



Congratulations Class of 2012! La Scuola d'Italia Celebrates its Graduates

Francesca Giuliani (July 02, 2012)



The Consulate General of Italy in New York served as the location for the 2012 La Scuola d'Italia Graduation Ceremony. Consul General Natalia Quintavalle presented the 13 graduates of Class 2012 with their diplomas. "You are Italy's best ambassadors," the Consul stated

On June 29, the [Consulate General of Italy in New York](#) [2] hosted a graduation ceremony for [La Scuola d'Italia](#) [3]'s 12th-graders who just successfully passed their final exam.

The exam is referred to in Italian as "the maturity exam," or "maturità," and it marks a very important milestone in the academic life of Italian students. Through the examination, the students have to prove themselves mature enough to enter the world of college education and adult life.

The 13 students who took the exam this year at La Scuola d'Italia all scored very high marks, and were complimented for their results by the examining commission (composed of professors both from La Scuola d'Italia and other international Italian schools around the world and presided by Professor Roberto Pennazzato), by Head Mistress Anna Fiore, by Consul General of Italy in New York Natalia Quintavalle and by Vice Chairman of La Scuola's Board of Trustees Steve Acunto.

La Scuola d'Italia Guglielmo Marconi was founded in 1977 by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,



and it is recognized by the Italian Ministry of Education. La Scuola is also accredited by the New York State Association of Independent Schools and chartered by the Regents of the University of the State of New York.

The only bilingual educational institution in North America, La Scuola offers its students the unique opportunity to study with an English and Italian curriculum, combining the best of American and Italian educational systems from Preschool to High School (Liceo). La Scuola's education is multicultural and classical at the same time, and it is rooted in the European tradition as well as in American culture.

"We have challenged you during these years, we know that," said Head Mistress Fiore to the graduates, "but by becoming truly conversant with two cultures you have achieved a mind that transcends both. You are now citizens of the world and of the planet Earth."

At La Scuola's Liceo Scientifico, where science and technology are cornerstones of the students' education, the values of bilingualism are just as important a part of the teachings as the connections between humanities and science are. "As Steve Jobs used to say: that connection is magic, and you always have to keep it in mind to be innovative, creative and compassionate for the human beings and the planet," Fiore added.

Consul Quintavalle congratulated the students for their excellent results: "We are all very proud of you, and by 'we' I mean all the representatives of the Italian institutions in New York. You are the best ambassadors for Italy." Quintavalle also mentioned the student's participation in many official occasions for the Italian and Italian-American community in New York. Most recently, the students were involved in the celebrations for Italy's National Day on June 2, when they played Plauto's *Amphitryon* in three languages, Italian, English and Latin. "Many of the people I meet for business mention that show to me and ask me with amazement 'how did they do it?'," Quintavalle said to the students before the handing out of diplomas began.

Holding her diploma in her hands, Natalia told i-Italy about her experience at La Scuola: "I attended La Scuola since 6th grade and I had no Italian heritage whatsoever. I was transferred from a catholic school which was closing due to lack of funds. Since 8th grade I am bilingual in Italian and English, it was trying at first but then, with the support of new friends, it's been smooth sailing ever since."

Sherize was in the same class as Natalia when she was transferred to La Scuola, and knew no Italian prior to that: "La Scuola is great! It's not just a school you go to, it's a family. I'm so sad it's over!"

Rebecca's mom is fully Italian, but her dad only speaks English: "I attended La Scuola since Pre-K, since I was 3 years old." Half of the 12th graders had gone through the same journey. "I would like to do an internship in Italy, maybe I'll go study abroad, but I'm so glad I can speak to my family in Italy now," she told i-Italy.

Professor Michael Prater, the coordinator of La Scuola's High School since 2006, first started as an English Professor at La Scuola in 2002: "I was given the opportunity to study Italian thanks to La Scuola and the Consulate General of Italy in New York. If not by blood, I'm Italian by choice."

Prater discussed with i-Italy about the importance of a bilingual and multicultural education in the USA: "In this country you can get in a car and drive nonstop for days and wherever you'll stop the people will still speak your language. It's special and unique but it also makes it different to realize that the world is multifaceted." That's why bilingual schools in America serve a much larger purpose: "You don't know your culture until you know another one. You don't know yourself until you see yourself in a mirror. Bilingualism teaches you tolerance of all cultures and gives you a sense of objectivity."

At the end of the ceremony, an Honorary Diploma di Maturità was awarded to Johnny Toksu, a Turkish-American student of Italian descent from the 2012 class who lost his battle against cancer last Spring, passing away at the age of 17. The diploma was symbolically handed out to Johnny's classmates. "We tried to transform such a terrible event into a message of hope," Head Mistress



Fiore told i-Italy. "They will accomplish what Johnny would have accomplished in his life. He was a very gifted and sweet boy," she added.

To Johnny La Scuola dedicated a Science Lab, where a plaque was laid: "It's our wish that science will be one day able to defeat the terrible disease that took Johnny from his family and friends," Fiore concluded.

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