



Flint Journal files • Lisa DeJong

▲ Dave Kimber, a teacher at Neithercut Elementary School in Flint, hopes to take his CD, "Under the Red, White and Blue," national. He and his brother, Dan, wrote the songs about core democratic values.

Teachers' catchy CD taking off

By Melissa Burden

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FLINT — Students in classrooms from California to Texas soon could be singing a Flint's teacher's tunes.

Dave Kimber, a sixth-grade social studies and language arts teacher at Neithercut Elementary School, said he hopes to begin taking "Under the Red, White and Blue" national within weeks.

Kimber launched the music CD that teaches civics lessons that in 2004 with his brother, Dan, a high school social studies teacher in California.

The CD features Dan Kimber's lyrics about such core democratic values as "Liberty" and "Diversity." Dave Kimber contributes the vocals.

"I am free, and that's a fact. Free to think and free to act" are among the lyrics in "Liberty."

Before becoming a teacher, Dave Kimber was a Hollywood recording artist who co-wrote the "Give a Hoot, Don't Pollute" theme made famous by Woodsy the Owl.

He's used music and the CD in his classroom in recent years, and his students have excelled on social studies portion of Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests.

For fall 2005, Neithercut had the highest score among Flint's elementary schools with 88 percent of students meeting or exceeding state standards. The state average was 78 percent.

While some Flint teachers have bought "Under the Red, White and Blue," it's not used districtwide.

A conflict of interest policy prohibits the district from buying the CDs because Kimber is a district employee who could financially benefit from the sale.



Music lessons

- **WHAT:** "Under the Red, White and Blue," a CD of original songs of core democratic values. Nominated for a Grammy for Best Children's Album in 2004.
- **WHO:** Developed by Flint elementary teacher Dave Kimber and his brother, Dan, a teacher in California.
- **COST:** \$24.95 for the CD; additional costs for lesson plans.
- **BUY IT:** www.musicthatteaches.com.

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Kimber said he plans to talk to School Superintendent Walter Milton Jr. about the policy.

"To me, it's a sin that I've done something really fantastic for kids, and I can't even share it with my own district," he said.

Some 450 Michigan schools, including such charter schools as Woodland Park Academy in Grand Blanc Township, use the CD, said Kimber, who recently received the Elementary Social Studies Educator of the Year award in Michigan.

The brothers, who spent \$30,000 to make the CD, hope to increase the number of Michigan schools using it by fall and will send the CD to districts and schools in Illinois, California, Minnesota and Texas. If successful, the CD would be marketed to four more states and so on, Dave Kimber said.

"I'm not trying to get rich on this. ... I'm just trying to get my money back so I can do another CD," he said.

"Famous People and Famous Events in American History" already is in the works. One song is nearly finished, and Dave Kimber plans to collaborate on another with two Detroit rappers.

"We're going to write a civil rights rap," said Kimber, who is up for two national educator awards.

Melinda Dickinson, a fifth-grade teacher and social studies coordinator in the Lansing School District, which uses "Under the Red, White and Blue," said she would encourage other districts to try it.

"I have found that often kids learn in different ways," she said. "Many kids can really be taught through music. If they can learn the words from 350 million rap songs, then they ought to be able to learn the words to these."