

Students to create 'city inside a school'

By Marc Albert

Students at a reborn Franklin School won't just study civics textbooks, they will live out the drama, successes and failures of civilization by creating a city within a school.

Students will start companies, write a constitution, and form government, social and cultural associations within the K-5 school. Students will pay for services with the school's own currency.

"We want to provide a real-world experience," said New York educator George Richmond, who has successfully pitched the program to 238 U.S. schools.

Richmond said he has been refining the "micro-society" idea since dreaming it up in an unruly Brooklyn classroom 30 years ago.

"You don't have to convince students to pay attention," he said. "If you are learning decimals, and the students are also arguing about (school) tax rates, it brings the lesson to another level."

Richmond said the program has improved student performance in math, English and reading.

Increasing enrollment, a three-year, \$3 million federal grant for Franklin and the city's existing magnet schools and interest in 'micro-societies' have spawned the BUSD's latest experiment.

The new "City of Franklin" will have

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232 residents this September when Franklin, now housing Cragmont and Thousand Oaks schools, gets its own campus back.

Franklin closed in 1982, and recently has been the home away from home for the two other elementary schools currently under reconstruction.

According to BUSD spokeswoman Karen Sarlo, parental interest has been strong.

Sarlo said 55 of the 60 slots in the new kindergarten class have already been filled. The school is open to all Berkeley children.

Students will spend an hour a day at various "jobs" as part of the cur-

riculum.

Students will get to apply their knowledge of math by 'working' as bank tellers and keeping transaction records.

Others will start a school newspaper and eke out a "living" as reporters. Students also sit on an elective city council, or serve on courts to help adjudicate disputes.

Carolyn King, a partner in Richmond's enterprise, said using currency in the classroom merely echoes the real world and should not be a concern for parents.

The school will also have plenty of room for volunteers. Sarlo said Berkeleyans will be invited to help teach their City of Franklin counterparts the rudiments of doing their jobs.

Richmond said the program helps children establish career interests,

teaches thrift and gives children a chance to immediately apply knowledge in a tangible way.

"It's a society building process," said King. "We hope these children will develop answers to societal questions that we don't have answers for." One school set up a constitutional monarchy, while the rest have opted for democratic models.

"This program is going to instill in children that they make the difference in their own lives," said BUSD Superintendent Jack McLaughlin.

The City of Franklin will become Berkeley's political science magnet school.

"Berkeley has its own society. I expect collaboration from co-ops and garden projects," McLaughlin said. "We expect to see a whole new form of micro-society develop."