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Published November 26th, 2008

## Mandarin Language Studio Opens in Lafayette

By Andrea A. Firth



Pictured are Diane Ramsey and Laurie Dunn, owners of the newly launched Kids Into Speaking Mandarin in Lafayette Photo A. Firth

Diane Ramsey and Laurie Dunn had investigated several business concepts when the idea of running a Mandarin language studio was first introduced to them. "The idea just clicked," states Dunn. "Once we considered the idea, it seemed as though Mandarin was cropping up everywhere," adds Ramsey.

Ramsey and Dunn started planning the launch of their Mandarin language studio-Kids Into Speaking Mandarin-in May, and the first classes started in mid-October. The studio, which is located at 3400 Mount Diablo Boulevard in Lafayette, offers classes for kids, teens, and adults focused on teaching the basics of the spoken language along with introducing students to the Chinese culture through poems, songs, and art.

Although neither Ramsey nor Dunn speaks Mandarin or has visited China, they don't see this as an obstacle to running a successful school program. "Both of us really love working with kids-that is why it resonated with us," says Ramsey, who was formerly the President of the Parents Club at Glorietta School. Dunn also has a strong school volunteer background and has spent many hours at Glorietta where her twin girls attend. And, both women bring business backgrounds to their venture. Ramsey formerly worked in the technology industry in product management and customer service, and Dunn worked in human resources for PG&E.

Despite the current economic downturn, the two entrepreneurs remain optimistic about the potential for the Mandarin language studio. With the influence of China rising on the world economy, the partners see Mandarin as an important

language for students to be studying that will provide them better opportunities in the workplace in the future. Ramsey notes that at the high school level there is currently one class offered at Acalanes and two classes at Miramonte, and there is a wait list to enroll. "I feel very strongly that the parents [in Lamorinda] are very informed about education," states Ramsey. "It made demographic sense. We know how serious parents are about education."

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