

VALLEY & STATE

SUNDAY, JULY 20, 2008

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC NEWS.AZCENTRAL.COM

SECTION B

Director back in Valley to film kids movie

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THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

While a film student at Yale University, director Scott Kirschenbaum began writing a screenplay.

PARADISE VALLEY

to tell the story of a young Sudanese refugee's experience in trying to find her place among her new world.

It would be told on the playground.

No adults.

Only local children.

A children's film with a political message.

This week, Kirschenbaum began filming, *Elementary Cool*, at Cherokee Elementary School, 8801 N. 56th St., in Paradise Valley.

Filming at Cherokee and in Arizona was a logical choice for Kirschenbaum, who splits his time between New York City and San Francisco.

Kirschenbaum attended Cherokee, Cocopah Middle School and graduated from Chaparral High School — all in the Scottsdale Unified School District.

"Basing the movie in Phoenix grew organically," Kirschenbaum said.

"This is an ideal place for this

The Phoenix native wanted



MICHAEL SCHENNUM/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Director Scott Kirschenbaum talks with actor Scott Slepian while filming *Elementary Cool* at Cherokee Elementary in Paradise Valley.

type of movie. The issues that a young adolescent refugee girl faces are never addressed in the mainstream."

The short film, which the director calls "a comedic children's movie with a political conscience," will be shopped around in 2009 to all the major film festivals.

If someone shows interest, then it can potentially be expanded to a full-length feature.

Elementary Cool producer and friend Stosh Mintek said that although the goal of a short is to make it into a feature

length film, he expects this film will be something no one has ever seen. "He truly is an original talent," Mintek said, describing his friend.

Local Sudanese girl Adhieu Cithec plays the central character. Kirschenbaum met members of the St. Paul the Apostle Sudanese Mission in Phoenix and spoke in front of the Sudanese community.

Cithec herself is a South Sudanese refugee. She came to the United States as an infant.

Scott Slepian, 9, plays another of the main characters.