

Instructor Cecile Toulme asks questions in French during an after-school advanced French class at Cherry Chase Elementary School in Sunnyvale. The program was started by parent-volunteer Aude Phay, a French native via Vietnam and France who wanted her two daughters, Jade and Lila, to be able to practice the language at school.

Speak Easy

Instructor Taruna Bala leads her students through a lesson during an after-school Hindi language class at Faria Elementary School. Bala has been teaching these classes, which rotate between Faria, Lincoln and Worth Elementary schools, for the past five years.

Language

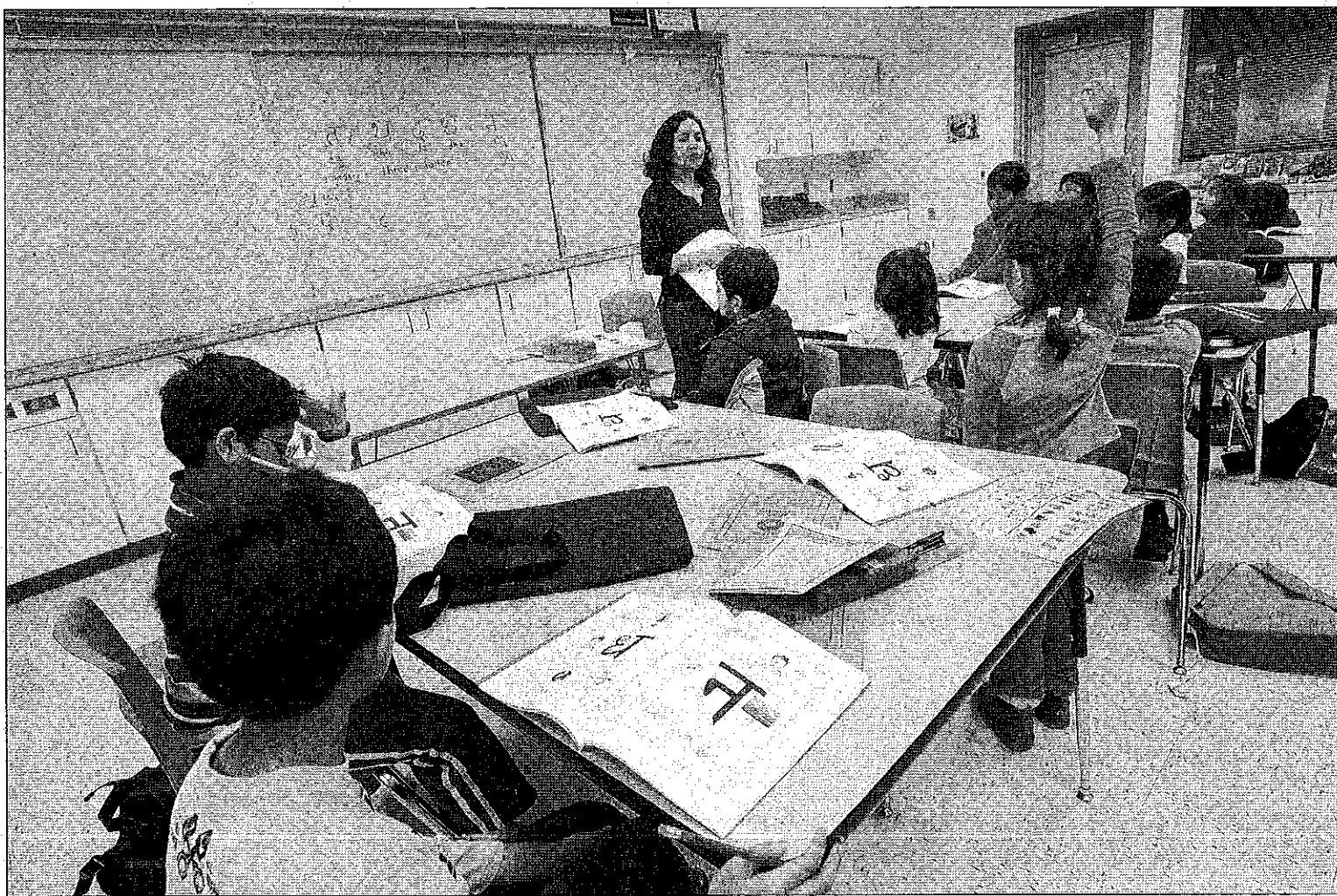
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In the Bay Area, the first French after-school class in the district was created in the spring of 2009, the program has grown to more than 100 students. That same year, Cumberland Elementary School developed Mandarin and Spanish after-school classes, teaching roughly 200 students to date.

"Exposure to language and culture should make a lot of sense for when raising kids these days who are going to be working, hopefully, with people in other cultures and other countries," Cumberland parent and Mandarin class organizer Nina Singh-Dobkin said. "This experience of exposure is something to start with so they have a positive experience when they need to pick up a language more seriously later. They wouldn't feel like they couldn't do it; it's not high stress. It becomes positive."

Out of the eight elementary schools in the Sunnyvale School District, only Cherry Chase and Cumberland have developed after-school foreign language programs fully funded by parents. Students meet on a weekly basis, playing games in each language and learning the basics from numbers and letters to colors and basic phrases.

"I think it's great that the parents have stepped up to make sure these programs are offered to kids," said Lier Fong, principal of Cumberland Elementary. "It's just really special that this community has put the emphasis and the education of the whole child on the front burner, so we can speak. In the 18 years that I have been in education, I have not seen foreign language classes take place during an instructional day at the elementary



entities.

Without the resources to offer foreign language courses to elementary students in previous years, the Sunnyvale School District has traditionally passed on the opportunity. But with parents taking the initiative, school campuses have offered whatever support they can provide.

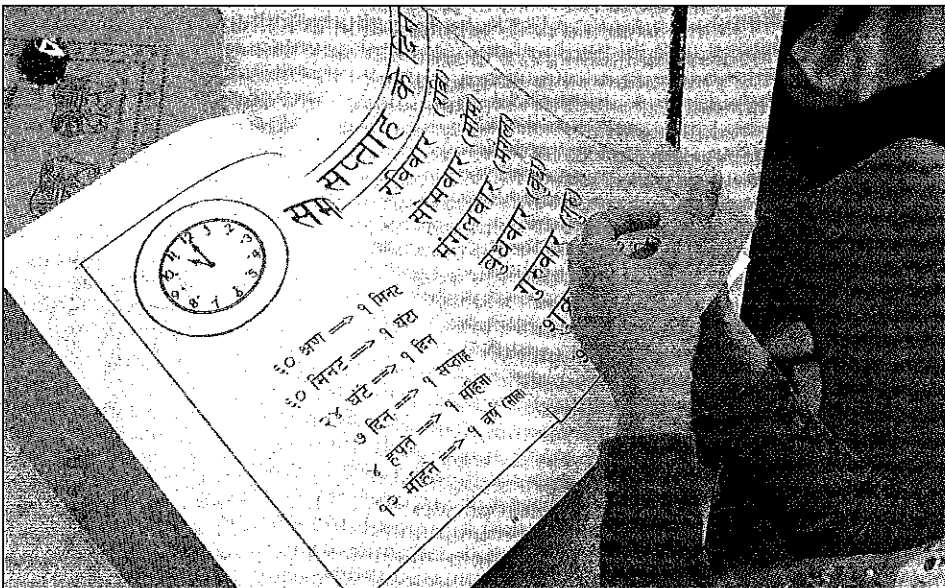
"The parents are funding this program and without that support, the program would not be available at school," district superintendent Ben Picard said. "As a district, we really support parent organizations that want to bring extra enrichment in, so we provide space at no charge. We wish as a school district we had

success. I'm very happy to see my own daughters love going to French class. It's definitely worth having."

Sunnyvale's programs are similar to an established Bay Area-wide Hindi program put on by the nonprofit U.S. Hindi Association, which has been operating since 2006. The program was started up by South Bay resident Ruchita Parat, who wanted to extend Hindi language studies she was doing with children at Sunday schools.

"I was already volunteering in a program and I wanted to develop a program that could teach the skills," she said. "Not everyone can come to Sunday school to learn Hindi; I thought it would work as an after-





A student looks through her workbook during an after school Hindi language class at Faria Elementary School.

Language

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are broken up into segments of various skill levels.

It's important the studies are consistent with what students learn in regular school, Parat said. Children are taught in the same manner as they would expect to find in a typical school day.

"What makes it special is that we are teaching Hindi the very same way they are learning English," she said.

Since there is typically not a major demand for Hindi material in much of the United States, the U.S. Hindi Association publishes its own material and curriculum. Children

do activities such as puzzles and word searches that are very similar to their English counterparts.

Volunteer teachers are mostly local to their communities or live near the school. The typical attendee was either born in India or is the child of parents who are fairly recent immigrants to the Bay Area.

"That would apply to 99 percent of those kids," Parat said.

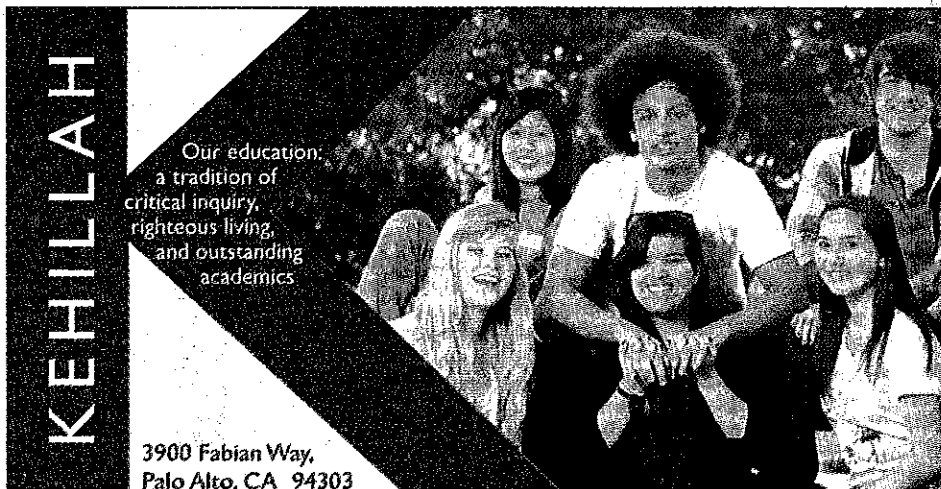
Similar programs are held in the area as well. A French and Italian program is held after school at Montclair Elementary School, and the Waha Montessori Chinese-American preschool is helping youngsters master Mandarin after school

at Dilworth and De Vargas elementary schools.

Part of the motivation for teaching children their parents' native language goes far beyond equipping them with the tools to someday communicate with people living an ocean away.

"Language is a connection to their roots and to their connection of what India is," Parat said. "These kids will always be Americans as well as Indian. There is no separating that, and it is important to have a connection with their culture."

For more information, visit www.efba.us, www.ssreg.com, www.wahamontessori.com and www.furmandarin.com/index.html.



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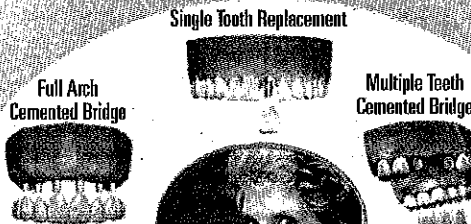
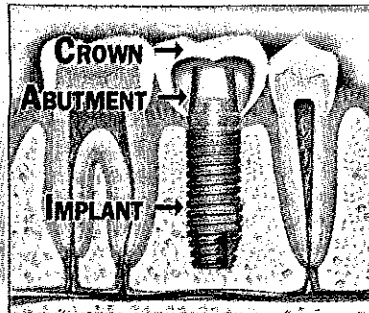
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