The School at Columbia University’s Opening Day Opens a New World to Children

A New Learning Experience...

At left, a welcoming entrance greets the new students.

Top right, the school boasts a teacher/student ratio of one to eight.

Center right, Gardner Dunnan, head of The School at Columbia University, greets parents on the opening day of classes.

Below left, a 4th grade class explores the boundaries of using clay in an imaginary exercise where the “clay” is passed around the circle and each student and teacher molds the clay using their minds and bodies.

Below right, students enjoy the rooftop playground.

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“The School at Columbia University’s integrated curriculum makes compelling questions and themes the center of the students’ learning. Skills and academic competencies, such as literacy, numeracy and wellness are integrated into their educational experiences, rather than presented as separate disciplines without relevance to one another,” said Luyen Chou, associate head of The School at Columbia University and executive director for the Center for Integrated Learning and Teaching. “At the same time, The School’s innovative curriculum database tool helps to keep the curriculum accountable to benchmark objectives and standards. We believe The School’s unique approach to curriculum will help us to educate the whole child in a world of complex interconnectedness, while maintaining a high standard of academic excellence.”

To help realize its vision, The School at Columbia University engaged in an unusual and wide recruitment effort to bring on board well-qualified, motivated, knowledgeable and creative faculty and staff. To ensure that the educators had a diverse background and the necessary technological and pedagogical skills, all applications were submitted through an online recruitment tool.

The neighborhood children enrolled in the inaugural class were chosen by lottery. At the beginning of October, The School at Columbia University will host presentations to encourage community families to participate in the lottery for next year’s classes. For more information about the times and locations of these meetings, visit the school’s Website, listed below.

Teachers utilize a variety of University resources, including Barnard College, Teachers College’s Institute for Learning Technologies and the Center for New Media Technology and Learning (CNMTL) and associated institutions and organizations. At the hub of activity is The Center for Integrated Learning and Teaching (CILT). CILT provides teachers and educators with a dynamic, supportive environment rich with opportunities to theorize, develop, implement and disseminate integrated curricula and allied pedagogies for use in K-8 schools.

Educational technologies, new media, and digital communications in learning are included in lessons to help bring a global perspective into the classroom.

The School at Columbia University places a big emphasis on meeting the nutritional needs of its students. To this effect, among other responsibilities, parents are required to pack lunches for their children. There also is a café at the school offering free nutritious snacks, serving as a gathering spot for parents, teachers and students throughout the day.

Co-curricular programming will be available to all students and after-school programs will be open to the wider community.

The School at Columbia University plans to add 5th and 6th grades in 2004, 7th grade in 2005, and 8th grade in 2006, when full enrollment will be 650 students.

“The School at Columbia University has already proven to be a powerful strategy for the recruitment and retention of top academics. In addition, we will serve as a research and development laboratory focusing on the production of curricular materials and new forms of teaching methodologies aimed at improving public and private schools throughout the country. This may be the greatest pre-collegiate educational initiative by any major university in the country,” said Gardner Dunnan, head of The School at Columbia University and Assistant Provost for Special Projects.

For more information about The School at Columbia University, visit: www.theschool.columbia.edu