

New York City STARTALK Grant for Hindi Language Instruction

Post-program Community Engagement Activities

Ethnic food, songs, and dances filled the auditorium of the [Hindu Center](#) on Kissena Boulevard in Queens on the evening of January 8, 2011 as more than 100 students, their parents, and guests gathered to celebrate the success of the Hindi language [STARTALK](#) program. The STARTALK program is a federally funded grant dedicated to the teaching and learning of critical languages identified by the National Security Language Initiative. Director, Sushma Malhotra, has been overseeing the program for 3 years since its inception in 2008. The program not only provides the opportunity for students to learn Hindi, but also offers professional development opportunities to help keep teachers current with the latest methodologies in language teaching. A total of over 150 students have participated in the past three summer programs. The STARTALK Hindi language program has certainly sparked interest in the Indian community, motivating them to keep their heritage language alive and current. Malhotra also showcased the program at the national STARTALK program conference in Atlanta in October, 2010.

The gathering on January 8th was the culminating event of the 2010 STARTALK post summer activities. Students who participated in the 3-week summer program at Thomas Edison High School were invited to a series of activities to learn more about the Indian cultures through visits to the Indian community facilities and ethnic neighborhoods. These cultural connection activities included a trip to Jackson Heights, Queens, where students had the opportunity to talk to the owners of shops featuring Indian cultural merchandise, to observe worship in Hindu temples, and to view cultural performances.

Maria Barreto, President of the New York State Association of Bilingual Education ([NYSABE](#)), was one of the guests of the event. She commended the program's success and thanked the program director, Sushma Malhotra, as well as the program teachers, for their hard work. She also invited the students to perform at the NYSABE annual conference that will be held in March, 2011. Pat Lo, Director of Asian Languages BETAC ([ALBETAC](#)) spoke about the spirit of the STARTALK program and emphasized the importance of families maintaining their language and culture while mainstreaming into American society. Pat Lo also received a plaque from the program for her insightful and selfless contributions. All students who participated in the post summer program activities received certificates and enjoyed Indian food at the end of the program.

Director Sushma Malhotra shared the guideline for implementing the STARTALK grant with the community and reported that the 2011 grant proposal had been submitted. She hopes to continue the work with the approval and funding of the grant. The flyer for the program will be distributed to the community once the grant proposal has been approved and funds have been allocated.

Click below for activity pictures:

- [A trip to Jackson Heights Indian ethnic neighborhood and a temple \(12/5/2010\)](#)
- [Viewing of Indian dance performance \(12/11/2010\)](#)
- [STARTALK program student award and ceremony \(1/8/2011\)](#)