

VOCABULARY

Asilo

Italian infant and toddler school.

Scuola Materna

Italian pre-school and kindergarten often co-located with an asilo.

Scuola Elementare

Elementary School

Doposcuola

After school

Inscrizione

Registration

Ufficio Postale

Post office. Most bills from school have to be paid at the Italian post office, but sometimes teachers want cash for field trips. When paying a bill at the post office select the Euro button when taking a ticket to wait in line.

Gita Scolastica

Field trip

Grebbiulino

A smock worn by all children to protect their clothes; can be purchased at the Emisfero along with other school supplies.

Bavaglino

Bib used by all children when they eat to protect clothes; can be purchased at the Emisfero along with other school supplies.

Ginnastica

Physical fitness

Codice Fiscale

Permesso di Soggiorno is the permit to live in Italy

Religione

Religion taught at most Italian public and private schools

Compiti di Casa

Homework



Additional Resources:

- Dryden, G. & Vos, J. (1997). The Learning Revolution. Auckland, NZ: The Learning Web.
- Kotulak, R. (1996). Inside the Brain. Andrews and McMeel.
- Krashen, S. (1992). Fundamentals of Language Education. Beverly Hills: Laredo.

*A non-DOD Facebook group of volunteer American and Italian parents called :

Vicenza Italian Schools/Sports Parents Network that may offer some support and information to parents who are considering bilingual education.

**Army Community Service
US Army Garrison Vicenza
Unit 31401, Box 80**

APO AE 09630

relocation@vicenzamwr.com



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Italian School Experience



Points to Consider...

**RELOCATION
ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM**



Moving Made Easy

Child's Temperament: Italian schools, and/or bilingual education, may not be optimum for every American child. The ratio of children to teachers is higher so each child receives less attention. Italian teachers tend to let children work out differences, rather than intervene immediately which is more common in American culture. Unable to express their likes/dislikes verbally, some American children may experience confrontations with other children in the beginning as they express frustration with sharing or basic needs. As with any new experience, children will adjust on their own timeline and in their own way with the support of parents who understand their child and the process.

Parental Level of Commitment: Prepare for a long transition period with some difficult days as the child adjusts to a total immersion experience. Parental commitment is critical to the entire process. Unlike in American schools, Italian parents are not usually invited to "drop in" to see their children or to help in the classroom. The level of commitment is not for the most volunteer hours in the school, it is for a mental commitment to give the Italian school and teachers enough time to immerse the child. The parent will need to learn some Italian to communicate with the teachers. Although there are usually other parents who will help translate and some teachers can speak English, it is best to know some key vocabulary. It is very valuable for children to see their parents confidently trying to speak Italian and to share the experience of learning together. Some Families sing to Italian CDs in the car; they talk about their own Italian classes or teachers; and at home they will watch Italian cartoons together.

Cost: Many assume Italian schools are less costly than the Child Development Centers (CDC) on the installation, but it depends on the school and the community. Italian school costs may vary from 80-145 euro per month (about eight hours of daily care) with after school care at an additional charge. The CDC (about twelve hours of daily care) can vary between \$220-\$606 per month based on the Family's total income. The currency exchange rate should also be considered. Typically parents will incur a yearly registration fee of 50-100 euro payable at the local Italian post office. Lunches are included, but there is usually a small cost for field trips. Many parents establish a monthly bank draft from their Italian bank account directly to the school. Remember that the sponsor should request a *Codice Fiscale* for each Family member during in-processing as this id number is needed to open an Italian bank account and for Family member participation in Italian schools and sports.



Overview

The Veneto Region, much like the rest of Italy, enjoys a proud tradition of childcare and education that reflects their culture and history. Generally, Italian children of working parents will be cared for by extended Family members or will attend a *nido*, or infant nursery, then toddlers attend the *asilo* until age three followed by the *scuola materna*. At age 6, they attend the *scuola elementare*. Parents interested in bilingual education should consider all of the points below and review additional resources:

PROS:

Below is an excerpt from the article "*Can Preschool Children Be Taught a Second Language?*" by Jeanette Vos Ed.D on the website "Early Childhood News."

• **"Language Learning is a Natural Process When Children Are Young:** During the first six months of life, babies babble using 70 sounds that make up all the languages in the world. They will then learn to talk using only the sounds and words they pick up from their environment.... A baby's brain will then discard the ability to speak in languages he or she does not hear (Kotulak, 1996)."

• **"Preschool Years Are Vital Years:** During the first three years of life, the foundations for thinking, language, vision, attitudes, aptitudes, and other characteristics are laid down," says Ronald Kotulak, author of "*Inside the Brain*". Consequently, it would be a waste not to use a child's natural ability to learn during his or her most vital years, when learning a second language is as easy as learning the first."

• Children often experience a warm, caring environment after the initial transition.

• Most children, after completing a year or two in the Italian schools, are prepared for first grade at DODEA schools. DODEA schools successfully integrate children from non-English speaking households from many different cultures.

CONS:

- Rigid daily schedule
- Initial sense of isolation for child and parental second guessing during transition
- Possible increased frustration and aggressive behavior as they try to express themselves

Schedule: Italian school holidays are frequent and, with few exceptions, differ from American federal holidays and training holidays. With siblings in Italian school and the DODEA schools, it is challenging to manage the different schedules. The teachers care for more kids and must adhere to a rigid routine so any parental visits really disrupt the classroom. Italian schools usually have only two pick up windows—around 1230-1330 or 1530-1630. If a parent misses the first, then it is best to wait until the second since it disrupts the schedule.

Other Differences : Religion, or *religione*, is taught at all levels in most public and private schools. Many Italian children also take Catholic catechism classes through their local parish outside of school. Upon registration for school, parents may have the opportunity to opt in or out of religious education.

Supplies: Initially the supply list may be a challenge for incoming American parents. The *asilo/scuola materne* age children may require a smock, bib, towel, and other supplies depending on the school.

Short notice: Sometimes parents will receive short notice of occasional changes to the daily schedule (i.e. school will start on Friday at 1030 and only go until 1245), but this is totally school dependent.

Elementary School: It would be very difficult to start a child who has no background in Italian or Spanish as a second language at this level. The curriculum is rigorous; children start with seven subjects taught per week from the first grade. Some elementary schools use shifting schedules: most days 0800-1300, then one or two long days per week 0800-1600. Elementary school homework, or *compiti di casa*, is challenging. Children may not receive much homework on the longer school days, but on short days and the weekends they tend to increase the homework to a couple of hours. Also, given the breadth of coursework (geography, science and history from first grade), it may also be challenging for parents without a background in Italian. Some parents hire a tutor (perhaps a neighborhood girl or boy) to help with Italian and with the homework. One other difference is that Italian schools require exit exams to prove competency prior to the next level.

If the American child does not pass the exit exam from the Italian elementary school, then DODEA cannot allow the child to enter the next grade in any DODEA school.