

Testimonial by Ruth Bonello Gellel, Literacy Support Teacher: Job-Shadowing opportunity at Istituto Comprensivo De Amicis - Giovanni XXIII, San Ferdinando di Puglia, Italy. 7th to 9th May 2025.

Participating in this job-shadowing experience has given me valuable insights into alternative teaching practices that have shaped my professional perspective. One key observation was the calm, supportive atmosphere that created a positive and focused learning environment. In early years settings, we observed two distinct approaches: one with age-based classes following a shared curriculum, and another with mixed-age groups (ages 3–5), where tasks were tailored to each child's development.

Teachers in both settings were trusted with the autonomy to adapt their programmes, fostering flexibility and responsiveness. Storytelling played a central role, with cross-curricular themes integrating literacy, coding, and science, helping children form deeper connections across subjects.

In primary school, collaborative lesson planning promoted consistency and teamwork. The practice of one teacher staying with the same class for five years allowed for strong relationships and personalised teaching. I was impressed by students' confidence in group discussions and their ability to evaluate, engage critically with complex texts such as poetry, demonstrating a high level of independence and emotional intelligence.

This experience has strengthened my understanding of student-centred learning and has reaffirmed the value of providing guidance while encouraging exploration. It has highlighted the need to raise expectations in language use and critical thinking from an early age.











