



How to improve immigrant's integration in Haukivuori secondary school

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Development Project Report

05/2007



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| Author(s) Liisa Väänänen | Type of Publication Development project report | |
| | Pages 1-28 | Language English |
| | Confidential Until <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | |
| Title How to improve the immigrant's integration in Haukivuori secondary school | | |
| Degree Programme Bachelor | | |
| Tutor(s) | | |
| Assigned by | | |
| Abstract <p>In my Development project I deal with things like immigrants, immigrants in Finland, integration and the rules and regulations of Haukivuori secondary school. When immigrants arrive to Finland and start school here they only have a little bit of knowledge about our rules and regulations. This lack of knowledge might cause problems and delay their settling in.</p> <p>My goal in my Development project was to create an easily understandable and useful guide for the immigrants in Haukivuori secondary school. I gathered together all the possible information I could think of being unknown to the immigrants. I also asked the immigrants and teachers in Haukivuori about the issues that often bother them or cause misunderstanding.</p> <p>Almost all the advice to immigrants that I have dealt with in my development project is practical and quite often is a part of a weekly routine in Haukivuori secondary school. I also put together some basic information about Finland which was considered important by the immigrants.</p> <p>I believe that integration is a long and difficult task to anybody and I truly hope that my Development project will give at least some help to the immigrants in Haukivuori secondary school.</p> | | |
| Keywords immigrants, integration | | |
| Miscellaneous | | |

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How to improve the immigrant student's integration in Haukivuori secondary school

Introduction

There are more and more immigrants coming to Finland everyday. Usually the immigrants come from countries that have totally different kind of religion, habits and values. This is a great opportunity for us to expand our knowledge of other cultures and get to know people from different backgrounds. But it is also a very demanding task for us. We have to realize that immigrants are not used to live the way we do and they don't necessarily have any knowledge on how to behave and manage in our country. One very important thing to remember is that quite often immigrants have faced war or other violent behaviour or poverty. So I think that we should try to be very understanding, helpful and patient when they are going through the integration process. Integration is a very long and difficult process but there are many things that can make it a lot easier.

In my development project I concentrated on how to give the immigrants more information about schoolwork and courses of action in Haukivuori comprehensive school. I also gathered together some basic information about Finland and our culture. When new students come to Haukivuori secondary school they are given a brochure about the rules and regulations in our school. This brochure is called "Academy year hand out" and it contains pretty much all the information one needs to know to be able to manage in everyday life in our school. But my idea is to expand all the advice that is given to new students and try to make it easier to understand for the immigrants. I will explain the rules in a more detailed way and add few piece of advice just to make sure I have covered everything the immigrants might come across during their settling in.

2 The secondary school of Haukivuori

2.1 Facts and figures of Haukivuori secondary school

Haukivuori is a small village in South-Savo and it has about 2300 inhabitants. The secondary school and the upper secondary school are on the same premises and few teachers teach in both schools. There are about 20 teachers and about 120 students in the secondary school of Haukivuori. About 30% of the students come from other villages for example from Virtasalmi, Kalvitsa and Hiirola. At the moment there are 15 immigrants in our school. The immigrants come from Pakistan, Afganistan and Iran.

I think that the smallness of the school gives it a great value. I think that the students are more close to each other than in a big school and there are no boundaries between different classes. I have found the secondary school of Haukivuori a very pleasant place to work and I dare to say that at least some of the students know that they are quite privileged to be able to study there.

2.2 Student's union and supportive students

In the curriculum it is said that the secondary school atmosphere is ment to be safe, positive, open and tolerant. Every year there is an election of the students union. The students union works to strengthen the feeling of togetherness. The members of the union come from every class and are elected by voting. The union arranges different kinds of happenings during the school year. For example they work together with the teachers to arrange the outdoor activities day and create all kinds of competitions among the students. Via the union the students have a change to influence on everyday life in our school.

There is also a group of support students in our school. These students are voluntary and they want to help the newcomers to settle in in our school.

Their work takes mostly place at the beginning of the school year when new students arrive. Their job is to help the newcomers with all the practical things and to give advice when needed. In case of bullying or other forbidden activities they are the ones to contact or teachers of course.

3 Immigrants and integration

A person who is called an immigrant usually lives in another country than his/her original country. Immigrants can be refugees, asylum seekers or returnees. They are always the minority groups in their new home country. There are many reasons why people have had to leave their original country and become immigrants. Usually the reasons are either race, religion, citizenship, political opinions or the social group they are in. (Talib, 2004, 20-21.)

What is meant by integration then? Integration is a long process in which the immigrant tries to settle in in his/her new home country. There might be complications when the immigrants and native citizens meet. A lot of research have been done to see how the immigrants settle in or if they settle in. The researchers want to know if the immigrants want to maintain their own habits, believes and culture and reject the new culture they are surrounded by in their new home country.

It is also important to know weather the immigrants will change their values and how well they do for example at work life in their new country. (Syrjäytyä vai selviytyä- pakolaisten elämää Suomessa 1994, 9).

3.1 How to facilitate integration

Immigrants themselves say that for example unemployment makes integration more difficult. Also things like prejudices, lack of Finnish language, cultural differences, bad experiences in their original country and the worry of the relatives who have had to stay there, make integration a lot worse than it should be. The size of the cities or villages the

immigrants have been placed to is also one thing that the immigrants find negative. And it is quite often the small size of their new place of residence. The immigrants also admit that their false beliefs and images about the life in a new country has made their integration more difficult. (Syrjäytyä vai selviytyä- pakolaisten elämää Suomessa 1994, 88-89).

Mirja Talib talks about the difficulties of integration in her book: “Kulttuurit ja koulu”. She says for example that when immigrants arrive to Finland and go to school they might be placed wrongly. And what she means by this is the fact that immigrants are not being treated fairly. In most cases the immigrants don’t have fluent Finnish if any, so the communication is very difficult. Because of the lack of verbal skills they might be considered not being able to understand and they will be put for example to special teaching. Even though this is not the right place for them they might stay there until they finish school. Mirja Talib also claims that immigrant’s different religion and the fact that they usually are from the lower social class has something to do with the way teachers treat them and will lead to poor success at school. (Talib 1994, 99.)

3.2 What is needed to improve the integration

I asked the immigrants in our school what we should change to make their integration easier? I asked their opinions about our school, what is good and what is bad. But the most important thing that I wanted them to tell me was the changes they thought should be done to make their integration easier. I got few suggestions but all of them agreed that more information about Finland is needed: “*Our knowledge about Finland is imperfect.*” They would like to know more about the schoolwork in Finland, what Finnish people are like, our habits and so on. So pretty much they would like to know more about our culture and get concrete advice on how to manage in everyday life. “*We need a guide about Finland and things in school.*”

I had a little chat with few teachers and I asked them about what they feel the immigrants should know more about. The teachers thought that it would be vital to tell them about basic rules in our school. The rules that play a role in everyday life. *“I think they should know more about what to do in case they are absent, when they are allowed to leave the school premises and so on.”*

Sometimes it seems that even little things that we Finns never think about, because they are so obvious to us, are totally unknown to the immigrants. This is when the frustration comes along. The teacher might not have time to explain everything from the very beginning and if the teacher does have the time and the energy to do that, the other students get nervous and so on. So it would be good if at least some of these conflicts could be avoided. The immigrants can't possibly know the rules in Finland or if told about them, they might not still understand them because their way of thinking and seeing the world is so different to Finnish people.

4 Immigrant's life in Finland

4.1 Immigrant's rights

Immigrants in Finland are entitled to the same rights and benefits as native citizens. They have the same rights for example for education. This is a great opportunity especially for those immigrants who have not had a change for any kind of education in their lifetime. Some of the immigrants don't know how to read and write and this pretty much leads to unemployment. And what comes to youngsters, they are usually situated to normal comprehensive schools among Finnish students. This will help them to learn the language better which is a vital skill for an integration to be successful.

The Finnish minister of labour, Tarja Filatov held a speech in Hämeenlinna to Finnish teachers and in her speech she stressed the meaning of comprehensive schools. She considers it to be the most important indicator to show how well youngsters will be employed in the future. Youngsters get their willingness to learn new and their attitude towards everything in a comprehensive school. But if they have bad experiences and miserable memories from comprehensive school, they might hold on to these for a very long time if not for the rest of their lives.

The economists in Finland agree with Tarja Filatov that we should really invest to human capital which will be gained through good education. And the basis for good education and the willingness to receive knowledge will be given by the teachers in comprehensive schools. In other words good start in school world will provide the students with excellent opportunities to achieve good jobs and a good basis for further studies. (Työministeriö 2007).

4.2 Immigrant's past

I attended a seminar in Mikkeli on the 10.2.2007. The seminar was about: "Help to learn". There were a teacher couple who had lived in Pakistan for 11 years and they told us about their experience abroad. They went to Pakistan to improve schools and the educational system in general.

They showed us pictures of the refugee camps and told us about everyday life in the camps. People in those camps lived in small tents, had barely any food to eat and they were also kept isolated from other people by guards. I was wondering then about the impact that the refugee camps have on people there. Some of the people spend over 10 years in those camps before they are set free. Imagine what that can do to your mind and if I think about the lost time and the lack of education, the loss is enormous.

4.3 Attitudes towards immigrants in Finland

Over the years quite many Finnish have moved abroad after better life, for example to America, Australia and Sweden. Some of them have returned but it was not until the 1980 when more people started to move to Finland than moving out from Finland. So the immigrants that have moved to Finland since 1980 have mostly been Finnish who returned home. Asylum seekers started to come to Finland from the beginning of the 1990's.

(Jaakkola 2005, 1.)

At the very beginning of the immigration people had quite bad attitudes towards immigrants. And they still do but not so much anymore. Jaakkola says in her book: "Suomalaisten suhtautuminen maahanmuuttajiin vuosina 1987-2003" that hate and anger towards immigrants have eased up a lot during the last years. Especially after the recession the attitudes started to change rapidly. During the recession people in Finland considered the immigrants as a threat for the economic wealth and people were also afraid that the immigrants will rise the amount of unemployment Finns.

4.4 Attitudes towards different kind of immigrants

When people in Finland started to get familiar with the idea of many immigrants coming to Finland they also started to prioritize different immigrants. What I mean by this is the way how people wanted to "choose" the immigrants to Finland. Finns preferred to get certain kinds of immigrants. The group of immigrants that the Finns wanted to help the most, were the ones who were threatened by war. I guess people saw that they were in need of the most urgent help. Some might also think that they could not be helped from Finland, for example given money or sending food. The second group that the Finns wanted to help were the in the development countries who suffered from famine. After this group the Finns were concerned about the people who had environmental problems. People whose problems were caused by politics, religion or race didn't

play a very big role when the Finns prioritized the distress of the immigrants. (Jaakkola 2005, 44-47.)

4.5 The profile of the immigrant friendly Finn

Roughly said the Finn who is more likely to have a positive attitude towards the immigrant can be describe as follows: It is more often a she than a he. She lives in the Southern part of Finland, more likely in Helsinki. She has a very good education and she supports the green or the leftist party. She has had contacts with the immigrants, might even have immigrants as friends. She has also travelled a lot abroad and is interested seeing different places and getting to know different cultures.

However this profile will change when the point of you changes and the profile is not so simple anymore. (Jaakkola, 49-58) For example when you think about different professions there are big differencies in opinions. The police and the border guards have often more negative feelings towards immigrants than teachers and social workers do. The police and the border guards also think that Finland has done enough for immigrants and teachers and social workers think the opposite. (Pitkänen & Kouki 1999, 62-63).

5 Getting familiar with Finland

During my time abroad I realized that people don't know that much about Finland. I was always asked a lot of questions about the Finnish nature, religion, the Finns and the climate. These things matter and interest people and I can believe these things are something that immigrants would like to know more about as well. So here I have gathered together some basic information about Finland that I think I would like to know when moving to a new country. I also believe that for example the weather in Finland is very different than the weather in immigrants original country so knowing about different seasons in Finland is very practical and useful.

5.1 Facts about Finland

There are 5 275 486 people in Finland. Finland's neighbouring countries are Sweden, Russia, Norway and Estonia. The capital of Finland is Helsinki which is located in the South of Finland, also most of the Finnish people live in the South.

The languages spoken in Finland are Finnish and Swedish. Only 5.5% of the people in Finland speak Swedish as their first language. Finland is one of the richest countries in the world. Finland became an independent country on the 6th of December 1917. Ever since we have been celebrating our independency on the 6th of December. Finland has a President who is selected by citizens every six years. At the moment our President is Tarja Halonen. Finland is part of the EU and Finland has its own army which is compulsory for men. Women can also apply to the army if they want.

5.2 Holidays in Finland

January

1.1 New years day

1.6 Epiphany

February

5.2 Runeberg's day

6.2 The National day for the Sami's

14.2 Valentine's day

18.2 Shrove Sunday

20.2 Shrove Tuesday (pancake day)

28.2 Kalevala's day, a day for the Finnish culture

March

- 8.3 International women's Day
- 18.3 Parliamentary election Day
- 19.3 Minna Canth's Day
- 25.3 Summer time begins

April

- 1.4 Palm Sunday
- 5.4 Maundy Thursday
- 6.4 Good Friday
- 8.4 Easter Day
- 9.4 2nd Easter Day, Mikael Agricola's Day, The day of the Finnish language
- 27.4 National Day for Veterans
- 30.4 The eve of the Labour Day, May day

May

- 1.5 The Labour day, May day
- 12.5 J.V Snellman's Day
- 13.5 Mother's Day
- 17.5 Ascension Day
- 20.5 Memory day for those who were fallen in the war
- 27.5 Whitsun

June

4.6 The day of the armed forces

20.6 The summer solstice

21.6 The Midsummer eve

22.6 The Midsummer, The day of the Finnish flag

July

6.7 The Eino Leino's Day

8.7 The day of the apostles

27.7 The day of the sleepyhead

September

30.9 Mikkelin day

October

10.10 The day of Aleksis Kivi and the Finnish literature

24.10 The day of the U.N

28.10 The summertime ends

November

3.11 The holyday

6.11 The day of the Swedish

11.11 Father's Day

20.11 The day of the children's rights

December

2.12 The first Advent Sunday

6.12 Independence day

9.12 The second Advent day

13.12 Lucia's Day

16.12 The third Advent Sunday

23.12 The fourth Advent Sunday

24.12 Christmas Eve

25.12 Christmas Day

26.12 The boxing Day

31.12 The New Years

(Ikikalenteri 1990).

5.3 The map of Finland



5.4 The biggest cities in Finland:

| Sija | Kaupunki | Asukasluku | Sija | Kaupunki | Asukasluku |
|------|---------------------------|------------|------|------------------------------|------------|
| 1. | Helsinki | 562 570 | 11. | Lappeenranta | 59 077 |
| 2. | Espoo | 232 634 | 12. | Rovaniemi | 57 835 |
| 3. | Tampere | 206 171 | 13. | Joensuu | 57 779 |
| 4. | Vantaa | 189 442 | 14. | Vaasa | 57 266 |
| 5. | Turku | 174 906 | 15. | Kotka | 54 860 |
| 6. | Oulu | 130 105 | 16. | Hämeenlinna | 47 351 |
| 7. | Lahti | 100 049 | 17. | Porvoo | 46 985 |
| 8. | Kuopio | 90 812 | 18. | Mikkeli | 46 514 |
| 9. | Jyväskylä | 84 482 | 19. | Hyvinkää | 43 843 |
| 10. | Pori | 76 149 | 20. | Järvenpää | 37 519 |

5.5 The Finnish nature

Even though there are only a little bit over 5 million people in Finland, still Finland is quite big country. Most of Finland, over 75%, is covered by trees.

The south of Finland is quite flat and the northern part has some hills and few mountains. Finland is a good place to go swimming, there is nearly 200 000 lakes in Finland! The biggest lake in Finland is Saimaa and the deepest is Päijänne. Finland also has many small islands and one big one which is called Ahvenanmaa.

5.6 The weather in Finland

There are four different seasons in Finland during the year. Winter will start and end the year. It can get really cold during the winter time which will last about five months from October to March. It is also very dark during the winter but when the snow arrives it will lighten the winter a little bit. There will be a lot of snow on the ground especially in the northern Finland.

After winter comes the spring which is the shortest season, it will last only from six to eight weeks. During the spring all the snow usually melts away and it gets nice and warm. After spring comes summer. Summer lasts about four months and the temperature can rise over 25 degrees. Summer nights are full of light which is good after the dark winter. Sometimes during the summer the sun doesn't set at all. After summer comes autumn and it lasts couple of months. It rains a lot during the autumn and it starts to get dark again.

5.7 Religion and education in Finland

Religion doesn't play a huge role in the Finnish lifestyle. Most of the Finnish are Christians and 15% of the population is not a member of any church. There are lots of other religions in Finland because not any religion is forbidden. There is A Helsinki Islam center in Helsinki and it has 1189 members.

School is obligatory for children at the age of 7-16. After that the most common schools are upper secondary school and vocational schools which will last approximately 2-4 years. Nearly all the schools in Finland are public schools and they are free of charge. Universities and polytechnic schools are also free and it is possible to apply for a scholarship from the government.

Finnish people speak English quite commonly and also a little bit Swedish. Finnish language will be taught to all immigrants. Nearly every Finn can read and the school system in Finland has been said to be very efficient. Finnish language has many different dialects which are spoken in different areas.
(Suomi 2007).

5.8 Sauna

Sauna plays a big role in the lives of the Finnish people. Sauna is a heated room where you go to wash yourself. You can go to the heated room for couple of times and take a cool shower in between. Sauna is very relaxing. Some people go to sauna every night and some only go to sauna on Saturdays. But I'm sure every Finn has been in the sauna at least once in their lifetime. Sauna was invented in Finland long time ago. There are about 2 million saunas in Finland. (The Finnish sauna 2006).

6 Guidance to immigrants

At the beginning of my project my goal was to create something useful and helpful to the immigrants in our school. Or if not directly for them but something that would help their settling in in our school and getting familiar with the way of life in Finland. At some point I thought about writing a guide to teachers that would help them to understand immigrant's behaviour, their culture and habits better. But that would have needed more time that I had and maybe not so efficient after all. So I decided to gather together all the information, all the rules, all the habits and all the events that take place in our school and tried to explain them as clearly as possible.

First I started to memorize all the problems that had aroused with immigrants. Everything that I had heard to bother teachers, other students and immigrants themselves. I also tried to see the school system in Finland with the eyes of a foreigner. What is totally different here and what might seem as unnecessary thing to do.

I think that when two cultures meet there are always complications and culture shocks. Trying to make a foreigner to feel comfortable in a foreign country is very challenging and sometimes an impossible job. But to me it sounded very interesting and also very challenging in a good way. Maybe it is because of the difficulties I had when I lived abroad and hoped that I would have had more "inside" information. By "inside" information I mean all the rules, habits and the lifestyle in general that was unknown to me.

6.1 How to manage in Haukivuori secondary school

There are few basic rules in Haukivuori secondary school:

1. Always take your hat and jacket off when inside
2. Smoking is not allowed at any circumstances
Be nice to everybody; talk nicely, say hello, and give other students a chance to study in peace
3. There will be no cursing
4. Remember to ask a written permission if you are absent from school, if you need more than three days time off, ask the head teacher, otherwise ask your class teacher.
5. If you get sick during your school day ask permission from your class teacher or the teacher who is holding your next lesson.
6. Always ask a permission if you are about to leave the school premises. For example if you are going to see the school nurse you need to ask a permission.
7. If something unnormal, for example an accident takes place on your way to school, let the school office know about this immediately
8. Students are not allowed to come to the teachers' room between 13.00-13.15.
9. Always have your books, pencils and notebooks with you at school.

The rules mentioned above are pretty straight forward ones and quite easy to understand. But when immigrants come to Finland and start studying they must be so confused and unaware of so many things that is impossible to know how to do things right. This is the reason why I thought it would necessary to explain some things that are quite obvious to Finnish students and if not obvious very easy to understand and obey when seen done by somebody else.

When immigrants come to Finland I'm sure they are not so willing to start acting like Finns do and should be done here. I would say that they reject some of the rules and would rather keep acting the way they are used to.

But maybe if they are aware of the importance that the rules have here in Finland and how much easier their life would be for example in school, if they followed the rules from the very beginning.

So maybe if the immigrants will come to realise that doing things the way they should be done makes their integration here in Finland a lot easier and a lot more pleasant. I have gathered here few suggestion about the way to behave and things that would be good to know and take into count when getting familiar with the Finnish way of life and the Finnish school life.

6.2 What is good to know when starting your school year?

I talked to some of the teachers in our school and this is what we thought would be good to let the immigrants know:

When you start school in Finland it is good to know few things so you will know what to do in different situations. Here are some things that I have gathered together to make your settling in a bit easier:

1. **Make a list of the holidays that you have in your religion.** Give the list to your teacher and talk about what you are going to do when you have those holidays. Weather you need to be absent for that day or if you have any other arrangements that the teacher should know. Good example is Ramada. Let your teacher know what you can and can't do. Always remember that you need your teacher's permission to be absent in any occasion!

2. **When you have a test at school,** remember to work independently. Everybody works alone unless the teacher tells you other. Do not look at your friend's test or try to talk to him/her. If you want to ask something or you need something, raise your hand and wait for the teacher to give you a permission to speak. If you get caught on cheating you will get detention.

3. **Try to speak as much Finnish as you can.** The more you try the more you learn and the easier it gets. The good way of learning a different language is making mistakes and learning from them. It's okay not to know everything! There are no stupid or wrong questions so ask as many questions as you feel are necessary. Try to speak Finnish also after school with your friends and read Finnish magazines and newspapers. Remember that by learning the Finnish language well makes your life a lot easier and especially your studying will get easier and more fun.

4. **If you are sick** let the head teacher, your class teacher or the school office know about it right away! Don't wait for hours, do it right after you have decided to stay at home. When you return to school get your notebook of absence from the locker near the teachers' room. Write all the needed information in it (a date, hours, reason for absence,) and take it home for your parents or guardians to sign. If your parents or guardians don't know how to write their names in Finnish alphabets, they can use their own way of writing. **Remember that you can't sign it yourself!** Then return the notebook of absence back to the locker. After this your class teacher will take a look at it and mark down that you have taken care of your days of absence. It is good to take care of your absence days right away so that you won't forget them and more importantly that you don't forget what was wrong with you and make a false statement. It is also good to remember that you will not get your school report before you have sorted out your days of absence.

5. **To make sure that all the students behave correctly** and do their homework daily there is a certain practice in our school. Teacher can give you detention if they think it is necessary. The **detention** is either one or two hours. Some teachers will give you one hour detention if you have your homework undone for three times in a row. It is really up to the teacher. So make sure that you have your homework done, all the equipment needed with you and you arrive to the class in time. Also

remember to be nice to your fellow students, do not curse and give other students a change to study in peace. The actual detention takes place in school on Wednesday afternoon, from 15.00 to 17.00. In detention you can not talk to anybody or do anything else except sitting down quietly.

6. **If you fail in some subject** you will get number four in your report card. This means that if you get number four from your test and there is no way you can fix it you will have to repeat the same studies next year. In practice this means for example that you will have to do the 7th grade again. But you can try to talk to your teacher after getting number four if you could do some extra exercises or maybe repeat the test. So you need to be active and try to fix the situation. And remember that if you get another change you really have to work hard and study a lot. Always remember that if everything looks too difficult or if you get frustrated go and talk to the teacher and ask for extra help. If it is possible the teacher might be able to give you an extra lesson, a remedial lesson.

7. **If you have problems** with some other students go straight to your class teacher and tell him/her your worries. There is no need to hold bad things inside of you if you can't sort them out yourself. If you feel like not talking about it to anybody, you can always write email to your class teacher or the head teacher. Do not take part to any kind of teasing or bullying. The smartest one is always the one who wants to skip the fight!

8. **Be honest!** Lying doesn't do any good in any situation. No matter what the situation is, remember to tell the truth. The truth will come out at some point anyway. If you have done something wrong purposely or accidentally it is good to admit it. In this way things can be sorted out. If the truth doesn't come out things will get more complicated and the consequences will be a lot more serious. If you get caught from lying there will definitely be a detention waiting for you. So be wise and always tell the truth.

9. Every year a **student's union** will be chosen. The student's union is gathered together from every class. Every class will choose its own chairman and a back up chairman. And then these chairmen from all the classes form the student's union which will for example plan different kinds of happening in our school. The student's union will decide about different things together and will try to improve the atmosphere in school and create better feeling of togetherness.

10. **The support students** are the ones who will give you a hand when you arrive to our school. These students are voluntaries and they want to help you to settle down in our school. You can go and ask help from them if you feel like you are lost. Also if you have problems with fellow students you can go and ask help from the support students. The support students will be introduced to you at the very beginning of the school year and probably they will arrange a meeting for you before your school year starts so that you can start to get familiar with the secondary school and what it is like to study here.

11. Every February there is **something special happening** in the upper secondary school. And because the secondary and the upper secondary school are on the same premises, these special occasions will influence the secondary school as well. The **second grades** in the upper secondary school will celebrate because the third graders are soon leaving the school. And by doing that the third graders will leave the second grades the oldest in school. So the second graders will get dressed in fancy dresses and suits and they dance for the whole school and for their parents too. After the dance they have a party of their own. They will also have lots of candies in school that day and they will share their candies with everybody. During the school day they might visit your class and maybe held a lesson for you. So on that day there isn't really normal classes, it's all about the second graders to decide what is going to happen. So all you need to do is have fun and take part of all the activities the second graders have provided to you.

12. But that's not all. The **third grades** want to have fun too. So they will have their day on the next day after the second graders day. The third graders are celebrating the fact that their time in the upper secondary school has nearly come to an end. They will invite the whole school into the assembly hall where they show drawings that they have made of the teachers who teach them. They call all the teachers one by one in the front and have a little chat with the teacher. This is their way of saying thank you for your teaching and goodbye. After the teacher's part they will ask some students in the front as well and they might ask you some questions or ask you a little favour. It's nice and a lot of fun. After this the whole school will gather together outdoors and wave for the third graders as they drive away in a big truck.

13. The **matriculation examination** will be in March. This is the biggest exam in the upper secondary school and also the final one. The matriculation examination lasts for two weeks and it will cause special arrangements for the whole school. You will be informed about these arrangements before hand. The matriculation examination is for the third graders and before it takes place the third graders have had about a month long period for reading for this test. After this test, if they have completed all the courses needed, their school is over. They are ready to graduate in June. In February they also have listening comprehension test and they will cause special arrangements for the school as well. But you will be informed about these too.

14. Every autumn and every winter you will have a week long holiday. The **autumn holiday** is usually in October or November and the **Skiing holiday** in the winter time is usually in March. These holidays will give you a nice brake from school. Also during the Christmas and New Year you will get some time off. Usually the school will start again at the beginning of January. The summer holiday is very long. It will last almost two and a half months.

15. Every Christmas there is a **Christmas party** at school. This party will take place on the last day before the holiday starts. Traditionally the whole school will go to the church and have a lunch after it. If your own religion doesn't allow you to take part in the service, inform your teacher about this.

16. At the end of the school year there will be an **end of term celebration**. On that day the third graders will graduate and they will be given a white hat and a diploma. Also the ninth graders of secondary school will get a diploma which means that they have graduated from the secondary school. All the other students will get a report card. Remember that you have to have all your days of absences sorted out to get the report card and to be able to move to an upper grade.

17. There are **15-minute- breaks** every hour in our school. During the break all the students, except the upper secondary school students, have to go out. The upper secondary school students only have to out during the 13.00-13.15 break. There is a certain area in the school yard where the students are allowed to spend that time. Crossing over those lines is forbidden. There will be two teachers to take care of the students and make sure that everything is okay during the break. So if you have worries or questions you can always turn to the teachers for help. So after your lesson, when the bell rings, take your coat and go out straight away. If you have problems going out the teacher who is observing the break will give you a detention.

18. There are few **exceptions** about going out during the breaks. Winter time if it gets very cold the teachers will allow the students to stay inside. This is usually only when temperature goes down to -15 degrees. You can also stay inside during the 11.45-12.15 break. This is the time when you can buy something from the kiosk that is run by the ninth graders.

19. The ninth graders usually go to a **field trip** during the spring. The field trip lasts 3-7 days and it can be done here in Finland or abroad. This is a

great opportunity to celebrate your last year in secondary school, see different places and get to know your classmates outside school. But before the fun part, you have to work hard to raise some money. It is better to start raising money at the very beginning of the seventh grade. Money can be raised by selling different things, for example candies, detergents and spices. Some students raise money by baking at home and then selling the pastries. It is also very common to save a little bit of money every month. This money will be put to the bank account of your class. But remember that the field trip is not compulsory. If you don't want to take part of the field trip then you don't have to raise any money or save any money. Then when the field trip takes place you have normal schooldays.

20. Always **on Friday** some class will bake for example buns, bread, rolls or pies and bring them in the front of the teacher's room. The teacher's can then buy them and the class will get money for their field trip. Your homeroom teacher will tell when it is your turn to bake.

7 Conclusion

There are a lot of misunderstandings between the Finns and the immigrants. I think that the main reason for that is the different culture and the language problem. The language problem will ease when time passes by and if people are open minded and willing to learn, the cultural differences shouldn't be a problem either for the long run.

Immigrants in Finland is a quite new phenomenon. I would say that when time goes by people will get used to the fact that more and more immigrants will come to Finland. I also believe that little by little people will notice that their own life will stay pretty much the same as it has always been even though for example your neighbours have a different colour skin, eat different kind of food and believe in different things. I really want to believe that at the same time as the immigrants are trying to settle in in Finland, we Finns will try to see the reasons why the

immigrants have to come to Finland in the first place and think about our own behaviour and the causes of it.

As intergration is as difficult and painful process as it is I think we Finns should be as helpful as we possibly can towards immigrants. I have lived abroad for four years and when I realised that the immigrants in our school were facing many problems I remembered that I had been in the same kind of situation myself and I wanted to help them. Well, I suppose my situation and my feelings when I moved to another country were not as bad, strong and painful as I believe the immigrants in our school have. But I remember having millions of questions in my head and I felt very homesick from time to time, even though I went abroad from my own will and desire and I didn't have to worry about my or my family's safety at any point. Still I was sometimes very confused and didn't like all the new and strange things that were happening around me. So I can only imagine what kind of chaos the immigrants have inside of their heads when they arrive to Finland and start their new life here.

In my development project I wanted to help the immigrants in our school in their integration process. I thought about all the possible things that they might have had problems with and I tried to explain these things to them as simply and completely as I possibly could. I really hope that my work will reach them and they can benefit from it. If it helps even one immigrant to feel better and settle in in Finland better it has served it's purpose.

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