

# **EDUCATIONAL MENTORING – A CHANCE FOR CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS**

**Information for parents**





Prof. Dr. Maria Böhmer, Minister of State in the Federal Chancellery, Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration

*“Many children and teenagers from immigrant families do not have the same educational opportunities as their fellow pupils because their German is not good enough. It often prevents them from tapping their full potential. Families, kindergartens and schools work hard every day to give these children and teenagers direct support. In addition to this, some of the young people have the opportunity to work with a mentor. She or he usually helps on a voluntary basis. As parents, please use this opportunity to give your children a better chance for the future. I would be delighted if I could convince you of the benefits of educational mentoring.”*

## **Learning German is necessary for professional success**

Education starts in early childhood – promoting language skills at an early age is enormously important to give all children and teenagers the same start in life. Many families with an immigrant background speak their native language at home. But to be successful in school and at work, it is just as important to learn German properly. If you find out about education and training possibilities as early as possible, your children’s start in any career will be much easier. But all children and teenagers need support. This is not an easy job, particularly for parents who have come from abroad and are not familiar with the German educational and training system. This is where mentors can help.

***“I wish I could meet my mentor every day.”***

says Julius, who is taking part  
in the project “Keiner darf verloren gehen”

## **The purpose of educational mentoring**

Educational mentoring projects support children and teenagers: mentors read to children, help them with their homework or give young people advice when it comes to choosing a career. They contribute their own experience in life and work, and act as role models and advisors. Mentors meet the children they are working with regularly, mostly at schools, kindergartens or libraries. In some mentoring projects the mentor will look after one child, in others they will be responsible for small groups. A mentoring project does not intend to replace the support and education provided by parents, child care facilities and schools, but it can be a valuable additional resource. Participation in these programs is free of charge.

## **Who organises mentoring projects?**

Mentoring projects are set up by various organisations such as non-profit organisations or welfare associations. These choose the mentors and monitor the mentoring projects: they are the point of contact for families and mentors and work closely with kindergartens, schools or training companies so that the children and teenagers get the best possible support.

***“JuKi’ – Jugend für Kinder, is just great!  
It’s really fun for my daughter, Eda. I’d  
recommend the project to anyone. I’m  
thankful that it exists.”***

Arzu Oezdemir, mother of a mentored child in the  
“Juki – Jugend für Kinder” project



## The mentors

Mentors are often pensioners or people whose own children have grown up and left their parents' home. But students and schoolchildren also act as mentors. All of them are supported and helped by experienced education experts.

A mentor must have experience and patience in dealing with children and teenagers. The job places high demands on the mentors, which is why the organisations choose them very carefully. They conduct interviews, demand letters of recommendation or ask for certificates of good conduct.

## The parents are closely involved

The organisations are also the first point of contact for parents and establish contact between the families and mentors. Parents and mentors usually get to know each other at the start of a mentoring project. Mutual trust is important for the projects' success. If the parents have any doubts or worries, they can get in touch with the respective organisation at any time.

## THE ADVANTAGES FOR CHILDREN, TEENAGERS AND FAMILIES AT A GLANCE:

- A mentoring project gives children and teenagers an additional person to whom they can become closely attached, someone to help them discover, use and develop their own personal strengths.
- Working together with a mentor helps them face up to new challenges and cope better with setbacks. Visible successes strengthen motivation and encourage self-respect.
- Many children and teenagers take tips and criticism from people who do not come from the familiar surroundings of home, kindergarten or school, very seriously.

### Mentoring projects in Germany

Mentoring projects are just as diverse as the mentors and mentored children themselves. Some projects concentrate on encouraging children in kindergartens or schools, others help young people when they begin their career. The project database of the “Aktion zusammen wachsen” (Initiative “Growing together”) provides a good overview. It contains more than 500 projects and can be found on the website **[www.aktion-zusammen-wachsen.de](http://www.aktion-zusammen-wachsen.de)**. In addition numerous supporters of the mentoring projects provide further information.

### The most common supporting organisations of educational mentoring projects are

- Charities and welfare associations
- Foundations
- Migrant organisations
- Municipal support
- Non-profit organisations or associations
- Voluntary organisations

## “AKTION ZUSAMMEN WACHSEN”

With “Aktion zusammen wachsen” the Minister of State Maria Böhmer supports existing mentoring projects and encourages individuals and organisations to set up new projects. The initiative promotes the voluntary commitment of citizens so that as many children and teenagers as possible can profit from the valuable work of the mentors. For further information please see: [www.aktion-zusammen-wachsen.de](http://www.aktion-zusammen-wachsen.de)

If you want more information about  
“Aktion zusammen wachsen” please contact:

**Nationwide service point “Aktion zusammen wachsen”**

Tel.: 030 / 399 27 3300 | Fax: 030 / 8968 3300

E-mail: [info@aktion-zusammen-wachsen.de](mailto:info@aktion-zusammen-wachsen.de)

[www.aktion-zusammen-wachsen.de](http://www.aktion-zusammen-wachsen.de)

### Credits

Published by:

Federal Government Commissioner  
for Migration, Refugees and Integration

Idea, compilation, design:  
ergo Kommunikation, Berlin

Photos:

Title: Reading mentor from the “Bürger Netzwerk Bildung”  
of the “VBKI”, Berlin

Inside: Federal Government, mentor in the project “Agabey-  
Abla” of the “Deutsch-Türkisches Forum Stuttgart”

Print: schmitzdruck&medien GmbH & Co. KG, Brüggen

Last revised: September 2009