

Mandarin programs grow in B.C. schools

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Read more: <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2010/09/07/bc-mandarin-school-programs.html#ixzz12DM5wtvs>

B.C.'s first Mandarin language programs for kindergarten and Grade 1 students are being launched in Coquitlam and Burnaby, adding to the range of programs offered in the Vancouver area.

Walton Elementary School in the Coquitlam School District launched its program Tuesday and will offer it to 44 kindergarten and 39 Grade 1 students. But unlike French immersion programs, the bilingual program will offer instruction split evenly between Mandarin and English.

The Burnaby School District is also offering a Mandarin program for kindergarten and Grade 1 students at Forest Grove Elementary School for the first time this year. It will include 150 minutes of Mandarin language instruction per week.

The Vancouver School Board already offers a Mandarin language program for Grade 4 and Grade 7 students at Jamieson Elementary School and is planning a K-1 Mandarin program for the fall of 2011. Many districts also offer Mandarin courses at the high school level.

Raquel Barria said she was considering enrolling her son, Joshua, in the French immersion kindergarten program in Burnaby, but decided Mandarin would be a better language for him to learn.

"Even the people who speak French, they speak English. But for people around here like our neighbours, a lot of them are from China. So we have good friends who are from China, and they don't really speak English well, and they speak Mandarin," she said.

Barria's ancestry is Chinese-Filipino, and she's proud of all parts of her heritage. She wants Joshua to feel the same.

"For him, if people will ask him, 'You look Chinese — but you're Canadian?' I guess his answer will be, 'I'm a Canadian-born Chinese,'" she said.

B.C.'s Education Ministry has said it's up to local school boards to introduce Mandarin courses.

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