

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Italian Consulate Director of Education Visits Elmhurst Academy

(Elmhurst, IL) Sandro Corso, *responsabile scuole* (director of education) of the Consulate General of Italy in Chicago, brought a little of Elmhurst Academy's Italian heritage to life when he visited the school on September 29, 2015. During the visit, students explored images of famous sites, posed inquiries based on their Italian studies and were treated to Corso's impromptu rendition of an aria from Puccini's *Rigoletto*.

Elmhurst Academy's connection to Italy is a strong one. As a Reggio Emilia-inspired school, the Academy uses an innovative approach to early childhood education that was developed in Reggio Emilia, Italy, some 70 years ago. Corso's visit came after the students began their school year engulfed in a cultural study of Italy and, in particular, Reggio Emilia.

Immediately following WWII, the parents of Reggio Emilia, along with educator Loris Malaguzzi, built a collection of early childhood schools dedicated to the belief that even very young children are

competent, capable individuals. In the Reggio Emilia schools, children are architects of their education, partnering with teachers to create a curriculum based on exploring the interests of the children. Malaguzzi believed, “They [children] are autonomously capable of making meaning from their daily life experiences through mental acts involving planning, coordination of ideas, and abstraction.” Malaguzzi believed the adults’ (teachers and parents) role in the child’s education was to “activate, especially indirectly, the meaning-making competencies of children as a basis of all learning.”

At Elmhurst Academy, which educates children from infancy through kindergarten, Reggio Emilia inspiration is evident throughout the school. Considered the “third teacher,” each of the five classrooms is full of provocative, rich materials that invite children to interact and explore. There is an emergent curriculum developed out of the students’ interests and inquiries. Projects, based on those interests, become the basis for learning for weeks or months at a time.

Reggio Emilia inspired learning is also based on Malaguzzi’s belief that children have “100 languages” they use in learning about their community. At Elmhurst Academy, children are encouraged to express their thoughts and ideas in many ways, including drawing, painting,

sculpture, music, technology and writing. Teachers, considered co-researchers with the children, document student work not just through displaying finished projects, but also by recording works in progress, including direct quotes from the children. Documentation of learning can be found in each classroom, through the hallways as well as in the school's Nature Explore® certified outdoor campus.

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