

LOCAL NEWS

City editor Connie Rux (510) 293-2420

www.newschoice.com

FRIDAY February 12, 1999

School becomes capitalist hub for education's sake

By Nancy Fong
STAFF WRITER

SAN LEANDRO — As students rushed Rice Krispies, ice cream sundaes, bracelets, frames and toy tops to market Thursday morning, others fingered their microdollars, wondering what to buy.

The activity was part of the Microsociety program at James Monroe Elementary School, and an opportunity for students there to learn the basics of personal budgeting and the economics of supply and demand.

It was the school's first marketplace where upper-class students — those in third, fourth and fifth grades — made, sold and purchased goods, and their younger classmates were allowed to shop.

Principal Rick Rubino said the program, which began in October, is intended to teach concepts of money, economics and the marketplace.

Not only that, the program eventually will have its own bank, post office, government, courts and publishing house.

The mini-institutions, based on a cap-

italism model, will be run by the students. All students receive an income for coming to school and getting to classes on time.

According to Rubino, students earn \$100 per week and are allowed 10 sick days per school year. If they are sick more than that, they are docked \$20 for each absence.

With their money, students are expected to pay \$300 rent for use of their desks and eventually will pay taxes.

At the 45-minute marketplace Thursday, some products sold briskly

and others had to be discounted to attract buyers.

Fourth-grader Lawrence Laurente realized that perhaps he had underpriced his movie pins, which sold out quickly. At \$40, the pins were a steal considering that a bowl of ice cream was \$80 and any additional toppings were \$10 each. Rice Krispie treats sold briskly for \$100.

But because each student had at least \$1,800, the prices were affordable and fair, said teacher Karen Kretzler. Her

Please see **School**, LOCAL-2

School: Misbehaving kids can be hauled into 'court'

Continued from LOCAL-1

fifth-grade class sold leather bracelets with beads for \$100 and lanyards for \$150.

Selling the handmade bracelets was Corbin Tangney, 11, whose face appeared on the \$100 microdollar by popular vote. With his money, he had purchased an ice-cream sundae. The rest of his money he planned to save and pay rent.

The idea for Microsociety grew out of a Brooklyn classroom in the late 1960s and seems to have caught fire in the 1990s.

Madison School adopted the program after a countywide training. Rubino believes it engages students and teaches them about real life.

For example, students who misbehave may be issued an in-

fraction ticket or hauled into court. "This allows us to raise (children's) consciousness about their behavior and its impact on society," he said.

"I think it's good," said parent Jim Trickel of the program as he stood in the ice cream line with daughter and kindergartener Allison.

The program has opened up family discussions about money and how it can't buy some things, such as friendship.

In addition, his wife, Kathy, and their son Nicholas, a third-grader at Monroe, had talked about market concepts and all the people who were involved in bringing their Wednesday night dinner of pork chops, to the family's table, from the farmer and slaughterhouse to the butcher.