



School Equity Best Practice

Title: Welcoming foreign language speaking refugee children in primary school and kindergarten

Equity dimension:

- Fairness Inclusion Access Opportunities
 Personalised learning Personal and social development

Subject: Integrating foreign language speaking refugee children in primary school and kindergarten classes

Target groups:

- Early Years Primary education Lower secondary education
 Upper secondary education Vocational Training Other

Source:

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Description:

Foreign-language newcomers are integrated into mainstream schooling. They participate in the 'regular' class that corresponds to their age and in addition receive individualized support outside the classroom. In this way we support the development of the children both socio-emotionally and in terms of knowledge and language development.

Methodology:

Several foreign-language refugees arrived at the school, both in the nursery and primary school. The children were welcomed in the class corresponding to their age and through extra support in and outside the classroom they were intensively supported towards the development of language competences, skills as well as socio-emotional well-being.

Start:

The school went looking for tools to deal with the challenge at hand. What does already exist in terms of materials and tools? Which tools are adapted to the school context and the background of the children?

The school also called in the help of the pedagogic guidance service.

Tip: invest sufficient time in searching for adequate and well-founded support materials.

Setting up goals:

Individual goals and action plans are set up for each child, with a focus on functional and useful goals from a child-oriented perspective. The mandate given to the school from the policy level to be able to flexibly deal with the standard attainment targets in favour of an individualized functional trajectory for each child is crucial.

Tip: A good balance between linguistic/knowledge goals and the socio-emotional goals is not always easy. Searching for this balance requires extra professional attention.

Methods to achieve goals:

The school chooses to have the children mainly participate in the normal class, where tasks are then adjusted to the individualized goals of the child. Joining their own age group also has an important added value in terms of their social integration and social contacts.

In addition, aid given by a specialised teacher outside the classroom provides intensive support that concentrates mainly on highly functional knowledge. Extra attention is paid to the bridging of cultural differences.

Development of expertise:

For both the in-class and out-of-class support, this approach requires specific expertise from teachers. Resources are therefore invested in time for meetings and training moments as a team. The added benefit is the steadily improving skills of the school team, in the long run also benefiting other children and later interventions.

Tip: Accept that, as a school, you are in a learning process that requires time.

Parent involvement:

Investing in the relationship with the parents is a key ingredient for supporting the development of the child: informing parents about the school's approach and being open for parents' needs and expectations.

Reflections on our practice:

- The challenges in integrating non-Dutch speaking refugee children are considerably large. We do not always feel sufficiently equipped to deal with the given complexity - we think that attention for those subjects in the schooling of school staff is necessary.
- Maintaining a good balance in expectations towards the child: initially, our expectations were too high with regards to the speed in development the children would have.
- Framing the many challenges ahead as a positive opportunity for learning as a school team, is a process-oriented view that is supportive and aids our development.

Link with partners:

We still see opportunities in the link with partners, in particular with the immigration services and social services that are involved in the procedures of the family. More cooperation would benefit the development of the child.

A caring transfer towards further education:

Investing time in searching for the best continuation after completion of primary school together with parents and child is an important step towards consolidating the development of the child in the future.

Resources:

- Pedagogic guidance service that contributes with expertise
- Extra hours for team meetings and the training of teachers
- Additional hours for supporting the children outside the classroom during individualised sessions of sessions in a small group.

Outcomes:

- Strong investment in an individualized trajectory for each child that helps to advance the language/knowledge development and the socio-emotional well-being of the children.
- The increase of expertise for the school team as a whole.
- Heterogeneous classes that offer larger learning opportunities to all the children present

Supporting documents:

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Interview: *the practice should include a recorded video interview to one of the users about the benefits of the good practice. The video should be in English or subtitled. Maximum 3 minutes. Write the video URL here*

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