



For Immediate Release

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## **Bullis Charter School Launches Foreign Language Program**

### **School Introduces Mandarin**

**Los Altos, California, October 24, 2007:** Children at Bullis Charter School (BCS) are learning Mandarin as part of their required curriculum. This foreign language program is the first of its kind in a Los Altos public school. The program was rolled out to Kindergarten and first grade classes this year.

While BCS has been offering languages such as Spanish, French, Italian, German, and Hebrew as electives since the school opened in 2004, this introduction of a formal foreign language program fulfills the part of the school mission that emphasizes using a global perspective to teach about the interconnectedness of communities. Mandarin will be integrated throughout other specialty areas including art, music and P.E. “With full-time, credentialed specialists teaching these subjects, our students will be exposed to Chinese culture in a variety of ways”, stated Wanny Hersey, Principal/Superintendent of BCS.

“This is not an “immersion” program, where students spend 50% or more of their day learning core subjects such as math, social studies, and science in the target language,” explains Merry Kuo, Foreign Language Specialist. “The goal of our foreign language program is to encourage open-mindedness, respect for other cultures, and to set the foundation for learning new languages.” The children have already learned simple greetings and songs, can recognize characters representing their teachers’ names and members of their families, and are learning to distinguish the difference in a sound’s meaning based on its tone. They recently performed a counting song at a school assembly and have recorded themselves speaking Mandarin on the school’s website at <http://web.mac.com/merrykuo/>.

Why Mandarin? The staff and board of directors of Bullis Charter School have described several reasons for introducing Mandarin. Logographical languages such as Mandarin and Japanese have been shown to stimulate activity in both the right and left sides of the brain, which may increase appreciation of visual arts while also improving language skills. People who speak languages that rely on pitch and tone for meaning are also more likely to have “absolute pitch”, which can help with musical training. In addition, the number of Mandarin speakers is roughly triple the number of English or Spanish speakers worldwide and an exposure to Chinese culture reinforces the goals of the school related to global citizenship.

Current students can access the school’s Foreign Language website and a third-party “Better Chinese” site at home, to supplement and reinforce classroom lessons. “Mandarin is fun! I like teaching my mom and dad words I learned from Guo laoshi (Teacher Kuo) that day,” said first grade student Sophia Jackson. Students will continue taking Mandarin through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, at which time Spanish will be introduced. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, they can choose to continue in Mandarin or Spanish.

More information about the Bullis Charter School

Bullis Charter School (BCS) is a K-6 elementary school located in Los Altos, California. BCS offers a collaborative, experiential learning environment that emphasizes individual student achievement and inspires children, faculty and staff to reach beyond themselves to achieve their full potential.

Using a global perspective to teach about the interconnectedness of communities and their environments, the BCS program nurtures mutual respect, civic responsibility and a lifelong love of learning. The school aims to provide programs that develop the whole child and that expose students to many academic and artistic disciplines. The school's introduction of a formal foreign language program is a reflection of this commitment.

The Bullis Charter School Open Enrollment period for the 2008-2009 school year runs from November 5, 2007 through January 25, 2008.

Parent Information Nights are scheduled for:

- Wednesday, November 14, 2007 7:00pm at Egan Junior High Multi-Purpose Room at 100 West Portola, Los Altos
- Tuesday, December 4, 2007 7:00pm at Bullis Charter School at 102 West Portola, Los Altos
- \* Tuesday, January 15, 2007 7:00pm at Bullis Charter School at 102 West Portola, Los Altos

Registration forms and information are available on the school website.

<http://www.bullischarterschool.com/registration.asp>

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