



Questions for Candidates - D51 School Board, 2023

From moderator Michelle Boisvenue-Fox

Candidate Name and District: **Jessica Hearn A**

1. A variety of educators and studies indicate that an Arts education helps students with development of motor skills, language skills, social skills, decision-making, risk-taking, and inventiveness along with connecting them to cultures and the wider world. **What was your experience with the Arts as a student?**

I want to be transparent about my personal experience with the Arts. While I didn't have extensive exposure, I did have the opportunity to take a painting elective and a stagecraft elective during my time as a high school student. These experiences provided me with a glimpse into the world of artistic expression.

Through the painting elective, I gained some basic skills in visual arts, which allowed me to appreciate the process of creating with colors and forms. The stagecraft elective introduced me to the behind-the-scenes aspects of theater production, which I found to be a fascinating and collaborative endeavor.

While my exposure was limited, I recognize the importance of Arts education in fostering skills like creativity, teamwork, and self-expression. If elected to the school board, I am committed to advocating for a well-rounded curriculum that ensures all students have opportunities to explore and benefit from the Arts, regardless of their prior exposure.

2. There is a term in the arts community and education called Arts Integration. In acknowledging students' different learning styles, education with arts integration has students demonstrate understanding through an art form no matter the subject. Examples include creating plays for a history lesson, commercial jingles to teach persuasive writing, or narrating creative stories through photographs. **What role do you see for the Arts in the education of a D51 student?**

As a D51 school board candidate, I firmly believe that Arts Integration plays a crucial role in the education of every student. Engaging with the Arts offers students a myriad of benefits. Through visual arts, students refine fine motor skills and learn to convey ideas with precision and detail. Music education, in



particular, enhances language skills by requiring an understanding of rhythm, melody, and harmony. School productions foster social skills, emphasizing teamwork, communication, and collaboration among peers.

Additionally, I see Arts Integration as a way to instill valuable lessons in decision-making and risk-taking. Whether it's selecting the right color palette for a painting or taking on a challenging role in a play, students develop confidence and the ability to make informed choices.

Moreover, the Arts serve as a window to diverse cultures and perspectives. They provide a unique platform to connect with the broader world, offering insights that textbooks alone cannot convey. Exposure to various forms of artistic expression fosters a deeper appreciation for the rich tapestry of global cultures.

Inventiveness is yet another critical facet nurtured by the Arts. It encourages students to think creatively, innovate, and approach problems from multiple angles. This skill proves invaluable in many aspects of life beyond the academic years. As a school board candidate, I am committed to advocating for increased support and resources for arts programs in D51. This includes providing professional development for educators, ensuring access to quality art supplies, and creating opportunities for students to showcase their artistic talents.

Furthermore, I believe in collaborating with local artists and organizations to enrich our curriculum with a wide range of artistic experiences. This not only benefits our students but also strengthens our community ties.

In short, Arts Integration is not just about creating well-rounded individuals, but also about nurturing a love for learning that lasts a lifetime. Together, let's work towards an education system that embraces and celebrates the transformative power of the Arts.

3. As a community leader, I love this quote, "Because schools play a pivotal role in cultivating the next generation of citizens and leaders, it is imperative that we reflect on the fundamental purpose of a well-rounded education." It's easy to think of children as children but forget that they are an up-and-coming generation. **What do you see as the role of a D51 board member with regards to supporting curriculum beyond the core subjects of reading, writing, math, and the sciences to include an Arts Education?**

As a candidate for the school board, I wholeheartedly agree with the sentiment expressed in the quote. It emphasizes the pivotal role that schools play in nurturing the



next generation of citizens and leaders. It's crucial that we view children not just as students in the present, but as the future architects of our community.

Regarding the responsibilities of a D51 board member in supporting curriculum, including Arts Education, I believe it's imperative to recognize the broader spectrum of learning. While core subjects like reading, writing, math, and sciences are fundamental, Arts Education is equally vital in shaping a well-rounded educational experience.

Arts Education fosters creativity, a quality that is central to problem-solving and innovation across all fields. It also promotes cultural awareness, fostering an understanding of diverse perspectives and histories. A comprehensive curriculum, encompassing the arts, ensures a holistic approach to a student's development. Engaging with the arts encourages critical thinking, effective communication, and interpretation skills. Furthermore, it provides a platform for students to express themselves and discover their unique identities. Arts programs often involve the community, offering opportunities for collaboration and civic engagement. Not all students thrive in traditional academic subjects, and Arts Education provides an alternative avenue for those with different talents to excel. Lastly, exposure to arts in school can instill a lifelong appreciation for cultural and artistic endeavors.

If elected as a board member, I am committed to advocating for Arts Education. This includes advocating for appropriate funding and resources to support arts programs, ensuring they receive the attention they deserve. I will actively seek partnerships with local arts organizations and work towards initiatives that bolster arts education in our district. Additionally, I will advocate for ongoing evaluation and enhancement of the arts curriculum to align with evolving educational goals and community needs. Providing opportunities for educators to enhance their skills in arts instruction through professional development is a priority. Moreover, I plan to engage with parents, students, and the wider community to emphasize the benefits and significance of Arts Education.

By championing Arts Education, we not only enrich the learning environment but also prepare our students to be well-rounded, culturally aware citizens and leaders in the years to come. Together, let's create a vibrant and inclusive educational experience for all students in our district.

4. The Art Heritage Program was created in the 1980s for K-5 students after an economic downturn in Western Colorado -- the Oil Shale Bust -- led to major budget cuts. Today, parents and community volunteers in 25 D51 elementary schools, as well as private schools in the Grand Valley, offer six art units based upon well-known artists. Students learn about an artist's life and times, view presentations of the artist's work, then create their own art. **In order to effectively manage arts education in the 46 schools within the district, would you support a full-time director position for the Arts Heritage Program?**



Thank you for bringing up the Art Heritage Program and its significance in our district. Honestly, it was a program I needed to look up! It's reassuring to know that there is already a coordinator and assistant in place to oversee the program. This demonstrates a commendable effort to manage the program effectively with the resources available. Given its importance and the number of schools it serves, I believe it's crucial to ensure its continued success. Any decision to create a full-time director position should be based on a careful assessment of the program's growth and staffing requirements.

If the program were to expand to all D51 schools and our staffing model indicated a need, I would support the addition of a full-time director. It's essential that we align staffing with the program's scope and needs to ensure its continued success in providing valuable arts education to our students. By investing in a full-time director, we demonstrate our commitment to providing a well-rounded education that includes the arts. This not only benefits our students' academic development but also fosters creativity, critical thinking, and a deeper appreciation for culture and history.

I am committed to supporting arts education in our district, and I will work diligently to make informed decisions that benefit our students and enhance their educational experiences. If the evidence supports the addition of a full-time director, I will work collaboratively with stakeholders to advocate for the necessary resources and support to make it a reality. This way, we can ensure that the Arts Heritage Program continues to thrive and positively impact the education of our K-5 students and, potentially, beyond!