

The Hour

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我喜欢说普通话

Translation: I like to speak Mandarin
— <https://translate.google.com/>



Hour photo/Alex von Kleydorff

Kiran Rao, in his second-grade classroom at the Wilton Montessori School, helped put a Mandarin language program in place for students.

Second-grader's idea to conduct Mandarin class comes to fruition

By KOREY WILSON
HOUR STAFF WRITER

WILTON — Thanks to the determination of a Montessori School second-grader, the school is currently testing the waters with the Mandarin language.

The Montessori School recently launched a pilot program for a class in Mandarin for students in grades 1 to 6.

Kiran Rao, a second-grader, recently proposed the idea to school leaders by demonstrating that some of his schoolmates had an interest in the

Chinese native tongue.

"When I took Spanish in first grade, I didn't really like it. It wasn't interesting for me but I took Mandarin before and I really liked it, so I wondered if I could get Mandarin in the school," said Kiran,

Kiran was first introduced to the language at a summer camp at Happy Panda Mandarin School two years ago.

"I think it's easier to learn because some of the symbols kind of look like what they mean so it was easier to remember for me and I think it's a really fun language," he said.

The class will be given one day a week at Montessori School's Wilton location. The first class of the pilot program was held on Friday, March 6.

"Traditionally, children in elementary can choose between Spanish and French. At our middle school, we've had Mandarin in the past," said Ruth Hurwitz, communications director at the Montessori School.

"Now that there's an interest for Mandarin here, we can see if it's going to be a part of the curriculum going

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Student promotes Mandarin

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forward."

To gauge the interest of students, Kiran took a survey of students in grades 1 to 6. The survey resulted in 27 students interested in the class and another 10 students that said maybe.

Survey taking is a pretty common practice among students in Montessori's lower elementary grades, according to Heather MacCabe, primary directress at Montessori School.

"Children gather information based on their interests. It's a mathematics lessons in the very youngest stages so they can learn how to make bar graphs and pie graphs,"

said MacCabe.

Kiran presented the idea to Sarah Walker, head of school at Montessori School.

"I was a little nervous that she wouldn't do it but it turned out that it wasn't so bad. She said yes to this idea," said Kiran.

"As the Head of School, it is vital to me to support our students and staff as we continue on the path as learners," said Walker. "I am grateful to our staff for helping bring this Mandarin pilot initiative to fruition."

She adds, "I am grateful to Kiran for his interest, initiative, presentation to me, and for his poise and patience. I am delighted

we are piloting this program."

The Mandarin pilot program is collaboration between Montessori School and Happy Panda Mandarin School. A teacher from Happy Panda will come to Montessori School to teach the course each week.

"We're excited that we created this alliance," said Hurwitz. "Happy Panda taught at our after school program a few years ago and it seemed like a great collaboration so we're happy to have them back."

Kiran added, "I was really proud of myself and I'm so happy that this happened. It's a great experience."