

POLISH JOURNAL *of* EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

ISSN 2657-3528

2025, Vol. VII (LXXVII)

DOI: 10.2478/poljes-2025-0012

Support for Students with Experience of Migration in Polish Schools

Agata Butarewicz-Głowacka¹ and Marta Walewska²

ABSTRACT

In Poland, children with migration experience do not formally have any difficulties in accessing mainstream education. They can benefit from it on the same terms as children of Polish citizens. However, their educational successes and school integration largely depend on the systemic solutions of Polish education, the preparation of teachers to work with students from other cultures and the support received from peers. This text is of a review and synthesizing nature. Its aim is to organize and discuss selected threads present in the literature on the subject, and in Polish law, regarding support for students with migration experience in the education system. We indicate formal solutions, issues related to teacher preparation and support provided by peers, so-called peer mentoring. We supplement the theoretical aspects with the results of research conducted in this area by various institutions and propose some practical ideas that can be implemented in the school environment on the basis of peer-mentoring programme Better Together.

KEYWORDS: students with migration experience, migrants, refugees, education, support, peer mentoring

Introduction

Functioning in a multidimensional society is becoming an everyday reality, and preparation for it is one of the most important tasks of school. When analyzing this topic, we cannot forget about the difficulties encountered in Polish schools by students belonging to a different nationality, originating from a different culture or religion, referred

1 Faculty of Education, University of Białystok, Poland
E-MAIL: a.butarewicz@uwb.edu.pl ORCID: 0000-0002-9348-7115

2 Faculty of Education, University of Białystok, Poland
E-MAIL: m.wyszynska@uwb.edu.pl ORCID: 0000-0002-0156-4700

to in the literature on the subject as migrants, displaced persons, with a migration biography, with a migration context (Markowska-Manista, 2016). The situation of children from a different cultural background, who study in a Polish school depends on many aspects. “The socio-political situation in the student’s country of origin, and the cultural baggage relating to the cultural script, in which the student was brought up” (Markowska-Manista, 2016, p. 130) are important reasons for why a family decides to leave their country of origin, shaping the circumstances of migration and refugee-hood. It is also worth mentioning the individual predispositions of each student and the reactions of the community, in which they function, as well as systemic solutions regarding the admission of citizens of other countries, including:

level of knowledge of the Polish language; differences between the education systems in Poland and the child’s country of origin; legal status of the child and parent (citizen, foreigner, with a residence permit, during the procedure for granting refugee status); psychological and developmental conditions (e.g. trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder—PTSD, developmental and language disorders, individual differences—student’s temperament and personality); cultural differences (e.g. values—including the perception of education in different cultures, the meaning of concepts—a good student, etc.); the process of cultural adaptation (e.g. culture shock, acculturation strategies, attitude of the majority society towards minorities); teachers’ competences and skills in working with a multicultural class; social and cultural competences of peers (Białek, 2015, pp. 12–13).

The results of qualitative research commissioned by the Centre for Civic Education indicate factors that, apart from individual predispositions, influence the learning success of students with migration experience. These include, above all, effective knowledge of the Polish language, as well as learning in a classroom, where the core curriculum is implemented. The approach of teachers and their involvement in preparing appropriate teaching resources that will help students coming from abroad to learn the required material is also very important. Students from Ukraine who study in Polish schools, experience numerous educational difficulties. They have particular problems with learning Polish literature and history. Learning German and English is also a challenge, which is probably due to language overload. Another area is science subjects, primarily due to complicated terminology (Tędziągolska et al., 2023).

Lack or low level of language knowledge,

lack of understanding of what is happening during lessons has an impact on foreign students not only demotivating them, disturbing the learning process of other students, causing boredom, but also leading to missing classes (...) and even school dropout or being the cause of inappropriate behaviour during lessons. It leads to low academic results, which affect the results of the entire school (e.g. very poor school ratings in the situation of total evaluation and assessment of the area of educational

outcomes carried out by the school board). Experiences of schools educating foreign students show that the age of the child is of great importance—younger children, compared to older ones, acquire the language faster and have less to catch up (Herubińska, 2018, pp. 199–200).

Educational success and school integration largely depend on the systemic solutions of the Polish education system and on the preparation of teachers to work with students from other cultures. The situation of children with migration experience is a permanent element of the discourse undertaken in scientific activities, as well as a current topic of conversation in Polish schools.

This text is not based on empirical research conducted by the authors, but is of a review and synthesizing nature. Its aim is to organize and discuss selected threads present in the literature on the subject regarding support for students with migration experience in the education system. The analysis is based on Polish law, available scientific publications, reports of international institutions and theoretical studies that address the issue of the functioning of migrant students in the school environment. Particular attention was paid to issues related to the school adaptation of students with migration experience and the role of the school and teachers in creating an environment conducive to integration and equal educational opportunities.

The adopted perspective is illustrative and interpretative, and the content presented does not constitute an attempt to verify research hypotheses or present the results of own research. The authors' aim is to show the dominant directions of reflection, key concepts and recommended solutions indicated in the literature and school practice in the area of inclusive and intercultural education, including the original Better Together programme based on peer mentoring. This text may constitute a reference point for further theoretical analyses and empirical research. It might also be helpful for educational practitioners looking for a structured overview of the most important issues raised in the literature on supporting students with migration experience.

Selected issues of institutional solutions

In Poland, children with migration experience, formally have no difficulties in access to mainstream education. They can use it on the same terms as children of Polish citizens. This applies to both participation in pre-school education, as well as compulsory schooling (until completing primary school, but no longer than until adulthood) and compulsory education until the age of 18 (usually by studying at primary school or completing vocational training with an employer). The legal status of residence of parents or guardians of foreign children is irrelevant. The school's governing body is obliged to organize free Polish language classes for all students who do not know

Polish or know it insufficiently, as well as compensatory classes. Additionally, the school principal may employ a teacher's assistant, a so-called cultural assistant. It is important that this person knows the language of the students' country of origin, as well as the language of the country of residence. Also on school premises, with the consent of the principal and the governing body, diplomatic or consular missions, as well as cultural and educational associations may organize classes in the language and culture of the country of origin (Ustawa Prawo Oświatowe, 2016).

Due to the change in the educational environment and difficulties in adaptation, children and adolescents with migration experience are treated as students with special educational needs (Markowska-Manista, 2016), which means that they are provided with psychological and pedagogical assistance at the facility. It is implemented primarily during ongoing work with the student, through joint activities of teachers and specialists, as well as during additional classes, depending on the individual needs of each student (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 9 sierpnia 2017 r. w sprawie zasad organizacji i udzielania pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej w publicznych przedszkolach, szkołach i placówkach).

The help of a cultural assistant, especially in the initial period after the student arrives in a new country, is very important. This is a person who, due to his knowledge, skills and competences, becomes a guide in the place of residence and supports the child's functioning in a new school. The tasks performed by intercultural assistants include:

participating in the student's adaptation and integration process from the first day of his or her arrival at school with his or her parents until graduation; assistance in completing the application and completing the required documents; providing information about the education system in Poland and the prevailing rules at school; supporting foreign students in their studies and in the process of integration with the school community; supporting students linguistically, during everyday communication and supporting school education during classes, taking notes or doing homework; assistance in translating from Polish into the native language of the student and his family, both during classes, parents' meetings and individual meetings with a psychologist/school pedagogue and teacher management; mediating contacts between the school and children's parents; supporting students in understanding the assessment system, helping in planning their further educational path; conducting mediation in the event of cultural, racial, national, ethnic or religious conflicts (NIK, 2023, pp. 34–35).

Responsibilities of intercultural assistants go beyond translation issues. As Edyta Januszewska and Urszula Markowska-Manista (2017) point out, their presence creates a creative space for taking actions for intercultural education. They point out that the assistant supports teachers' communication with students and their families, elimi-

nates language barriers, which promotes school integration. It supports teaching staff in resolving difficulties and conflicts that arise in a multicultural classroom.

Due to limited financial resources, schools receive support from intercultural assistants mainly through cooperation with non-governmental organizations working in aid of migrants. They employ and finance assistants from grants and projects. Taking into account the high demand of schools, one person usually takes care of students from several institutions. However, not all schools with students from another country employ a cultural assistant. Such support was received by 71.4% of schools audited by the Supreme Audit Office (NIK, 2023).

Bodies managing public and private schools also have the opportunity to create so-called preparatory units. They are aimed at students coming from abroad who experience adaptation difficulties related to cultural differences or a change in the educational environment. These problems result, among others, from previous study abroad in a different educational system or communication disorders caused by ignorance or poor knowledge of the Polish language. This requires appropriate adaptation of the educational process to their individual needs and capabilities. Education in preparatory classes takes place in accordance with the core curriculum of general education (Ustawa Prawo Oświatowe, 2016).

A maximum of 15 students can study in the preparatory department for one school year, but this period may be extended or shortened due to the individual development and educational needs of children and adolescents. The basis for the functioning of preparatory units is to adapt the course of lessons, educational requirements and the method of assessment to the students' abilities, including their competence in using the Polish language. So far, few Polish schools have decided to establish preparatory departments. This was primarily due to the lack of knowledge of the management and teaching staff regarding the introduction of this solution to schools, as well as the critical opinions and negative experiences of European schools that have introduced this type of solutions. It turned out that

students experiencing migration in so-called preparatory classes learn slower (than in the case of inclusion in mainstream education) and therefore it is a practice based on (temporary) separation, which may result in their marginalization and a sense of stigmatization (involuntary granting of the status of an alien) (Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, 2022, p. 127).

Teacher in a multicultural classroom

The implemented activities, which result directly from legal provisions, are intended to help students find their way in the new educational reality. Their aim is primarily

to prevent the marginalization of students with migration experience due to lack of knowledge of the Polish language and educational difficulties. These factors, combined with difficult, often traumatic experiences in the country of origin, may cause emotional difficulties and behavioural disorders leading to failing grades or possibly dropping out of school. However, it is not the formal preparation of the school to accept a student from a different culture that is crucial here. Appropriate preparation of teachers, students and the entire school community is much more important. The grassroots initiatives they undertake influence the climate of a given classroom and the sense of belonging and safety of all students. Taking into account the needs of students with migration experience during lessons, time spent during breaks, as well as extracurricular initiatives, makes adaptation to new educational and social conditions faster.

The School with Class Foundation³ conducted research among Polish teachers of primary and secondary schools regarding various aspects of education and inclusion of Ukrainian students. The vast majority of them had no experience in working with students from another country or culture, or they had just single students. Only 9 percent of teachers worked with many students from another country, including less than 4 percent who had contact with children from Ukraine. These data show that the majority of Polish teachers only after the events of February 2022 encountered the new challenge of working in a multicultural environment. This involved not only preparing and conducting lessons differently than previously known, but also dealing with new emerging difficulties. The situation was further complicated by the communication barrier. Only 0.1% of respondents declared knowledge of the Ukrainian language, while almost every third teacher declared knowledge of the Russian language (Pyżalski et al., 2022).

The results of the conducted analyses indicate that many teachers, despite the lack of professional preparation for working in a multicultural classroom, try to support children with migration experience in the teaching process (Januszewska & Markowska-Manista, 2017). At the same time, the presence of Ukrainian students in Polish schools is still perceived by teachers as a challenge that does not bring any benefits apart from expanding knowledge about Ukraine. They believe that the basis for the educational integration of students with migration experience is, above all, mastering the Polish language. They also indicate adapting to the rules prevailing in Polish schools, as well as mastering the content resulting from the core curriculum. Teachers do not feel prepared to work in a classroom with students coming from another country. They believe that the reason is not the lack of appropriate professional competences, but language barriers that make communication difficult. Principals

3 <https://www.szkolazklasa.org.pl> (access: 10.10.2025)

and teachers are usually not aware that to conduct effective teaching in a culturally diverse classroom, other competencies are also needed, e.g. the ability to integrate students or conduct teaching in a multilingual classroom. This indicates the need to conduct teacher training activities in the field of multicultural education for the good of all students, including Polish ones, and the comfort of teachers' work. It is important that this type of initiatives are conducted as a well-thought-out and planned development path, and not as occasional participation in proposed training and workshops (Tędzińska et al., 2023).

However, it should be remembered that working with a culturally diverse class, due to its unpredictability and permanent changeability, is a big challenge because "it requires modification of teaching and learning methods, constant search for new forms of work (...) This requires a creative and flexible approach to the teaching-learning process" (Młynarczuk-Sokołowska & Szostak-Król, 2016, p. 156). Therefore, it is not possible to prepare teachers to solve all unexpected and difficult situations. It can be assumed that the requirements that the multicultural space of social and educational life placed on a modern teacher will be most effectively met by an individual with a creative attitude. It is characterized by, among other things, curiosity about the world, openness, tolerance, commitment and acceptance of conflicts and opposites.

A person who creatively perceives himself and his world, operates in an open, polyphonic borderland space. It strives to understand another culture through an ethical attitude of non-co-presence and realizes itself in dialogical coexistence with Others, in a constant process of becoming, in unfinished, searching for oneself from the future (Cudowska, 2004, p. 127).

Contact with otherness makes one sensitive to ambiguity and uncertainty and mobilizes them to engage in dialogue and search for new solutions to emerging problems. Therefore, there is a need to shape creative attitudes of teachers to enable them to effectively carry out educational tasks in the new, multicultural reality and to prepare children and young people to function in a diverse and multidimensional world.

Peer mentoring in education

The educational development and potential of all children can only be fully realized, if their social and emotional needs are taken into account. In the case of students from a migrant background, this is particularly important. In the new environment, they may experience behaviours that hinder optimal participation in school life, such as segregation, hostility, and harassment. For this reason, "while focusing on developing migrant students' language skills and supporting the learning process, it is equally

important to promote their personal, social and emotional development in order to create optimal learning conditions" (Eurydice, 2019, p. 21). Children and young people coming from abroad enter a world they have never known before. Virtually everything they experience is marked by otherness, which can cause fear and a sense of helplessness. Access to school, and therefore to the peer group, is initially also marked by uncertainty and fear. Appropriate reception of new students and recognizing their presence and needs in the new environment is an important element of the basic human need, which is a sense of security. At the school education stage, acceptance and integration with peers is an important need of young people. Integration has been identified as a key element in the settlement process of refugees and migrants (Koirala et al., 2024). Its satisfaction in a properly functioning group gives a chance for development and self-fulfilment, and at the same time prevents social marginalization.

Peer support, also known as mentoring, befriending, or having a peer buddy, is used in numerous facilities in the United States and Europe (e.g., Great Britain and Ireland). Its main assumption is to create a positive climate for learning and work, in which the social and emotional well-being of all participants of the educational process is important (Brady et al., 2014, after: Tzani-Pepelasi, 2019). Programmes based on establishing peer relationships can be introduced already at preschool age. This is the time when the youngest establish their first interpersonal relationships, and their nature and method of establishing them are the basis for social interactions in the future (Hanish et al., 2022).

People functioning in a developed support network—surrounded by close people: family, friends, neighbours, belonging to various communities—groups connected by conscious and emotional bonds, connected by a community of interests and views, cope better with difficult life situations, with experienced frustration and stress, hence, they are less burdened with the negative consequences of experiencing them, and therefore less at risk developmentally and socially (Ostafińska-Molik & Wysocka, 2014, p. 84).

Similarly, the lack of a support group in the case of subjectively felt loneliness, causes difficulties in the mental and physical sphere of the individual, making it difficult to function and cope with emerging adversities.

There are plenty of peer-mentoring based programmes in aid of children in Europe, many of which are aimed at children with a migration background. The Refugee Education UK (REUK) programme is an initiative supporting young refugees and asylum seekers, aged around 14–25, who are studying at school or college in the UK. Participants are paired with volunteer mentors, with whom they meet once a week for about an hour. During these meetings, they work on homework and things they find difficult at school, improve their English and develop self-confidence. The main goal of the programme is to counteract social isolation and support in achieving educational

goals, which helps young migrants integrate and find their way in the new educational system. The programme operates in several cities in the UK, such as London, Birmingham and Oxford—and is a valuable form of support both for young refugees and for volunteers who want to engage in education and social support.⁴

Another worth-mentioning initiative in the UK is The Hope for the Young programme, which offers mentoring support to young refugees and asylum seekers, living in and around London. Participants meet with their mentors once a week for approximately six months, working to improve their English, develop independence skills, build self-confidence, and prepare for further education. Mentors are volunteers, who receive specialized induction training to best support their mentees. The programme places a strong emphasis on individual attention, trust, and emotional support, helping young migrants navigate their new environment, develop their potential, and gain greater independence.⁵

In the United States of America, where mentoring and peer-mentoring programmes are very popular, there are also a lot of initiatives in the field of migrant students. One of them is The Maine Immigrant & Refugee Services (MEIRS)' Refugee Youth Mentoring programme, an initiative for refugee and migrant youth in Maine, USA. In this programme, young people are paired with trained mentors, and the goal is to create a supportive relationship, in which the mentor helps, among other things, adapting to their new country, planning their education and career. The programme includes weekly meetings, during which the mentee and mentor work on academic support, primarily English, math, and academic subjects, development of social and life skills, and exploring career paths, civic engagement, building a sense of belonging, and appreciating one's cultural heritage.⁶

As a part of a project financed by the European Union, a mentoring programme was developed and implemented in a Portuguese school for newly arrived migrant children, responding to the lack of activities supporting their integration. The programme was based on a participatory and co-creation approach, with three main goals: strengthening the voice of migrant children, their agency and active citizenship, and facilitating integration in school. Older students acted as mentors, supporting their migrant peers. During the academic year, joint activities were carried out to promote integration, diversity and sustainable development in the school environment. The evaluation, which included a survey and focus group with children and teachers, showed the development of values such as tolerance, respect and empathy, as well as an increased awareness of teachers about the needs of migrant children and

4 <https://www.reuk.org/weeklystudysupport>

5 <https://hopefortheyoung.org.uk/about-us> (access: 13.10.2025).

6 <https://meirs.org/youth-programs> (access: 13.10.2025).

the importance of including their voices into the school initiatives (de Carvalho et al., 2025).

Due to the large number of migrants, including refugees, in Poland, more and more programmes are being created to support the integration and education process of children with migration experience. One of such initiatives was Peer Mentoring programme, designed in 2011 in the Foundation Dialog (former: Foundation of Education and Creativity) in Białystok. The programme assumes that peers or a bit older Polish students, who function well at school, support younger or newer students, including foreign students, assisting with adaptation, language learning, and community integration. According to the research results, thanks to relationship based on trust and partnership between the peer mentor and the mentee, better educational and social results are obtained. Students with migration experience reduce their sense of loneliness and isolation, improve Polish language and obtain better academic results. Not only foreign students benefit from the programme, but also peer mentors, developing social and leadership competencies through mentoring, they become more active, develop empathy, and self-confidence (Butarewicz & Potoniec, 2013).

Another Polish initiative, run by Salvation Foundation, is Knowledge to the Power—a tutoring and scholarship programme aimed at supporting the education of children and young people with migration experience, including refugees. The programme is addressed to young people, aged 9–17, living in Warsaw, who attend Polish schools, especially those experiencing learning difficulties and at risk of dropping out. Through systematic support, the programme increases educational opportunities for foreign children and supports their individual development. Although, the main element of the programme here is not mentoring but tutoring, but the idea of such support is similar. Each child participating in the programme has the opportunity to use the help of a volunteer, who provides learning support during weekly meetings. These meetings are not only educational in nature, but also serve to motivate the child and support him in achieving his educational goals.⁷

The effectiveness of youth peer programmes is visible in three areas of preventive activities. They provide participants with knowledge and psychosocial skills that are important in overcoming situations that threaten proper development. They also prevent the occurrence of risk factors, reducing the possibility of destructive behaviour that is inconsistent with applicable social norms. In return, they are a source of protective factors that promote a healthy lifestyle, healthy peer relationships as well as activities for the common environment (Gaś, 2003).

⁷ https://ocalenie.org.pl/co-robimy/wiedza-do-potegi?utm_source=chatgpt.com# (access: 15.10.2025).

The results of numerous studies show that interactions between members of different groups result in the development of tolerance, understanding, empathy and trust, and at the same time reduce prejudices. Positive effects are most likely to occur when the relationship is based on cooperation, focused on a specific goal and supported by significant people and authorities (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, as cited in: Hanish et al., 2022). Research conducted in Italy additionally shows that contact with one group considered foreign also improves attitudes towards other groups. Italian children's friendships with immigrant children were associated with a reduction in their prejudices against children with disabilities (Vezzali et al., as cited in Hanish et al., 2022). Peer support prevents the occurrence of peer violence, including cyberbullying, and also contributes to taking intervention actions when children and adolescents witness aggression (Cowie, 2011, Thornberg and Jungert, 2013, as cited in: Tzani-Pepelasi et al., 2019). It has also a positive impact on relationships with peers and establishing friendships, as well as involvement in learning and class life (Carter et al., 2016, as cited in: Tzani-Pepelasi et al., 2019). Taking care of peers increases one's sense of self-confidence, as well as responsibility and morality (Tzani-Pepelasi et al., 2019).

Better Together programme as a tool supporting the integration of students at school

The Better Together peer mentoring programme is a part of the "School Accessible to All" project implemented by the Educational Research Institute, in partnership with UNICEF and the Ministry of National Education in Poland. The idea of the programme is that every new student has his own guide from the first day—a peer who introduces him to school life, supports him in learning and helps him find his way in the group. The results of the research show that such relationships not only facilitate adaptation, but also increase the sense of security, strengthen motivation and improve academic performance (OECD, 2017).

The programme involves the cooperation of pairs of students: mentors and mentees. Students who know well the principles of Polish schools, their requirements, rights and obligations become mentors. People under their care may be students with migration or refugee experience, as well as those who have adaptation difficulties, need support in integrating with a group or help with learning. The detailed aims of the programme include: integration of children with migration experience with Polish students at school, reducing the sense of loneliness and isolation of those under care, support for children and adolescents with adaptation difficulties, establishing social relationships by students with experience of migration and refugeehood, learning Polish by foreign students, developing social skills of mentors and mentees, solving

difficulties and possible conflicts resulting from cultural differences and promoting the idea of peer mentoring based on volunteering (Butarewicz-Głowacka & Walewska, 2024).

The Better Together programme should be implemented throughout the school year at primary or upper secondary school. It includes several stages: choosing a programme coordinator at school; diagnosis of students with migration experience support needs; promotion of the programme at school; recruitment of candidates for mentors among Polish students; recruitment of mentees—students with migration experience; training of candidates for mentors; selection of mentors; selection of mentees; introducing mentors and mentees to the programme; pairing mentors with mentees; mentoring work; support and supervision of the programme coordinator; end of relationship; evaluation (Butarewicz-Głowacka & Walewska, 2024).

Due to the limited volume of the text, we will focus here only on the chosen aspects of the programme implementation, i.e. the selection of a coordinator, the selection of mentors, the matching process and evaluation. The choice of a coordinator is very important, because the programme implementation depends on him. This role can only be entrusted to a person who wants to implement it only of his own free will. Any employee can be a programme coordinator at school, e.g. a teacher, pedagogue, psychologist, after-school teacher, library employee. The mentoring programme is based on voluntary work, therefore, it is very important that the chosen supervisor of the programme feels its validity implementation, and has time and opportunity to get involved. Charisma of the programme coordinator is vital as well, he should be a person who enjoys the authority of students and is a mentor for them. Such a programme supervisor attracts students, encourages them, motivates them to participate in the programme, and also gives them a sense of support, very necessary for both Polish students and foreign students (Butarewicz-Głowacka & Walewska, 2024).

All of the Polish students who want to become mentors need to participate in the training. After completing the training, the programme coordinator selects these students who, in his opinion, are ready to get involved into mentoring relationships. Among the criteria that the programme supervisor should take into account when choosing mentors there are: good academic results; very good or exemplary behaviour; pro-social attitude; willingness to engage in volunteering; soft skills, i.e. psycho-social skills that allow for effective communication, building relationships, resolving conflicts, adapting to various situations, working in a group; personality traits such as responsibility, perseverance, determination, reliability, patience, reliability, tolerance, openness, self-confidence, independence, creativity, consistency, activity, kindness, assertiveness, sensitivity, empathy; internal motivation; passion and enthusiasm for action; readiness and willingness to expand your knowledge and acquire new skills (Butarewicz-Głowacka & Walewska, 2024).

The process of selecting mentors must be thoughtful and careful. Chosen mentors should meet the above criteria. This will prevent disappointments during the implementation of the programme, it will also increase the chance of relationship success and achieving goals. Programme supervisor, who works at school, knows his students best, so can choose the right students (Butarewicz-Głowacka & Walewska, 2024).

The matching process is not an easy task. The better the coordinator knows the students, the better he will pair them. When matching, it is worth considering such factors as:

- gender—it is advisable that the mentor and his mentee are of the same gender, as they usually are easier to establish a relationship;
- age—it is worth combining pairs within the same class, because the mentor and the mentee spend more time together, and it is easier to organize joint meetings, when students finish lessons at the same time;
- interests, passions—it is good when the mentor and the mentee have similar hobbies, they like similar things, this is often a good starting point to get to know each other and establish relationships;
- personality—it is good, when the mentor and his mentee have a similar temperament, so that it is easier for them to establish a relationship;
- educational situation—it is worth paying attention to the mentor's strengths and weaknesses, if, for example, the mentee has the greatest problems with learning mathematics, it is advisable that his mentor is good at learning this subject;
- needs—it is good when the mentor is able to meet the needs of the mentee, e.g. when a mentee is a shy and needs support in overcoming the barrier of shyness, it is worth having a mentor who is a self-confident person;
- experiences—if the mentor and mentee often have similar experiences it is easier to start a relationship together (Butarewicz-Głowacka & Walewska, 2024).

An extremely important task of the programme coordinator is its evaluation, which should be formative in nature. Its goal is optimization the evaluated programme, i.e. quality improvement, verification of the solutions adopted, choosing those that seem most appropriate. The evaluation in the programme is so important, not only because of the intended effects, but also because of the whole mentoring process. Evaluation is conducted both during the programme and after its completion. Thanks to the evaluation carried out during the programme, one can check functioning of couples, as well as achieving goals. Moreover, relationship monitoring makes possible regular support for mentors and mentees (Butarewicz-Głowacka & Walewska, 2024). Our experiences and results evaluation of many mentoring programmes indicate that these mentoring couples achieve better results, which are supervised and supported by programme

supervisors, as well as those in whose mentors are prepared and trained for their role (DuBois et al., 2002).

Conclusion

When coming to a new country, children encounter various social and emotional difficulties. Their functioning depends on individual factors, the circumstances of migration and the possibility of prior preparation for it, as well as the assistance received in the new place of residence. These factors will influence the course of the cultural adaptation process (Achremowicz & Kida, 2021). Access to properly organized education, the possibility of self-fulfilment, a sense of security, acceptance also by the peer community and belonging to it, and, above all, integration with it, are important life needs of a young person at the stage of school education. Satisfying them, on the one hand, provides opportunities for comprehensive activity of the individual, and on the other hand, prevents exclusion.

Students with migration experience, who feel good in the Polish school environment and integrate well with the local community, usually achieve better educational results and show greater commitment to learning. The sense of belonging and acceptance in the school environment promotes not only the cognitive, but also emotional and social development of students. The response to the need for more effective integration is the proposed Better Together programme, which through peer mentoring supports the adaptation of new students, building relationships and mutual understanding between children from different cultural backgrounds. Thanks to this, the school becomes an open, supportive and conducive place for the development of every student.

References

- Achremowicz, H., & Kida, P. (2021). *Razem w szkole. Praca w szkole z uczniem migranckim i w klasach międzykulturowych*. Fundacja Ukraina.
- Białek, K. (Eds.). (2015). *Międzykulturowość w szkole. Poradnik dla nauczycieli i specjalistów*. Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji.
- Butarewicz, A., & Potoniec, K. (2013). *Mentoring rówieśniczy w szkole: od teorii do praktycznego zastosowania wobec uczniów cudzoziemskich*. Fundacja Edukacji i Twórczości.
- Butarewicz-Głowacka, A., & Walewska, M. (2024). *Razem Rażniej—mentoring rówieśniczy na rzecz wsparcia uczniów z doświadczeniem migracji*. Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych.
- Cudowska, A. (2004). *Kształtowanie twórczych orientacji życiowych w procesie edukacji*. Trans Humana Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie.

- de Carvalho, C.M., Garoufallidou, D., & Pinto, I.R. (2025). Mentorship in Schools: A Co-Creation Programme That Gives a Voice to Migrant Children. *Social Sciences*, 14(5), 252. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14050252>
- DuBois, D.L., Holloway, B.E., Valentine, J.C., & Cooper, H. (2002). Effectiveness of mentoring programs for youth: A meta-analytic review. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30, 157–197.
- Eurydice, (2019). *Integracja uczniów w szkołach w Europie ze środowisk migranckich. Polityka poszczególnych krajów i stosowane rozwiązania. Raport Eurydice*. Wydawnictwo FRSE. https://www.frse.org.pl/brepo/panel_repo_files/2021/02/18/bwuxby/migranciinternetpl.pdf
- Gaś, Z. (2003), *Młodzieżowe programy rówieśnicze*. https://www.parpa.pl/download/remedium/mlodziezowe_03.pdf
- Hanish, L.D., Xiao, S.X., Malouf, L.M., Martin, C.L., Goble, P., Fabes, R.A., DeLay, D., & Bryce, C.I. (2022). The benefits of buddies: Strategically pairing preschoolers with other-gender classmates promotes positive peer interactions. *Early Education and Development*, 34(2). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361321868_The_Benefits_of_Buddies_Strategically_Pairing_Preschoolers_with_Other-Gender_Classmates_Promotes_Positive_Peer_Interactions
- Herubińska, M.H. (2018). Dzieci cudzoziemskie w polskiej szkole. Portret(y), wyzwania i problemy. *Wychowanie w Rodzinie*, 1, 187–209. <https://doi.org/10.34616/wwr20181.187.209>
- Januszewska, E., & Markowska-Manista, U. (2017). *Dziecko „inne” kulturowo w Polsce. Z badań nad edukacją szkolną*. Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej.
- Koirala, S., Mekonnen, G.T., Deller, B., Arinaitwe, G., Kezabu, K., Swabey, K., & Kember, D. (2024). Implementing a migrant and refugee mentoring program through action research. *Heliyon*, 10(22), e40470. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e40470>
- Markowska-Manista, U. (2016). Praca z uczniem z trudnościami adaptacyjnymi—specyfika różnic kulturowych i zmiany środowiska edukacyjnego. In E. Śmiechowska-Petrovskij (Eds.), *Dzieci z trudnościami adaptacyjnymi w młodszym wieku. Aspekty rozwojowe i edukacyjne w kontekście specyfiki różnic kulturowych* (p. 125–148). Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego.
- Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, A. (2022). *Codziennosc polskiej szkoły z perspektywy dzieci i młodzieży ze środowiska przymusowych migrantów*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku.
- Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, A., & Szostak-Król, K. (2016). Uczniowie cudzoziemscy w polskiej szkole—problemy, wyzwania i egemplifikacje działań metodycznych. In E. Śmiechowska-Petrovskij (Eds.), *Dzieci z trudnościami adaptacyjnymi w młodszym wieku. Aspekty rozwojowe i edukacyjne w kontekście specyfiki różnic kulturowych* (p. 149–171). Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego.
- Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, (2023). *Kształcenie dzieci cudzoziemców w polskich szkołach. Informacja o wynikach kontroli*. NIK. <https://www.nik.gov.pl/plik/id,28888,vp,31720.pdf>
- OECD (2017), *Evidence-based Policy Making for Youth Well-being: A Toolkit, OECD Development Policy Tools*. OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264283923-en>

- Ostafińska-Molik, B., & Wysocka, E. (2014). Doświadczanie wsparcia społecznego przez młodzież. *Pedagogika Społeczna*, 3, 83–104.
- Pyżalski, J. et al. (2022). *Razem w klasie. Dzieci z Ukrainy w polskich szkołach. Potencjały i wyzwania w budowaniu wielokulturowej szkoły w kontekście wojny w Ukrainie według nauczycieli i nauczycielek. Raport z badania*. Fundacja Szkoła z Klasą. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363535374_Pyzalski_J_i_in_2022_Razem_w_klasie_Dzieci_z_Ukrainy_w_polskich_szkolach_Potencjaly_i_wyzwania_w_budowaniu_wielokulturowej_szkoly_w_kontekście_wojny_w_Ukrainie_według_nauczycieli_i_nauczycielek_Raport
- Tędziągolska, M., Walczak, B., & Wielecki, K.M. (2023). *Uczniowie uchodźczy w polskich szkołach. Gdzie jesteśmy u progu kolejnego roku szkolnego?* https://ceo.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Raport_Uczniowie_uchodźczy_w_polskich_szkolach_CEO_wrzesien_2023.pdf
- Tzani-Pepelasi C., Ioannou M., Synnott J., & McDonnell D. (2019). Peer Support at Schools: The Buddy Approach as a Prevention and Intervention Strategy for School Bullying. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention*, 1, 111–123. <https://pure.hud.ac.uk/en/publications/peer-support-at-schools-the-buddy-approach-as-a-prevention-and-in>

Legal Acts

- Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 9 sierpnia 2017 r. w sprawie zasad organizacji i udzielania pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej w publicznych przedszkolach, szkołach i placówkach. Dziennik Ustaw z 2023 poz. 1798. <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20230001798/O/D20231798.pdf>
- Ustawa z dnia 16 grudnia 2016 roku Prawo oświatowe. Dziennik Ustaw. z 2024 r. poz. 737. <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20170000059/U/D20170059Lj.pdf>

Websites

- <https://www.szkolazklasa.org.pl>
- <https://www.reuk.org/weeklystudysupport>
- <https://hopefortheyoung.org.uk/about-us>
- <https://meirs.org/youth-programs>
- https://ocalenie.org.pl/co-robimy/wiedza-do-potegi?utm_source=chatgpt.com#