

A group of students who passed a Chinese government proficiency test normally administered only to adults.

Yzmari Duran was one of five fifth-graders at The International School in Portland to successfully complete the test, designed by the HSK Center of Beijing Language and Cultural University to gauge Chinese language proficiency of non-native speakers.

"This was the first time that we introduced HSK in Portland and the first time we had participants of such a young age," said Yang Shen, chief education consul at the Chinese Consulate General in San Francisco. "It is by no means an easy test."

In China, the test serves as a requirement to enter a college or university, and is used to determine if students might be exempt from taking certain language courses in China and in many American universities. It also is used as a reference for hiring in positions requiring basic competence

ANCIENT TONGUE

Beaverton student's mastery of Chinese language leads to an invitation to visit the giant Asian nation

in the Chinese language.

Both Duran and the other students have attended The International School's Chinese immersion program since preschool, according to Bruce

part and a comprehension element.

"I think the hardest part for me was the reading part because it was long," said Duran, the Beaverton fifth-grader who also is fluent in Spanish.

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Bruce Bayliss, International School

Bayliss, who heads the school.

Bayliss acknowledged that the test is tough.

"This test is for college-level students," said Bayliss. "It's outstanding (they did so well)."

Five passed test

The 2½-hour test included hundreds of questions, an oral portion, a writing

University of Beijing this summer, compliments of the Chinese government.

Their visit to China won't be a first, either.

Last year, seven students in Yafei Liu's class traveled to China for three weeks. A camera crew from a Chinese children's show, "Under a

Same Sky," followed the group around for 10 days, recording their day-to-day activities.

Bayliss said he couldn't be more pleased with the students.

"I've been telling people around the country about this," he said.

Very good foundation

The International School of Portland is the only one in the area that offers total immersion classes in Japanese, Chinese and Spanish.

Students in the Chinese immersion program receive an American curriculum taught entirely in Chinese.

Yafei Liu, the students' teacher, said she was pleased by the proficiency students showed by passing the test but not totally caught off guard.

"I'm not very surprised because they had a very good foundation," said Liu. "I'm proud."

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