



Community-Based Program

Background Information

Institution: Dante Alighieri Society of Massachusetts – Italian Language School

Program address: 41 Hampshire Street City, Cambridge, MA 02139

Telephone: (617) 876-5160

Fax: (617) 661-3797

Web address: www.dantealighieri.net/cambridge

Contact:

Name: Bill Hart

Title: Director, Children's Italian School

Address: 41 Hampshire Street City, Cambridge, MA 02139

Email: bhart@colorkinetics.com

Telephone: (617) 876-5160

Fax: (617) 661-3797

Levels: Pre K-K, 1-5/6, 6/7-8, 9-12, and adults

Our children's program begins on a partial immersion basis for the Pre-K and Kindergarten levels. Beginning at Level 1 the course is completely immersion-based.

Languages/dialects taught: Italian

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: The Dante Alighieri Society of Massachusetts is a non-profit organization whose objective is to promote and foster Italian language and culture. We offer language courses for children from Pre-K to grade 12 on Saturday mornings from September through May. We offer adult classes on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings throughout the year.

Type of program: immersion, partial immersion, foreign language program, Saturday academy, and extracurricular club

Program origin: 1990

Parents

Parents' expectations for the program: The parents expect that their children will learn to speak Italian and develop an appreciation for the culture.

Staff

Instructors' making administration's expectations for the program: The staff are committed to making the learning experience as fun as possible. We know that it is a Saturday program, and we want the children and parents to enjoy themselves.

Students

Students:

- First-generation immigrants: 5%
- Second-generation immigrants: 30%
- Third-generation immigrants: 30%
- Children of interethnic marriages: 15%
- Non-ethnic background: 10%

Countries of origin: Italy, United States, and Bosnia

Total student enrollment: 110

How the program identifies heritage speakers: Oral interview

How the program determines the language background and language proficiency of students: The instructors interview new students to see what language proficiency they have in the first few weeks of the school year.

Percentage of students who complete the program: 50%

Percentage of students who continue to study the heritage language after completing the program: 15%

Possible reasons for student withdrawal: Other school or sports activities with time conflicts.

Instructors

Number of instructors in the program: 12

Languages in which instructors are proficient: Italian and English

Proficiency level: All of our instructors are fluent in Italian, and most are native speakers.

Credentials: 20% of the teaching staff hold a teacher's certificate or license in any given state. Teachers are certified in Early childhood education and Italian language teaching. One teacher has a BA in Education and Engineering. Others have an MA in Education.

Professional development opportunities instructors have: Italian AP training, Italian Consulate teaching seminars

Professional development opportunities instructors need: curricular planning and course development

Instruction

Total contact hours per week: 2 hours per week

Times per week: 1 class session per week

Student grouping: Students in the children's program are grouped by language aptitude.

Hours devoted to language teaching: 100% of the time the spoken language is Italian.

Hours devoted to culture teaching: Culture is addressed as part of the subject matter.

Language skills

Skills developed by the program: Heritage Italian

Heritage language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing

Levels of language proficiency reached by the end of the program: The goal is for students to reach fluency in Italian.

Culture

Aspects of culture taught: geography, history, festivals, customs, traditions and beliefs, religion, folktales, arts and crafts, dances, songs, rhymes, social and cultural norms, cultural appropriateness, and literature

Methodologies

Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program: immersion

Materials

Textbooks: Grande Amici Series

Other materials used for instruction: Multiple handouts are used including plays, songs, games, and crafts.

Technology used for instruction: We use videos and have Internet access.

Assessment

Assessments used to evaluate students' progress: Teacher's observations

What the program has in place

Financial support the program receives: Ethnic/cultural organizations

Other support the program receives: Student tuition