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White Bear Lake Area Schools adds Chinese language options

WHITE BEAR LAKE, Minn. – White Bear Lake Area Schools students will have the option of enrolling in a Chinese class for the 2012-13 academic year. White Bear Lake Area Schools Board members unanimously approved this week the addition of Chinese (Mandarin) language as a secondary course offering.

“I am very excited about the expansion of our already-strong world language program,” said Lori Swanson, White Bear Lake Area School Board chair. “We learned through our Strategic Planning process that our community values and supports global experiences for our students. These additional opportunities will help ensure our students possess a global understanding and competitiveness when they graduate from our programs.”

Beginning in 2012-13, incoming Central and Sunrise Park Middle School sixth graders may choose from French, German, Spanish and Chinese. Additional Chinese courses will be phased in on an annual basis, with the option expanding to grades six and seven in 2013-14 and to grades six, seven and eight in 2014-15.

At the high school, Chinese I will be offered as a high school course option for grades nine through 12 for the 2012-13 academic year. Administration will develop a plan that will allow the District to expand the program to offer courses from Chinese II through the College in the Schools (CIS) level in future years. CIS courses through the University of Minnesota currently are available in the high school’s French, German and Spanish tracks. A third level of ASL recently was added to the high school course offerings beginning next year.

“Learning a language is about so much more than simply learning foreign words,” said School Board member George Kimball. “Language is used as a vehicle to learn another culture, which helps us better understand the world. It will be a great addition for our district and our students.”

The world language addition complements the District’s strong middle and high school world language departments. American Sign Language (ASL), French, German and Spanish languages have been available to White Bear Lake Area High School students for many years. District sixth, seventh and eighth graders have been able to choose between French, German and Spanish since the new middle school schedule was adopted in 2008.

The District’s partnership with Hanzhou Foreign Languages School in Hanzhou, China, also increases White Bear Lake Area students’ international understanding. Visiting Chinese teachers serve residencies in our elementary schools and are available as resources at the middle school and high school levels. The District’s current exchange teacher, Anna Sun, is the District’s third visiting teacher from Hanzhou.

Additionally, District fourth graders are participating this in Concordia Language Village immersion and field trip experiences. These opportunities are made available through the District’s partnership with the East Metro Integration District (EMID).

The District currently is conducting a review of the elementary world language program. It is expected that later this academic year the review committee, comprised of parents, staff members and administration, will present the School Board with a proposed plan for a district-wide elementary world language program.

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