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Hindi Language Classes for American Kids

Hindi classes offer interactive, 'American' approach to learning Indian language.

By [Avni Nijhawan](#) | [Email the author](#) | 9:00am | [Print](#)

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Kids in Milpitas will soon have another opportunity to learn Hindi, a primary national language of India—this time, American style.

Jano Hindi, which translates to "Know Hindi," is one of the [U.S. Hindi Association's](#) (USHA) programs for kindergartners through fifth-graders. The Milpitas classes will start Saturday and meet once a week for an hour throughout the school year. The program costs \$420.

Although there are other Hindi programs in the area, founder and director Ruchita Parat said what makes her program unique is their "American" approach; the program does not use any materials from India. Instead, the program uses custom-made games and translated stories American children are familiar with. In addition, teachers use modified games—like Hindi Scrabble and Bingo—to make the classes easier to relate to and interactive, especially for reluctant children.

"The curriculum was designed for students growing up here," she said. "For the kids, [Hindi] is a barrier ... they say, 'I don't want to learn Hindi,' but they love our classes."

The program will be at three [Milpitas locations](#)—[Curtner Elementary](#), [Merryhill School](#) and the [Wing Education Center](#)—at various times during the week to provide greater access, said Parat.

Hindi is one of two official languages in India—the other being English. But Parat said that relatively common knowledge of English in India shouldn't preclude students from learning Hindi.

"If you really want to know the culture, if you really want to know the people, then Hindi helps a lot," she explained. "Yes, in the business world you can get by with English, but once you take away the business world, you would want Hindi."

Parat said she designed the curriculum 10 years ago but was only teaching in one location at the time. The program officially began in 2006 and now has around 3,000 students in the Bay Area, Parat said. The teachers are trained by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

"When we started long ago, most of the schools didn't even know what Hindi was," she said. "When I went and said, 'I'm from the U.S. Hindi Association,' they used to say, 'Oh, *Hindu* association!'"

[Hindi](#) is the name of the language. [Hindu](#) refers to a person who belongs to the third-largest religion in India, Hinduism.

Ultimately, Parat said she wants to offer Hindi classes at the high school level.

However, she may have to compete with an existing program called [Madhu Bhasha Kendra](#) (MBK), which has a high school program that can be taken for credit in a few Bay Area districts, including Milpitas Unified. The program is University of California-approved and WASC accredited and can be taken for a grade, said founder and director Madhu Aggarwal. Like USHA, MBK is a nonprofit, and its fees are \$1,800 for 150 hours of instruction during the year.

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