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Page 1 of 1

Chinese culture comes to St Marcellin

By Liz Wylie

Chinese Language Week has been celebrated at different events around the country and some Whanganui school children had the opportunity to speak Mandarin and learn about Chinese culture.

Whanganui High School's Confucius Room teacher Beck Ding was hosting Dr Tony Browne, chairman of the Victoria University Confucius Institute, on a visit to St Marcellin School.

St Marcellin students have been learning about Chinese language and culture with Mr Ding each week.

A group of young Chinese teachers also visited the students and performed dance routines, tai chi demonstrations and a song.

Mr Ding said the song was about the Chinese mid-autumn festival and has references to family togetherness and the beauty of the moon.

St Marcellin principal Maia Williams said the students enjoy their Chinese lessons.

"They are learning a lot about Chinese culture as well as developing language and they really enjoy it," she said.

Dr Browne spent time at Whanganui High School and said the school can be proud of having the Confucius Room.

"The Confucius Room here is one of around 1000 internationally, and it was one the

earliest, opening in 2012.

"It is intended to be a hub for the Whanganui community and learning Chinese language has huge benefits for young people," said Dr Browne.

"There are around 400,000 visitors from China coming to New Zealand each year, and that is likely to increase to over a million in the next 10 years."

Dr Browne said learning how to communicate with Chinese people really broadens professional options for young people who want to become involved in tourism, teaching or business.

The Confucius Institute was founded in Beijing in 2004 when Dr Browne was New Zealand ambassador to China, a post he held until 2009.



MARTIAL ART: Chinese teachers Ming Ma (left) and Tory Shi demonstrate tai chi for students at St Marcellin School.

PHOTO/STUART MUNRO