY ACEVES: Candidate for Superintendent of Public Instruction
- TOM TORLAKSON: Candidate for Superintendent of Public Instruction
- JACK BLACK: Actor and musician, star of “School of Rock” and Tenacious D
- WIL-DOG ABERS: Bassist, Ozomatli
- LITA ALBUQUERQUE: Painter, sculptor, installation and environmental artist
- TAYLOR DAYNE: Singer and Songwriter
- LAMONT DOZIER: Writer and producer, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame
- BEN MCKENZIE: Actor, star of TV’s “Southland” and former star of “The O.C.”
- MALCOLM JAMAL WARNER: Actor, director and musician, former star of “The Cosby Show”

The California Alliance for Arts Education is in its fourth decade of building a brighter future for our state by making the arts a core part of every child’s education. We work to ensure that the six-million pre K-12 public school children in California have access to quality, standards-based classes in dance, music, theatre and visual arts. We accomplish this by influencing state policy, by building a statewide network of local coalitions, and by inspiring public advocacy. The California Alliance for Arts Education is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that does not engage in electoral activities.

Photos can be downloaded at:

<http://www.wireimage.com/SearchResults.aspx?iqi=456234&s=arts%20education&sfld=C&vwmd=e>

High Resolution Video EPK:

<https://download.yousendit.com/WTNMZXQ4TkxCSnBjR0E9PQ>

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<https://download.yousendit.com/WTNMZXR6SEJsMHcwTVE9PQ>

Additional clips can be viewed at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMcX6LaPxuQ>

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