



Celebrating Manhattan's First Italian Dual Language Program

Roberta Cutillo (April 12, 2019)



A flag ceremony was held this morning, April 12, 2019, at Harlem's Public School 242 to celebrate the launch of Manhattan's first Italian Dual Language Program, an achievement carried out by the "In Italiano" parent association and supported by IACE, the Italian Consulate, and the local Italian community at large.

Parents, students, institutions, companies, and various supporters of the initiative gathered this morning in Harlem's [Public School 242](#) [2], to celebrate and officialize a new Italian Dual Language program, the first in Manhattan.



"This is a very important day, it means so much. It reinforces the message that the Italian language is present in American public schools," commented the Consul General of Italy, Francesco Genuardi, who, along with Consuls Silvia Limoncini and Irene Asquini, delivered an Italian flag to mark the official launch of the program. "We owe this accomplishment to all of the Italian community, who organized itself spontaneously."

The project to bring this program to PS 242 came from [InItaliano](#) [3], a grassroots initiative that promotes Italian language and culture in various public and private educational settings, conceived by three Italian parents with the aim of filling the lack of resources for Italian speakers within the school system.

"We are excited that our students will be learning Italian," said Denise Gomez, the Principal of PS 242. "It's extremely important. We are an IB authorized school so one of the expectations is that we teach our students a second language so that they become global-minded citizens and respect other cultures and beliefs."

Some of the students are already taking part in an unofficial Italian program launched by the school, where they are learning, amongst other things, Italian songs, such as the one performed by a group of kindergarten students (none of them native Italian speakers) during the ceremony.

A significant aspect of these Dual Language programs is that they also expose non-Italian students to the Italian language. "It's not only important for the Italian American community but for society in general," remarks Jack Spatola, Principal of PS 112, a school in Lefferts Park, Brooklyn, where the city's first Italian Dual Language Program was launched in September 2015.

"We're on to our third edition in Brooklyn, there's a great demand from parents who want their children to learn Italian," he explains "The problem there is space."

Various organizations and companies attended the ceremony to show their support for this initiative. "It was a true team effort," said the Consul General, explaining how New York Italian institutions, companies, and media came together to accompany and facilitate the hard work undertaken by the dedicated parents at InItaliano.

One of those supporters was the Italian [American Committee on Education \(IACE\)](#) [4], a non-profit organization founded in 1975 for the purpose of promoting the study of the Italian language and culture within the tri-state area.

"The strategy we use to promote language is to bring the kids outside of the classroom and have them experience 'made in Italy' first-hand," explained Ilaria Costa, the Executive Director of IACE. "We bring them to Eataly, to the Ferrari showroom, to the Coney Island Luna Park because it was designed by the Italian Zamperla, to PepsiCo, where the major designer is Mauro Porcini. This way the kids become passionate about 'Italianness' and go back to their school saying 'Italian is cool.'"



Livia Senic-Matuglia from Rizzoli was present as well. "As an Italian bookstore with an important history in New York we thought it was important to be here to support such an important project for the families that are trying to maintain the Italian language," she explained.

"The next step is to spread awareness, not only to Italian families but to anyone wishing for their children to experience the Italian language and culture," remarked Francesco Fadda of the InItaliano association, adding that the program will start officially this coming September "so if there are any families with children aged pre-k to first grade they can come here and enroll their children to experience the Italian language."

The demand for Italian language programs is growing in New York and more schools are starting to offer the opportunity to study in the language. Another Public School in District 14 in Williamsburg, Brooklyn is working to start an Early Immersion Italian program.

For more information and updates you can visit [InItaliano's website](#). [5]

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