

Children Studio School
1301 V. Street NW. Washington DC. 20009
call (202) 387-6148 or 387-5880

September 20, 2005

Mr. David N. Franco
1612 U Street, NW, Suite 404
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Mr. Franco:

Thank you again for your dedicated contribution to Children's Studio School through Level 2 Development's plans for our community. I would like to describe briefly the nature of Children's Studio School and the some of the many *Artists and Communities* programs it offers.

Children's Studio School believes that the arts are essential to living and are capable of developing divergent ways of thinking and understanding. Children's Studio School is a community-based arts organization and full-day school of the arts for young children (3- 11 years old) of disparate abilities, learning styles, and economic (predominantly low) and cultural backgrounds and is committed to engaging highly developed artists—architects, writers, performing and visual artists—as the primary teachers responsible for the *entire* curriculum. Through the organization's Arts As Education© approach, children learn about the world around them through posing questions, solving problems, and engaging in the creative processes of working in the arts as the means to gaining knowledge of self, community and culture. Children and artists naturally draw upon each other's creativity and cultural histories, thus cultivating inspired, perceptive and caring children who are partners in their own education and who can grow into inventive, compassionate and proactive adults.

Children's Studio School provides children with and a deep and interactive educational environment where their own interpretations and ideas are incorporated into the processes of their l comprehensive education. Students develop literacy and mathematical skills within the context of architectural design, musical composition, choreography, and writing. Their imaginations are stimulated to envision the outcomes of their experiments. It is the Children's Studio School's mission to help develop multidimensional capabilities of

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EXHIBIT NO.15D

thinking, acting and understanding as well as to support the community, and to help children navigate the complex world in which they live through the school's Arts As Education© pedagogy.

> *We worked on low-density, medium-density and high-density. We talked about what sort of buildings we need to make community. Then, we did a proposal...we made small buildings that are going to make a big community. The way we did that, we multiplied 8x8=64 and then we divided it.* (Zola, age 5)

Children's Studio School collaborates with other arts and education organizations and institutions to bring exhibitions and performances by students and professionals to the community, and students and their families to other art institutions, thereby making the arts more accessible and relevant to the diverse DC population. The School invites families and members of the community into the studios for programs after school, on evenings, weekends and during the summer to support parents and caretakers by fostering the creation of viable solutions for complex problems. In addition to its full-day school of Arts As Education©, here are some Children's Studio School programs that that your contribution will help support:

Early Light and After 4 Studios are held September through June to meet the urgent need for before and after school programs. As they do during the "regular" school day, in these studios children are engaged in experiencing and manifesting their ideas through many art disciplines, guided by community artists. As they explore diverse art forms, the students find new ways of discovering the world and finding solutions to complex issues interwoven with their cultural traditions and those of the artist.

Children's Studio School's transcultural approach allows children to brainstorm, experiment, create and analyze their learning process through architecture, performance, dance, music, writing, and a wide variety of two and three dimensional visual arts. By way of the arts, children discover and reinforce their own cultural resources while promoting appreciation and respect towards their own communities and the world.

City As Studio is a summer program of research, investigation, design, creation and analysis of the life and history of the Washington DC area. For six weeks of full-day sessions, students aged three to eleven, work with architects, writers, visual and performing artists to

explore the world in which they live. Children function as urban planners, historians, anthropologists, composers and poets, and grapple with concepts of mathematics, physics and structure to create their own urban designs, reconstructions and performances.

The City as Studio program continues to operate at full capacity, drawing in children from all over the city. Since 1992, approximately 1,200 children and their families have participated in and benefited from this program.

Urban Arts Complex houses working ateliers for artists, writers and architects, a community gallery and performance space and workshop studios for artists, teachers, and families. It is an active, vibrant center of community arts, education and culture, day and night, including exhibits, performances, dialogues, presentations, "Studio Café" and:

Evening Studios are on-going community studios taught by a diverse group of community artists. Parents and their children are engaged in an artistic process that guides them to develop new forms for the expression of their ideas and dilemmas in one or more artistic disciplines. Working in the school's Arts as Education pedagogy, artist/teachers guide parents in exploring their own artistic processes and proclivities and learn how to become more involved in their children's education. They learn to identify new and effective approaches for interaction as a family. They are given tools to help them solve problems and make practical decisions for themselves as parents, providers, employees/students, and community members. Participants are also given an understanding, through direct participation, of the school's methodology and how they can become more involved and supportive of their children's education.

Weekend Studios are a six-week series of Saturday morning and afternoon session in which artists work with a team of children and older family members within an arts discipline to examine aesthetic, historical, and scientific issues. In these teams, cooperative learning is

emphasized with respect for all members' ideas, regardless of age. This environment allows children and adults to interact in an open-ended exchange, where pre-determined answers do not shape the outcome; rather, new possibilities are discovered. Since this requires more intense listening, it allows for a rich communication between adults and children.

Honoring and Transforming the Intimate Cultural Traditions of Washington Families, initiated in 1994, is a program that takes place over the course of four-month periods where three generational families work with an individually assigned artist to explore and discover sources of family identity and strength. With the guidance and support of their artist, families develop a concept into a project that expresses uniquely the tapestry of the family's history and identity. Families are able to create enduring forms of family history by drawing on moments of creative vision in all aspects of their lives, and how they can find solutions to the art of surviving as a family. Together, families create murals, poetry, plays, books, photomontages, quilts and music. The process of understanding family life in terms of the Arts as Education pedagogy strengthens and reveals family bonds, encourages families to value cultural expressions and support positive problem-solving in family life.

Epicenter Stories is a writing and mentoring program founded by Children's Studio School faculty member Dr. Carolivia Herron, started in November 2001, that links young and old creative writers with an adult writer/mentor. Authors and other volunteers from civic and community groups critique and encourage the students' writings by email and in-person to heighten their love of community, self-confidence, language and increase their computer literacy skills.

Internships at the Children's Studio School provide both young and mature artists, students and parents with an introduction to its Arts As Education© approach to teaching. The organization's primary commitment is to applicants from Washington DC, but interns have come from a plethora of cultures and communities throughout the world. Interns actively assist artists and children in studios by working directly with students, helping document their work and process, and

participating in professional development workshops. Interns work closely with artist/teachers to develop their own teaching capabilities, shape their expectations for challenging careers, and form the foundation for deepening their understanding of their role as part of a professional and effective team.

Thank you again for your anticipated support and on-going collaboration.

Sincerely,

Marcia McDonell
President

attached: 7 photos