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School offers Chinese class

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St. Paul School is now offering Mandarin Chinese as an after school program for students.

Parents, teachers, Principal Mary Miller, and Monsignor Patrick Halfpenny wanted to add Mandarin Chinese classes.

Diane Romanelli, a parent and member of the group Families with Children from China, helped search for groups that would teach after school.

After looking at programs, the school obtained references and proposals. The choice was Fun with Panda.

"The group was very responsive and they teach at Bloomfield Hills Schools, including high schools, Kumon centers and more," Romanelli said. "Miller, Halfpenny and the team researching this thought they were a good fit for us.

"The teacher, Diane Hopkins, was a preschool teacher specializing in young kids in Bloomfield Hills and Birmingham learning centers. In addition to the native Chinese speakers, this group was really good with the language and most importantly, able to impart this language skill."

The school now has three classes split up into kindergarten to second graders,



St. Paul students from left, Matthew McMahon (standing) and Dennis Burmeister (sitting) listen to Mandarin Chinese teacher Diane Hopkins during a recent class.

third graders to fourth graders and fifth graders and up. Lesson style, school officials said, is age appropriate.

The younger students are learning in a variety of ways, including singing songs and making items, such as a panda puppet.

The older students are learning in a more classroom like setting with instructors teaching tones and introducing characters.

Chinese is one of the six official languages of the United Nations. More than one billion people worldwide speak Chinese, making it an important language to learn in the 21st century for economic, cultural and political reasons, school officials said.

Mandarin Chinese is the official language of China.