

Mandarin magnet program shows its New Year stuff

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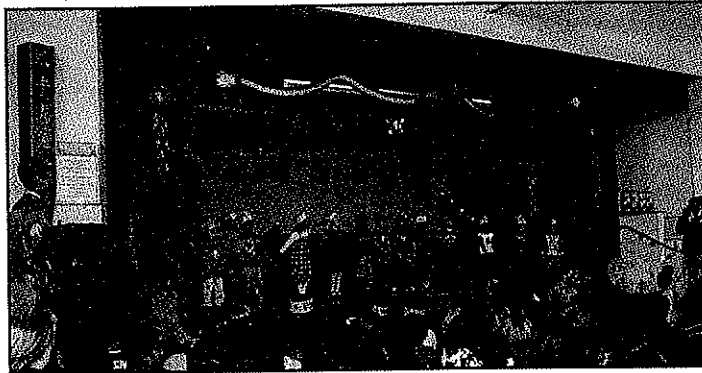
"Ni Hao!" the students yelled to their principal, Edward Park, as they celebrated Chinese New Year at the Barnard Mandarin Chinese Magnet School.

The students, some dressed in traditional Chinese garb, are of diverse ethnicities with each one singing and speaking perfect Mandarin.

The event showed the students' learning and understanding of the Chinese culture. It also featured community acts like the Golden Dragon Chinese Kung Fu and Hong Wu Kung Fu & Tai Chi Academy. Also present was Panda Express, which catered food and donated \$500 to the school.

The Mandarin Chinese Magnet program teaches academic subjects in English and Mandarin Chinese culture, language and literature through art, music, dance and drama.

For four days of the week, students are taught Chinese culture and language for 45 minutes. Chinese is also integrated into each subject. For example, the subject math and science can also include a lesson on Chinese



Principal Edward Park watches from left as his students perform during the school's celebration of the Lunar New Year.

use of the abacus and gun powder for fireworks.

Barnard is part of the Magnet program and is funded by the federal government, which also provides transportation and free before- and after-school programs. They also accept students from outside the district.

The classes are from kindergarten to fourth grade; however, Park has announced the school will now teach at an additional level of fifth grade.

The program is the only one in San Diego with 190 students enrolled. Although

the school is about 60 years old, the Mandarin Chinese program started two years ago.

"I'm promoting what's out here and the free public education" said Park, "I think it's a hidden gem."

Before becoming principal at Barnard, Park worked at an administrator in West Los Angeles helping to promote Korean language in his district. Now as a principal at Barnard, he now focuses his energy on promoting Mandarin Chinese.

Mandarin Chinese is the most widely

spoken language in the world, and China is becoming the second largest economy after the U.S. "I want to get these kids ready" said Park.

According to Park, one of the many goals for the school is to make sure students are ready for the 21st century with integrated Mandarin language and culture and rigorous academic programs.

He wants to close the achievement gaps through their programs and have that language learning continue through middle school, high school and finally enrollment in advance Chinese classes in college. This can make that student a marketable person after graduation.

"If I had that kind of opportunity I could have been a CEO!" said Park.

Park wishes for the school to be sustainable and hopes the district, politicians and community see that it is an important program to invest in for the students.

"We don't want a monolingual society with a stagnant stage of the achievement gap. We want alternate ways to teach these kids; to interest and excite the kids.

"Our school could be their launch pad."