

## Gates Chili may end Italian, Latin classes

**Meghan Finnerty** Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

Gates Chili Central School District may soon say 'arrivederci' to Italian classes, even though census data shows a quarter of the population in the town of Gates is of Italian heritage.

And Latin might be offered only as a high school elective.

In a tweet, Gates Town Supervisor Mark Assini said the size of the crowd at a recent district Board of Education meeting showed the proposal 'is not sitting well with the community.'

The Little Italy Association in Rochester agrees, arguing that Latin and Italian languages provide career advantages.

'These languages form the basis of the learning concepts and terminologies that are required to excel (in specific careers),' said the association in a statement.

The Board of Education will consider the recommendation to teach only two languages, French and Spanish, to students entering seventh grade in the 2018-19 school year. Students already taking Italian or Latin could continue until graduation.

District administration made the recommendations to the Board of Education.

'As we build a budget and consider staffing needs we often look at the sustainability of programs over time,' the district said.

Gates, Chili and other westside suburbs were a magnet for Italian immigrants throughout the 20th century. In recent years, more families from Spanishspeaking countries and refugees from Asia, Africa or the Middle East have settled in the area.

Franca Cinelli, who taught Italian at Gates Chili for more than 35 years, said she was 'just floored' by the news. 'I would like the board to not cut Italian,' she said.

She called Latin the 'crowning glory' of the foreign language department and said it sets Gates Chili apart since it is the only westside district teaching the language.

Local schools have the right to choose what foreign language classes they teach, according to the Monroe County School Boards Association.

Seven districts taught Italian and five taught Latin during the 2016-17 school year.

'Having Italian and Latin languages taught in our local school districts helps preserve the Italian American heritage in the Greater Rochester area,' Frank Ciardi, president of the Italian American Community Center, said.

The next Gates Chili Board of Education meeting is at 7 p.m. April 10.

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**The room overflows at a Board of Education meeting in Gates earlier this month. In the crowd are signs appearing to support teaching Latin. PROVIDED**