

**ARTS EXPLORATORY COMMITTEE
KEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ARTS RECOMMENDATIONS
MAY, 2010**

Submitted by:

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Introduction

After several months of meetings and research, the Arts Exploratory Committee is pleased to submit the following recommendations to Principal David Landeryou. We are excited to build upon the creativity and arts engagement that already exists in Key's classrooms and in its arts program, and we believe that stepping up Key's involvement in the arts by means of the recommendations below will significantly enhance our children's school experience as well as that of the larger Key community.

Undergirding this set of recommendations is our belief that arts should be fun, that everyone is an artist, and that engaging a child's imagination through a creative process is more

important than perfection or mastery of an artistic pursuit. Developing basic technical skills in the arts is also important. We envision a community where children connect their experience in the arts to their classroom learning and to their everyday lives, and where teachers (not just arts teachers) are encouraged and supported in their creativity.

Our recommendations are born out of a collaborative process among teachers, parents, and administrators at Key and are endorsed by our Committee. They were also created in consultation with experts in the arts field, as well as with local, comparable schools. We consulted Fillmore's administration at several points in the process.

We see these recommendations not as an end to the exploratory process, but rather as the first step in creating an improved arts culture at Key.

Recommendations

I. IMPROVE THE FILLMORE EXPERIENCE FOR OUR CHILDREN

The committee recognizes that Fillmore Arts Center is a valuable arts resource for our children, and that it offers opportunities our children could not access on Key's campus or at most other schools in the area. At the same time, we take seriously concerns that were articulated by parents in the spring, 2009 LSRT Parent Survey.

The three major concerns the committee dealt with were quality of teaching, appropriateness of the music curriculum,

and communication between Fillmore and Key teachers and families. In particular, we want to see teachers who not only are technical experts in their fields, but who are enthusiastic, committed to children, have strong classroom management skills and are the right fit for the age group of our children. In music, we would like to see the younger children taking general music and singing, along with other developmentally appropriate programming. Finally, we looked at ways to forge stronger lines of communication between Key and Fillmore at all levels: between the administrations, between the teaching staffs, and between Key parents and Fillmore teachers/administration.

We'd like to note that during the course of our committee work, we've had periodical communication with, and support from, Fillmore's director, Katherine Latterner, and that she has already acted on some of our recommendations. The recommendations are non-binding, but it is our hope that all of them will eventually be implemented.

We recommend that:

- A. Key establish a Fillmore Committee.** It should be made up of: the Principal of Key, at least two parents and two Key School teachers.
- B. The Committee develop and conduct course surveys.** Surveys will be conducted at the end of each semester to allow parents and students to give feedback about each course to the Fillmore Director and the Principal of Key. The Fillmore Director and the Principal of Key will present the results to the Committee, including scores and highlights of the findings, and a report on how they are responding. (Their report will be anonymous in that courses and teachers that are discussed won't be named

for the Committee.) The Committee will then write a summary report to the PTA. The data should be compared and analyzed over time.

- C. Children be taught general music in the K-2 program, which would include group singing.**
- D. Chorus be offered for grades 3-5.** Chorus would be offered as one of several options for musical study as a follow-on to general music/singing in the lower grades.
- E. Performances be done on Key's stage instead of at Fillmore whenever possible.** Children perform periodically both during the day for fellow students and in the evening for families, and we'd like to see these performances happen at Key. The goal is to be able to share the children's performances with as many people as possible and to bring an arts culture on-site to Key.
- F. Fillmore course descriptions go home.** Fillmore should send to Key teachers and parents descriptions of each Fillmore class so that teachers/parents know what courses their children are taking and understand course goals as well as skills taught. The Committee will help with dissemination of this material when needed.
- G. The Committee Head collaborate closely with Fillmore's Director to support Fillmore's program.** To allow our collaboration with Fillmore to be more fruitful, the Committee Head should visit Fillmore often and schedule to meet with the Director at the beginning of the year.
- H. Key help Fillmore get the word out early and often about open houses, performances, and other events.**
- I. Key and Fillmore teachers connect their curricula.** Teachers from Key and Fillmore should meet (as they used to do) before the start of each year to share curriculum ideas and develop points of connection in the material. At that time, teachers should share contact

information to allow for ongoing dialogue throughout the year.

- J. Each child's artwork be displayed at Key.** The Committee should engage volunteers once a semester to bring artwork from Fillmore to display at Key so that each student in visual art has something on display (details about where to be worked out; currently some artwork is on display).
- K. Key engage the larger Fillmore Community.** The Committee Head should engage Fillmore's Director, other Fillmore schools in the Six-School Council and Friends of Fillmore to develop ways to support and enhance Fillmore on an ongoing basis.

II. ESTABLISH A KEY SCHOOL ARTS COMMITTEE

The Key Arts Committee will consist of parents, teachers and students. Its purpose is to bring an arts culture onto Key's campus and, ongoing, to nurture the arts at Key. The committee will implement and support several new arts initiatives at Key, including:

A. Professional Development: Find and develop professional development experiences in the arts for teachers, including the many Kennedy Center offerings.

Our exploratory committee spent time getting educated about arts integration, which means bringing the arts into the teaching of mainstream curriculum. We were inspired by the powerful, arts-integrated teaching of many of Key's classroom teachers. While this is not the

right time to suddenly re-focus Key's entire teaching staff on an arts integrated approach, it does seem like the right time to allow individual teachers ample opportunity to explore how the arts can bring fun and freshness to their teaching. We imagine that while just a few teachers might initially be interested, their positive experiences could generate more interest school-wide. There is funding available through the DCPS Catalyst Program for developing a school-wide program down the road, and Chancellor Rhee specifically suggested our pursuing that avenue if we find enough interest.

B. Support the chorus and musical program (see below) by observing its initial successes and failures and by helping Mr. Landeryou to trouble-shoot and make it successful. The committee should figure out how to evaluate the program's progress effectively and help with needed changes. The committee will also organize the production aspects of the spring musical in collaboration with the music teacher and possibly student council. This would include publicity, ticket sales, sets, costumes, and organizing volunteer support for the musical. It might include some fundraising activities.

C. Create and organize a Family Arts Program at Key (see below).

D. Support the new Assembly Program (see below), if needed, with volunteer help.

E. Develop a list of parents who can provide artistic support for the Holiday Sharing Program and other new assemblies, as well as for teachers in the classrooms.

F. Bring arts performances/workshops to Key with an eye to small-group interaction as well as larger acts, and possibly adding performances in the evenings for families.

G. Build and maintain an Arts page on Key's website where events are listed and updated, with links to resources for teachers and students.

H. Nurture arts opportunities in the ASEP program.

I. Develop new arts ideas ongoing.

III. ESTABLISH ARTS PROGRAMS AT KEY

The Committee wants to develop an arts culture on campus at Key. By "arts culture," we mean that we want kids -- and by extension teachers, parents, and other Key community members -- to have ample opportunity to create, perform, and experience art right in and around our school. We recommend that the school develop three programs: Two Key School Choruses and Spring Musical, an Assembly Program, and a Family Arts Program.

A. Key School Choruses and Spring Musical

Two after-school choruses will be developed for grades K-2 and 3-5. The choruses will perform at assemblies, during Key events such as annual picnics, graduation, etc. and out in the community. In the winter, the 3-5 chorus will begin rehearsing for a spring musical. The chorus teacher will be hired by Mr.

Landeryou with support from the committee and paid for with PTA funds.

B. Assembly Program

The Assembly Program will be run initially by Janis Linden, who will work, with support from other teachers, to develop a series of assemblies throughout the year, starting with a modest number and working towards a goal of monthly, short assemblies. The rationale behind this is to build community, to mark important times of year, to give the children a chance to perform, and to give children a forum for leading.

Some assemblies might have a theme, such as Veterans Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Martin Luther King, Earth Day, a particular book or author, a scientific idea, a great musician, etc.

Each class would have a chance (but not a requirement) to perform from time to time, and the choruses would perform and lead the school in the group singing of a national song, such as the National Anthem, and a Key School Song (yet to be chosen!).

The student council could have a part in leading the assemblies, visiting artists might come periodically, and assemblies would have a participatory component that requires no preparation (like communal singing or other activity).

C. Family Arts Program

The Family Arts Program will be run by the new Key School Arts Committee. The Committee will develop arts programs that take place mostly after school and that include families as well as students and teachers. Ideas might include but certainly are not limited to:

- community square dances

- parent-kid jam sessions
- a performance series on Key's campus for families
- Friday afternoon sing-alongs after school
- Arts experiences to supplement traditional Key events such as the back-to-school picnic, book fair, etc., like painting stations or open mikes or Key School chorus performances
- Music over the school PA system going in or out of school
- Any other arts experiences the committee might imagine and desire to implement

Supporting Recommendation

Buy a lockable art supply closet for the teachers, keeping it stocked with supplies for classroom art fun. A teacher would need to be assigned each year to order inventory and keep teachers informed of availability. Supply chest would be a one-time expense of the PTA; art supplies would be added to the PTA budget and paid for by the PTA.

Funding

The Arts Exploratory Committee has requested \$6,000 from the PTA's 2010-2011 budget to pay for a music teacher, expenses associated with performing, art supplies, art display boards, outside performing artists, building fees, and other miscellaneous expenses associated with the new programming. Professional development expenses for teachers are expected to come from the DCPS budget for professional development.

In Conclusion

We've developed a set of recommendations that relies heavily on the willingness of teachers, parents, and children to share their artistic and organizational gifts. We're truly excited to see

what might result when all our creativity is unleashed at Key.
Let's make it happen!