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Bay Area students join transcontinental domino event

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Bay Area students could make history next month if an international effort to topple the longest domino chain proves successful.

In a coordinated effort with Chinese schools in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing, campuses in the Fremont, New Haven, Newark and Hayward school districts, as well as the Fremont Union High School District in the South Bay, have signed on as venues for a segment of the domino chain.

"This event symbolizes a way for students and educators to start working on a common goal ... to develop a way for the two countries to communicate with each other, learn from each other, to break down stereotypes and cultural perceptions," said Benjamin Yee, co-founder and chief operating officer of NexusBridge, a Web portal launched in November to connect students and educators in the United States to their counterparts in China.

The event will kick off at 6 p.m. Feb. 9 in Fremont, where the first of approximately 5.6 million dominoes is scheduled to fall.

For security reasons, Yee would not disclose the exact location of the dominoes but said that they will be set up on a school campus. The invitation-

only event will be televised live through Web streaming.

As the last domino falls in one district, a computerized trigger will send a signal to a laptop set up at the next district. The laptop's disk drive will pop out, hitting the first chip there, which will send the rest of the dominoes cascading until the last chip falls, and the cycle repeats.

From Fremont, the chain will move to Newark, then Union City, then on to Sunnyvale and Hayward before making its way to China.

The last domino will fall in Beijing, home of the 2008 Olympic Games, about 30 to 45 minutes after the first chip topples in Fremont, Yee said.

The event is taking place the first weekend of February as a way for participants to celebrate the Chinese New Year while also building momentum for the Summer Olympics, organizers said.

NexusBridge staged its first international event in November when students from Mission San Jose High School in Fremont formed a human domino in the shape of the Olympic rings, an activity that mirrored a similar event in China.

With that event under their belt, NexusBridge founders have moved on to a more ambitious project.

If successful, next month's domino event would set a world record, organizers said. Last year, domino gurus in China made history by toppling nearly 5 million dominoes, Yee said. Those same experts are helping to coordinate this year's record-breaking attempt.

In preparation for next month, students from each school district have been learning the art of domino

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set-up. Ultimately, at least 300 Bay Area high school students will have helped design and set up their district's domino pattern, Yee said.

Ivy Wu, president of the Fremont school board, lauded the efforts of NexusBridge, which hopes to expand its presence beyond the United States and China and to connect students to each other worldwide someday.

"A lot of times, our students are into their own schools, their own campuses. They don't even know (about things) outside their own school. It's good for them to see the bigger picture," Wu said.

"NexusBridge will be a good way to connect with people, not just in China, but with other cities, other schools."

For more information about the domino event, visit www.nexusbridge.com.

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