

## ARTS - FYI



### **Get Lit-Words Ignite supports literacy through poetry**

Karen D'Souza at Ed Source writes that the education nonprofit **Get Lit-Words Ignite reaches out to 50,000 students in Los Angeles a year in grades 4 through high school through its school-based programs.** These programs show young poets **how to use poetry to address illiteracy and injustice.** The three-day **Get Lit Classic Slam, which was held on April 18-20, 2024 in Los Angeles, is the largest youth poetry competition in the nation.** [HERE.](#)

Get Lit-Words Ignite **supported Nigerian – American poet Salome Agbaroji, the U.S Youth Poet Laureate, as a high school student at Gahr High School in Cerritos, California.** She says that, “Get Lit is an amazing organization, giving you the space and opportunity to share your voice and to be creative and to be wild and to be heard.”

According to the article, **Get Lit “...spreads a love of literature through spoken word poetry and performance.”** The organization was founded by actor and author Diane Luby Lane in 2006 and recently received \$1 million from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott to reach students in over 150 Los Angeles schools. These students will write and perform their own poems.

According to founder Lane, **“Spoken word really helps with literacy. It really helps when you put your body on the line, when you’re not just listening passively, but you’re actually memorizing, you’re responding with your own words. It’s such an interactive experience.”**

**Poetry also helps students gain confidence and poise and empowers their voice.** According to founder Lane, writing and reading poetry even helped her daughter with dyslexia, because poetry parses words one at a time so students have time to consider each syllable instead of racing through a passage.

Source: Karen D'Souza, **“LA Arts education group fights falling literacy rates through poetry,”** Ed Source, April 15, 2024 [HERE.](#)



### **“Art Happens Here with John Lithgow” premieres on PBS on April 26, 2024**

Emmy and Tony award winning actor, producer, and humorist **John Lithgow** will be featured in a **PBS special which focuses on how the arts are making a difference in the lives of young people in community-based arts programs and classrooms across Los Angeles.** The special will be shown on PBS stations on April 26, 2024.

According to an interview in Backstage with Kerensa Cadenas, **“Art Happens Here with John Lithgow” follows Lithgow as he explores singing, dancing, printmaking and pottery with students in Los Angeles. According to Lithgow, “the teachers teach the students, and the students teach me.”**

In the interview Lithgow explains that his family moved around when he was growing up, but he knew that he wanted to be an artist in ninth and tenth grades **when he attended Simon Perkins Junior High School and Buchtel High School in Akron, Ohio and took two elective studio art classes. He was inspired by his two arts teachers, Helen Thomas and Fran Robinson, and attributes wanting to go to school each day because of the joy that he felt taking those classes.**

He learned to be an actor, along with his three siblings, by working in Shakespeare festivals, which his father produced and directed during summers.

Lithgow said in the interview that he learned as a performer from an early age that the arts are hard. “It’s a discipline.” **Artists are “incredibly disciplined and hardworking people. Overwhelming discipline and joy [those form] the superstructure of a good education for young kids.”**

**“Art Happens Here with John Lithgow” premieres Friday, April 26, 2024 on PBS. [HERE.](#)**

John Lithgow also co-chairs the American Academy of Arts and Sciences’ Commission on the Arts with Kennedy Center President Deborah Rutter and Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey. The commission focuses on **arts education and its impact on individuals and communities.** In 2021 it published **“Art for Life’s Sake: The Case for Arts Education.”** This is a **“go-to resource” for research on the social, academic, and economic benefits of an arts education;** policy issues in arts education; and advocacy for arts education. [HERE.](#)

*Source:* Cadenas, Kerensa, “John Lithgow on **the Importance of Arts Education,**” Backstage, April 11, 2024 [HERE.](#)

*Source:* PBS Publicity **“Art Happens Here with John Lithgow”** February 23, 2024 [HERE.](#)



## **The arts are mounting a come-back in Lorain City schools**

**After years of cutting arts education programs due to tight budgets, Lorain City Schools recently expanded its arts education offerings in all 14 of the district's schools and school leaders can already see the difference the arts are making.**

Tracy Carlross at News 5 Cleveland recently visited the district to find out first-hand the positive impact of arts education on student attendance, achievement, school environment, and more.

She spoke to several students and Ross May, assistant superintendent of Lorain City Schools, about expanding arts classes and its impact on the district. May said that three years ago the district began conducting research, speaking with other school districts, and interviewing families and students, and **learned that stakeholders wanted more student access to arts education.**

The school district expanded arts courses in music, visual arts and dance in each school, so that Lorain is the only school district in Ohio that offers dance at every school. **As a result enrollment has increased to the highest levels in seven years; school attendance has increased; and there are fewer discipline problems.**

Researchers at the Brookings Institute in 2019 worked with Rice University to analyze the causal effects of arts education experiences that happened in the Houston Independent School District when students had more access to quality arts education classes. **Researchers examined the correlation between arts programs and increased graduation rates, better attendance rates, and enrollment. May said that similar improvements are happening at Lorain City Schools.**

*Source:* Carlross, Tracy. **"Lorain City School District expands arts program and sees positive response,"** Cleveland ABC-5 [HERE](#).

*Source:* Bowen, Daniel H. and Kisida, Brian. **"Investigating Causal Effects of Arts Education Experiences: Experimental Evidence from Houston's Arts Access Initiative,"** Rice University's Kinder Institute for Urban Research and Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC) February 2019 [HERE](#).