

Italian Families and the Education and Care of Young Children

The goal of this assignment is to examine how families in Italy address the care and education of their young (preschool through 3rd grade) children. Specifically, you are being asked to address questions such as:

- (1) What kind of child care/educational arrangements are available for Italian families?
- (2) What type of child care/educational arrangements do Italian families prefer and use?
- (3) What is a typical day in child care/school like for the preschool child (i.e., length, schedule, meals and snacks, curricula and subjects covered)? For the elementary school child?
- (4) What do children wear to child care/school? What standards about clothing are important?
- (4) What is the ratio of teachers to children in these child care/educational settings?
- (5) What qualifications are required of teachers in these child care/educational settings?
- (6) Is parent involvement encouraged? If so, how?
- (7) How are after-school arrangements handled?
- (8) Are standards of quality similar to quality preschools in the U.S.?

1. Using the attached literature and other articles that you find, your group will write a **Review of the Literature** (approximately 3-5 pages) on how child care and early education is organized in Italy and how families in Italy handle the tasks associated with child care. For this project, you will focus on Italian families; however, it is appropriate to draw comparisons with American families.
2. Write a **Methodology** section, approximately 3-5 pages long. Specifically, in this section you should describe only how you are going to go about collecting your data. This section should include the subsections that correspond to the assignments below. This section should NOT include the results of your data collection. That information will go in your Results section.
3. Write a **Results** section (approximately 3-5 pages long), also divided into the same number of sections as the Methodology that describe what you found after you collected your data. .
3. Write a **Discussion** section (approximately 3-5 pages long) that shows how your results relate to the literature we have provided and the speakers we have heard. Cite relevant literature/speakers. How are your results similar or dissimilar to the results described in the studies in your literature review? What are the limitations of your study? What other questions would you have liked to ask but didn't? What cultural differences should we take into account when drawing conclusions and comparing cultures?
4. Write an **Integration** section (approximately 3- 5 pages long). Does this project integrate the areas of CAHS, HDFs, and NUFS? If so, how? If not, what could be done to make it a better integrated Human Sciences experience? Use and cite the Human Sciences references provided.
5. Include a **Reference** section. Cite all the references you used in this paper, including lecturers and dates they lectured.
6. Include **sketches, photos, or other images** to enhance and illustrate your main points.

Assignments

Observation of the Child Care Education Setting

Make arrangements for your group to visit two child care settings: one or both should be a nursery school for children 3-6 years (*Scuola materna*); a second option would be a day nursery for children 0-3 years (*Nidi d'infanzia*). When you visit, have each group member complete the child care quality checklist provided (www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/H/HE-0373/). Create and complete an observation form on which each group member objectively describes aspects of the children's environment, clothing, and eating behavior. Sketch or take photos of the classroom and children (after asking permission to do so, of course).

Interview with Teachers

Set up an interview with teachers at the *Scuola maternal* (perhaps to be arranged immediately after your observational visit). Use the first page of the checklist provided in "Five Steps to Selecting Good Child Care" (www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1805.pdf) to create a list of questions. The interview questions should also ask (1) if and how parent involvement is encouraged, (2) what questions teachers think parents should ask when they are looking for child care, (3) what the educational requirements in Italy are for becoming a child care teacher, and (4) how they perceive their job as a child care teacher compared to others (e.g., is it well-paid, well-respected, etc.)

Interview with Parents

Conduct a focus group with a minimum of five parents, at least some of whom have children in child care currently (or did when their children were younger). Create a list of questions to ask that would inform you about (1) the kind of child care arrangements that are available, preferred, and used; (2) what they think are important qualities, training, or other characteristics that the people who take care of their children should have; (3) how people find good child care.