

First Film Festival

*Picasso once said this - he said that "All children are born artists. The problem is to remain an artist as we grow up." **Sir Ken Robinson** TED 2006 (Feb 2006) - How schools kill creativity*

What can we give our students to ignite them into a life of learning, curiosity, creativity, and connection to their world? How can we allow them to show us who they are as we reflect back to them who they can become?

First Film Festival is filmmaking and photography that celebrates how our Elementary School children see their world and who they are in it. It tells us, the audience, what matters to them and allows us to support their power in expressing themselves.

According to the Mission for Arts Education in SMMUSD, "equity, access, and excellence in arts education for every student in every school is the vision and the goal of the Visual and Performing Arts Department (VAPA)....We work to teach the whole child and prepare all of our students for fulfilling lives and jobs in the coming years."

Yet in SMMUSD, there is no Media Arts program in the Elementary Schools and their only Arts experience is a once a week class.

The ***First Film Festival*** is an opportunity for SMMUSD to close that gap, bringing elementary students, teachers and families into a community working together to explore the Art of Visual Storytelling.

First Film Festival is a Media Arts program teaching students through the making of a documentary, photography or a short narrative film not only the Common Core standards of Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Creativity, Communication, Close reading/seeing but also Social Emotional Learning objectives, primarily, Empathy and Teamwork. These underpinnings serve as the foundation of this as an Arts program that engages students on so many levels of learning while creating something that they truly "own." It is a platform for Equity, Inclusion and Connection within the school, their home and the larger community.

Expanding on the Media Arts and Common Core Standards, SEL objectives open the filmmaking/photography experience to the focus of the Festival's productions, Social Justice. Covering the standards of Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action, these standards will be explored through the photographs and films presented by the teacher and serve as models for the students' own films and/or photographs. It is taking their perspective on their world and using their voice to tell their stories of how they identify themselves, how they see others, what injustice they perceive and their own ideas about taking action. This will be expressed in not only the "visuals" they use but in their script writing, whom they choose to interview and why and their music choices.

With the current trend of social media enticing students of all ages to use visual images to connect them to others, media has never been more prominent, more valuable and more accessible to learning. Why not use what students enjoy outside the classroom to teach and expand within the classroom?

*"...What do I discover when I look at artworks? What do I think about when I think about art? I feel like the privilege I've had as a curator is not just the discovery of... exciting works. But, really...to talk about beauty, to talk about power, to talk about ourselves, and to talk and speak to each other." **Thelma Golden**, "How Art gives change to Cultural Change"*

The pilot program for **First Film Festival** will be at McKinley Elementary and ?. A series of 12 one hour workshops will be offered after school on Wednesdays, minimum days. These workshops will be designed to teach photography to the 1st -3rd grades and short documentaries or narrative films for the 4th and 5th graders. Using resources from Create/Ca, DIY.doc and Teaching Tolerance, this program will focus on Empathy as a way into understanding the connections students see in what they shoot as well as the technical aspects of creating a film with Social Justice as it's focus. Teaching Tolerance and PhotoVoice both provide a format for this process.

Parents at these schools who already have careers in Entertainment can serve as volunteers and/or guest speakers to inspire as well as instruct students. All parents will be invited to attend specific workshops where some of the "works in progress" can be viewed. Parents will also be invited to two workshops where Digital Literacy - how to tell truth from fiction in the media will be taught, again based on material from Teaching Tolerance.

Community partners, Film Independent and the International Documentary Association and others to come, will participate with teaching artists and technical assistance.

In May of 2020, **First Film Festival** will premiere its films and photographic exhibitions with an audience of parents and community partners to celebrate the work of our Elementary students.

Equipment/technical services

Using a camera or a cell phone as their voice, students who have difficulty with the standards of writing or reading, verbalizing on any level, have a window, an opening to show us who they are and what they know.

With the computer labs already equipped with Macs, students have access to iMovie editing software - a very user friendly editing program. Any additional equipment for shooting and editing can be requested from parents and our community partners.

First Film Festival

A Media Arts program is a timely and effective way to teach a whole host of Objectives and Standards. Through the art of visual storytelling, First Film Festival incorporates Common Core, Media Arts and Social Justice Standards along with Social Learning Objectives, providing Equity and Excellence in an enjoyable experience of Community and Support.

Students who never thought of themselves as artistic, whose verbal skills and ability to communicate in the classroom were limited, use the camera to find a way to dazzle us with their unique vision of the world. They allow “us” into who they are in a safe and compelling way...connecting with us by expressing what they cannot always say.

“You keep on doing this year after year because you have seen first-hand, the transformative power of the arts...Skills like problem solving and teamwork, self-expression. These skills aren’t just valuable in the studio or in the theater, but they are critical in the classroom and will be in the workplace”...Michelle Obama

