

## INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS STUDENTS GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

### Index

#### Introduction

1. [Identify the multiple barriers](#)
2. [Know the school](#)
3. [Show that you care](#)
4. [Know your rights](#)
5. [Deal with cultural differences](#)
6. [Learn the language](#)
7. [Talk to the teacher](#)
8. [Support your child](#)
9. [Liaise with other parents](#)
10. [Where to find help](#)

### Introduction

These guidelines are addressed to the integration of immigrant students and target the parents of immigrant students. The ten steps proposed to the user, and which do not have to be followed in chronological order, start with the identification of the multiple barriers that immigrant parents and students may have to face when wishing to integrate in the educational system of a new country. The ten steps gradually guide parents into acquiring information on school and the educational system of the host country (steps 1 and 2); on empowering them to perform on behalf of their children or themselves in the school environment (steps 3 and 4); on gaining confidence to address cultural differences and talk to the class teacher and headteacher (steps 5, 6 and 7); and in seeking the appropriate support both outside and within the school environment for their children and for themselves as parents of immigrant children (steps 8, 9 and 10).

These guidelines need a fairly good knowledge of the language of the country where immigrants live. Yet, the parents of immigrant students do not always know the language of the host country, so it would be necessary to give them the guidelines in the two different languages, that of the country where they are living and that of the country of origin. The translation of the guidelines could be made by each school. It is in their best interest to support the students and their parents for integration. This will be a step in the guidelines for headteachers.

## Identify the Multiple Barriers

1. Identify the multiple barriers you have in sending your child to school and understand your own barriers.
2. Check if you know where you can get information about the school system, to learn about your rights and obligations.
3. Learn about appropriate educational support for your child in school and about taking responsibility for your child's learning and schooling.
4. Learn how to cope with cultural differences and integration and how to participate in school life.

### Online Manuals From the Routes Portal

- [Partire è un po' morire?](#) ("To leave is a bit like to die", Italian proverb).  
This resource focuses on the contradictory feelings associated with the experience of migrating to another country from the point of view of children and adolescents.
- [Home far away from home](#)  
A second life in the new countries: to find a job, to learn a language, to meet new people...

### Interviews

- [Interviews on migration issues](#)  
The interviews, available on the Routes portal, collected were made with Migrants and Natives who have been in contact with immigrants.
- [Interviews on Early School Leaving Prevention](#)  
A section of the School Inclusion Portal is dedicated to Interviews made, in five different European countries, with counsellors in charge of educational policies, headteachers, teachers, parents and students dealing with the prevention of early school leaving.

## Training Sources From the School Safety Net Portal

- [Breaking down the barriers to immigrant students' success at school](#)  
The article, written by Marilyn Achiron, focuses on education which is one of the best ways of integrating immigrant children and their families into their new home countries. But most immigrant students have to overcome multiple barriers in order to succeed at school.
- [Tips for Parents: Immigrant Families](#)  
The web portal "The Learning Community" helps schools and families work together for the welfare of children. The goal is clear, to provide information and resources for immigrant parents to their good and positive integration. Written by Sarah Stanley, Melissa Flanagan y Connie Mills.

### Websites

- [Infos Belgique](#)  
Official website with information about life in Belgium addressed to immigrants who settle in Belgium. One section is dedicated to the education system.

### Success Stories From the School Safety Net Portal

- [Welcoming and Planning](#) (Italy)  
A story told by a teacher on how to welcome immigrant children and their families.

## Know the School

1. There are advantages in enrolling your child in a school. Education is compulsory and the school will help your child integrate into society by learning how to speak, read and write, learning about the culture and by getting a diploma that will help him/her get a job.
2. There are school regulations that you should become aware of when your child enrolls. Ask the school to explain them to you and check if they have them written in your language so you can better understand them.
3. Find out if the school has a foreign language interpretation service and if not, get linguistic help from immigrant associations or immigrant support official bodies to help you communicate with the school. There may be mediators at school specifically for the relation between immigrant students and their family, so you should ask if they are available.
4. Learn about how the school is organised: curricular subjects and teachers require specific materials; your child is expected to work at home on what he/she has learnt in school; teachers may send notes about your child's progress; there are mixed physical education classes and they are compulsory; there are timetables to keep up with; there must be respect between teacher and pupil; your child must attend school regularly and absences have to be justified; there is a record of your child's progress in school that may be taken along with your child if she/he moves to a different school; there are regular parents' meetings that you should attend to keep informed about your child's progress.

## Training Sources

### From the School Safety Net Portal

- [I respect. Active citizenship, cultural diversity and positive tolerance](#) (UK)  
A portal with easy to access activities that are connected to particular minority groups, such as ethnic minority children, African and Caribbean children, Traveller children.
- [The school in the French-speaking Community of Belgium: Guide for parents of immigrant children](#)  
The Red Cross of Belgium proposes to parents of migrants an information booklet on how the school system works in French-speaking Belgium. With many illustrations and pictograms it can be adapted to other contexts.
- [Communication between the school and parents who do not speak French](#)  
Alice Pierard (Belgium), UFAPEC (French-speaking Union of parents associations in Catholic education).
- [Tips for Parents: Immigrant Families](#)  
Sarah Stanley, Melissa Flanagan y Connie Mills.

## Show that You Care

It is important to show that you care about your child's learning and progress at school.

1. Encourage your child to attend school every day and to participate in every planned class. It is important that your child has the required materials/equipment for each class.
2. Learn about the required hygiene rules and comply with them.
3. Communicate with your child about what she/he has learnt every day and show interest.
4. Check your child's homework. If you cannot help because of the language, know about the existing support systems through the class teachers and ask for help.
5. Value the learning your child does at school as something that will be valuable for his/her future life in any community.
6. Another way to show that you care is to be present during welcoming days, parents' meetings, celebrations organized by the school, graduations, etc.

## Websites

- [Fédération Francophone des Écoles de Devoirs](#)  
Homework support services in Belgium.

### Training Sources From the School Safety Net Portal

- [Family Friendly \(ING\)](#)  
Through Family Friendly the Province of Prato intends to promote and develop the best practices for the participation of foreign parents, by providing useful tools for a factual integration in the area they live in and, at the same time, to foster academic, training and working success of their children.

### Online Manuals From the Routes Portal

- [Best practices](#)  
A collection of examples of best practice across countries that can be used to show how immigrant parents can get involved and seek support. There are collective and individual actions that can serve as examples.

## Know Your Rights

1. Find out about the services for immigrant children who attend school (such as transition classes in Belgium) or homework support services.
2. Find out about how your child can have his/her previous learning acknowledged by the school system (for example: diploma recognition).
3. Find out about extra classes your child may attend in school to improve his/her language and other skills in order to integrate better into the school level she/he is attending.
4. You can talk to the teachers about your child's progress. Find out how and when and use those meetings as opportunities to understand how you can help your child.
5. Rights come together with obligations. Make sure you understand which obligations you have in connection with the rights described above.

### Training Sources From the School Safety Net Portal

- [DASPA, Service to welcome and educate newly arrived students](#)  
Ministry of compulsory education – Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (Belgium).
- [The school in the French-speaking Community of Belgium: Guide for parents of immigrant children](#)  
Red Cross of Belgium.

### Websites

- [Fédération Francophone des Écoles de Devoirs](#)  
Homework support services in Belgium.
- [Diploma recognition services](#)  
A Belgian web site.
- [Conversations in Integration](#)  
Dr Roland Kaehlbrandt speaks about strengthening immigrant families by showing them appreciation.



## Deal with Cultural Differences

Mutual ignorance and lack of understanding are the cause of many misunderstandings and blunders. These may hinder the successful integration of your child at school and may be an obstacle to your effective communication with the school about your child.

1. Your culture and language matter. So do the culture and language of the host country. It is important for you and your child to be proud of your own culture and language and to be able to show it to others at school. So, accept invitations from the class teacher to talk about your culture or help your child share cultural artefacts from his/her own mother culture with others (food, objects, songs, instruments, festivals, etc.)
2. Talk to your child about what you experience as different and as difficult in the host culture. You may encourage your child to write it in a diary or post it in a blog on line.
3. Be curious about the host country and language; be respectful of that culture and show interest on different ways in doing things.
4. Respect the religious festivals of the host country and also your own, by talking to the teacher and headteacher if necessary.
5. Encourage your child to live with respect and in two cultures by looking at things from different perspectives. This will enable a trusting, respectful relationship to emerge between you and your child.

### Publications

#### From the School Safety Net Portal

- [Mainstreaming diversity – Analytical collection of intervention tools to foster diversities](#)  
IRFAM (Institut de Recherche, Formation et Action sur les Migrations - Belgium).
- [Intercultural mediation and the construction of dialogues in difference: some reflections](#)  
Casa-Nova, Maria José (Portugal).

### Success Stories

#### From the School Safety Net Portal

- [Interest](#) (Turkey)  
A story told from the parent's point of view on how difficult it was to deal with his son's cultural identity crisis.

### Online Manuals

#### From the Routes Portal

- [Partire è un po' morire?](#) ("To leave is a bit like to die", Italian proverb).  
This resource focuses on the contradictory feelings associated with the experience of migrating to another country from the point of view of children and adolescents.
- [Home far away from home](#)  
A second life in the new countries: to find a job, to learn a language, to meet new people...

### Training Sources

#### From the School Safety Net Portal

- [Tips for Parents: Immigrant Families](#)  
The web portal "The Learning Community" provides information and resources for immigrant parents to their good and positive integration.
- [Family Friendly \(ING\)](#) Province of Prato (Italy).
- [I respect. Active citizenship, cultural diversity and positive tolerance](#) (UK)  
A portal with easy to access activities that are connected to particular minority groups, such as ethnic minority children, African and Caribbean children, Traveller children.

### Interviews

#### From the Routes Portal

- [Interviews on migration issues](#)  
The interviews collected were made with Migrants and Natives who have been in contact with immigrants. The interviews focus on the experiences, points of view and attitudes of the two groups in order to identify similarities and differences among nationalities and throughout the years.

## Learn the Language

Your child is learning the language of the host country at school and she/he will be using two languages daily.

1. Respect your child's preferred uses of language, even if you do not understand the language he/she prefers to speak in. It may be difficult at some stages of language development for a child to speak about everything in two languages.
2. Learn the language of the host country with your child. Ask him/her to explain some of its words and phrases to you. Be part of the language learning process of your child.
3. Attend adult language classes if they are available near you.
4. Mind that a language is not just words; it includes gestures, looks and body language that you should get acquainted with. So, learn about all aspects connected with language every day while you go out working and shopping.

### Training Sources

#### From the School Safety Net Portal

- [Tips for Parents: Immigrant Families](#)  
Sarah Stanley, Melissa Flanagan y Connie Mills.
- [Communication between the school and parents who do not speak French](#)  
Written by Alice Pierard (Belgium), UFAPEC (French-speaking Union of parents associations in Catholic education).

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## Talk to the Teacher

It is your responsibility to talk to the class teacher about your child's progress and about any learning difficulties she/he may experience.

1. If language is a problem for communication, there are several parents who may act as interpreters for you. There are also long-time immigrant parents that can become 'relay-parents' to act as intermediaries between school and newly-arrived families.
2. The teacher will tell you about what she/he thinks is best for your child in educational terms. Respect that expertise and ask for clarification if you do not understand.
3. Try to act on the teachers' advice for your child.
4. If problems arise between your child and the school, know that there are sanctions the school can impose and that need to be taken into consideration. Talk to the class teacher and the headteacher about how best to deal with the issue at home.

### Publications

#### From the School Safety Net Portal

- [Building Partnerships with Immigrant Parents](#)  
This article, written by Sobel, Andrea and Kuger, Eileen Gale (USA), describes the many partnerships that can be created with parents of immigrant children through school.

### Training Sources

#### From the School Safety Net Portal

- [Communication between the school and parents who do not speak French](#)  
Alice Pierard (Belgium), UFAPEC (French-speaking Union of parents associations in Catholic education).

### Success Stories

#### From the School Safety Net Portal

- [School as a solution to juvenile delinquency: the story of a foreign mother](#) (Italy)  
A story about a mother trying to help her son from dropping out of school and seeking the support of school staff.
- [Language Barriers](#) (Greece)



## Support Your Child

There are many ways in which you can help your child acquire and develop language and academic skills.

1. Take your child to the local library, where he/she can access the internet, engage in learning activities and read/borrow books.
2. Give your child a book as a present.
3. Encourage your child to write the shopping list and collaborate in going out shopping when the occasion presents itself.
4. Get your child to read aloud from all print around us such as milk cartons, cereal boxes, road signs, etc. This way you are both learning the language and culture of the host country.
5. Encourage your child to listen to the television and radio and to write postcards, birthday cards, a diary, etc

There are also more institutional ways to help your child if she/he has learning difficulties:

1. You may talk to the class teacher about it.
2. Accept the teacher's suggestions for your child to meet a counsellor or a social worker when it is suggested to you.
3. You may ask to benefit from several school initiatives, such as mentoring, private tuition, re-schooling, counsellors, mediation services, intercultural mediators, etc.
4. Re-schooling or help in the open environment is a partnership between your child, you and the school that you will have to become engaged in and honour.

### Training Sources

#### From the School Safety Net Portal

- [Welcoming Traveller Children in your school](#)  
Gloucestershire Traveller Education Team (UK).  
Training guide on integrating travellers' children with a clear section on the feelings of parents: "Why do Traveller parents have anxieties about school?"

### Websites

- [Fédération Francophone des Écoles de Devoirs](#) (homework support services - Belgium).
- [CPMS](#) Psycho-Medico Social Centres (Belgium).
- [School Mediation Services](#) (Belgium).
- [SAS, re-schooling services](#) (Belgium).
- [AMO](#) help in open environment (Belgium).

### Success Stories

#### From the School Safety Net Portal

- [Mentoring: Help for Parents](#)  
University students give remedial classes to students with difficulties in a secondary school of Brussels (Belgium).

## Liaise with Other Parents

It is important to keep in contact with other parents because this will empower you to communicate your own opinions and it helps create a link and commitment of parents to school. There are many examples on how to liaise with other parents.

1. You can join the parents' association.
2. You can talk regularly to the parents of children who attend the same class.
3. You can be part of a "parents' café", monitored by a counsellor who speaks your mother tongue and knows your culture. There you may discuss several school-related topics such as homework, health, nutrition, adolescence.
4. You can participate in activities and initiatives of your own neighbourhood because they foster your family's integration into the community and help everybody more aware of your own culture.

### Publications

#### From the School Safety Net Portal

- [Building Partnerships with Immigrant Parents](#) Sobel, Andrea and Kuger, Eileen Gale (USA).  
This article describes the many partnerships that can be created with parents of immigrant children through school and how they can be empowered, provided teachers are prepared to give up their own prejudice and understand the immigrant family situations.

### Websites

- [Taking the Swedish National Diversity Plan to School](#)  
Learn about the many initiatives developed through this diversity plan, which includes 'ideas schools' for diversity, mentoring programs and parents programs as well as partnerships with several social actors.
- [FAPEO](#)  
Fédération des Associations de Parents de l'Enseignement Officiel (Belgium).
- [UFAPEC](#)  
Union Francophone des Associations de Parents de l'Enseignement Catholique (Belgium).



## Where to Find Help

1. There are national platforms to promote and support immigrant parent involvement and immigrant student support (see ACIDI - Programa Escolhas in Portugal). These are connected with local authorities who may help with your child's education.
2. Check also the availability of specific immigrant student programmes in municipalities and schools that specifically involve parents and communities.
3. Check if the school your child attends has a home/school/community liaison coordinator within the school. She/ He may facilitate your contact with the school.
4. If you experience health and housing problems, there is most of the times cross-sectorial co-operation between schools, social welfare, health and housing and therefore, when you talk to the school (class teacher or headteacher), other services will be notified and may help you.

### Training Sources

#### From the School Safety Net Portal

- [The school in the French-speaking Community of Belgium: Guide for parents of immigrant children](#) (Belgium)  
Red Cross of Belgium proposes to parents of migrants an information booklet on how the school system works in French-speaking Belgium.

### Websites

- [Infos Belgique](#)  
Official website with information about life in Belgium addressed to immigrants who settle in Belgium. One section is dedicated to the education system.
- [Site de l'Office des Étrangers](#) (Belgium).
- [ACIDI](#) - Programa Escolhas in Portugal.