

DIARY – DICTIONARY

A tool which supports children with a migrant background in learning Polish.

HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS



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The conquest of learning is achieved through the knowledge of languages.

Roger Bacon, English philosopher

Dear Parents!

If you are reading this handbook, your child is probably attending or will be attending a Polish school.

The start of school education is an important event for many children. If a child doesn't know the language of tuition well, school certainly becomes an even greater challenge

Language is not only a tool which allows children to gain knowledge. It also gives them a sense of security. If a child knows Polish, they understand what others talk about in the classroom and what the teacher expects from them – which makes learning easier and helps ensure the child's wellbeing in the classroom.

*That is why it's a good idea to support your child with learning Polish rather than just wait for your child to learn the language by going to school. **You can help your child even if you don't speak Polish very well yourself!***

How can you do that? Just use the "Diary – Dictionary"!

What is a “Diary - Dictionary”?

It's a simple tool which helps learn Polish. It's a type of diary. With some help from adults (parents and/or teacher) the child records important events from their life every day in the “Diary – Dictionary”. They can write about what happened at school and at home or about things that are about to happen.

The “Diary – Dictionary” was created on the basis of a technique used in speech-psychological therapy, known as a “Diary of Events”¹.

Extensive experience of therapists who use that method shows that keeping a diary of events accelerates learning of the language, helps build the child's sense of security in different social situations and supports their emotional development.

Who is the “Diary – Dictionary” intended for?

The “Diary – Dictionary” is a tool intended for children who need support in learning Polish as a second language. It is mainly oriented at children with a migrant background who are currently or will soon start attending a Polish school.

The Diary can be kept by children of different ages, with different levels of knowledge of Polish. Entries in the Diary can be more or less extensive – depending on the child's linguistic skills.

We recommend that the Diary should be used by:

- **Polish children returning from abroad** – especially ones who spoke Polish at home but used a different language when talking to their peers and communicating at nursery/school,
- **foreigners' children** – especially ones who use a language other than Polish in everyday communication with their parents,
- **children from bicultural families**, who use more than one language in everyday communication – if Polish is the less-developed language.

Benefits from keeping a Diary

Keeping a “Diary – Dictionary” offers a range of benefits for the child:

- **allows the child to practise language through dialogues** – conversations and ready dialogue templates in the Diary help the child learn phrases commonly used in the school environment,
- **expands vocabulary** useful at school,
- **motivates to repeat known words and phrases** – by recording experiences on paper, the child can go back and share them with others,
- **helps learn asking and answering questions** in typical situations at school,
- **helps communicate needs and opinions** with phrases and words recorded and practised by the child,
- **supports the child's emotional development** – helps name and understand different emotions,
- **helps build a positive image of oneself** – as an active person, able to find themselves in different social contexts which require the use of Polish (even if the child's knowledge of Polish isn't always the best),
- **shows a linear understanding of time**, which helps the child understand grammar and temporal relations

¹ Speech and language therapist Wacława Zuziowa was the first therapist to use the tool in the 1960's. Currently, keeping a diary of events is a technique used to boost linguistic development as part of the Krakow Method (Metoda Krakowska) created by Prof. Jagoda Cieszyńska, psychologist and speech therapist, Ph.D.

between events from the past, present and future,

- **prepares for events which may take place at school and in various social contexts** – which gives a sense of security.

The “Diary – Dictionary” also offers benefits for parents:

- **helps strengthen the bond with the child** – to keep up with their school accomplishments and experiences,
- **offers an opportunity to establish regular cooperation with the child’s teacher**, who – just like the parents – can monitor what the child records in the “Diary – Dictionary” and help them keep the Diary.

What will you find in the “Diary – Dictionary”?

The Diary is divided into 3 parts:

Part 1

The child’s main “Diary – Dictionary” – a notebook with several dozen pages which is a template for the child to make their own entries. On subsequent pages there are dedicated spaces to record dates, descriptions/dialogue related to the given day, as well as information about the child’s mood. Next to that, there is also space for a so-called Memento of the Day – a fact or an event of particular importance for the child.

Part 2

Ready dialogue templates – in part two, you can find ready dialogues relating to different situations from the life of a school.

Part 3

Dictionary of feelings and emotions – a set of emoticons with an indication of the emotions and feelings that they represent. Under the pictures there is also space for the child to write down the names of the feelings and emotions in a language they know (other than Polish).

How to use the “Diary – Dictionary”?

The child should spend around 15 – 20 minutes a day on making entries in the Diary.

In part one of the Diary, **the child should make an entry every day with the help of their parents (or teachers)**. The entries should relate to events important from the child’s perspective, in which they’ve taken part or for which they are preparing.

It is best if the child makes entries individually. Ask the child to present their own account of a specific situation from their life. The parent/teacher can help the child with that (write or draw an element agreed with the child) – depending on the child’s age and ability to read and write. An entry can include a drawing of the child and other people taking part in the event. You can use speech bubbles to write down what everyone said.

Entries created individually by the child best represent situations which were important for them. These are the events that the child will be the happiest to go back to – to recollect them and talk about them to others, thus practising the language.

Most of all, the Diary should help the child develop their language skills in typical situations taking place at school. That is why we recommend that entries should relate to the child’s functioning at school. On the other hand, that is not the only important aspect of the child’s life. During breaks and in the classroom the child talks to teachers and peers about different things. The Diary can certainly also contain entries relating to things outside school (e.g. dinner at home, shopping, playing at a playground etc.). Entries can also talk about events for which the child is preparing, such as taking part in a friend’s birthday party or beginning of a new school year.

What's important is that the contents of entries made in the Diary should be genuinely important to the child.

If you're out of ideas – because sometimes the child and their parents/teachers may not be able to think of an event to record in the Diary on a given day, **you should go to the second part of the “Diary – Dictionary”**.

It contains a range of dialogues which can serve as an inspiration and a template for making an entry. Selected dialogues can also be used in full – copied and pasted in the child's Diary in the space provided for event description.

While reviewing the dialogues in the second part of the “Diary – Dictionary” you may notice that in some places instead of drawings of children there are spaces provided for the child's own drawings. That is where the child can draw a friend from school – matching the drawing to the dialogue. This should help the child identify more with the dialogue pasted on the given day into their Diary.

IMPORTANT!

Even if the parents don't speak Polish well, they can certainly help their child keep a “Diary – Dictionary”. You can use an ordinary dictionary. It's also a good idea to ask the child's teacher for help, who can check if the parent's entries are correct.

While working on an entry with the child, **it is very important to complete the section relating to the child's mood**. The child should use the designated space to draw a representation of how they're feeling on a given day. It can be an emoticon, a full-body character or another symbol representing emotions, such as a balloon, bomb, gift etc. You should also write down the name of the emotion/feeling experienced by the child on the given day. The parent can take a moment to talk to the child about their feelings. This will help the child understand their own emotions better. You can use the last part of the publication, the “**Dictionary of feelings and emotions**”, to help you complete that part of the “Diary – Dictionary”.

At the end, in the designated “**Memento of the Day**” part, we record something related to the given event which serves as a kind of a reminder of that event. It can be a photo, the child's drawing, an entry ticket, shop receipt, flower petals etc.

It's a good idea to **ask the child's teacher for help with the “Diary – Dictionary”**, even if the parents speak Polish very well. While helping the child make entries, the teacher builds a stronger bond with them. Even just the teacher's interest in the child's entries in the Diary will motivate the child to make further entries. Usually children are happy to share their work with others and use phrases and words learnt in real-life situations at school and in the classroom.

While making entries in the Diary ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT:

- dialogues should be short and grammatically correct,
- spoken sentences should be written in CAPITALS,
- drawings of the characters from the dialogues should be as close to real-life people as possible (which applies to drawings created by parents) – the drawings don't have to be detailed, but should take into account characteristics of the given person, e.g. length of their hair.

Examples of completed sheets/ fragments of the Diary-Dictionary

DZISIAJ JEST:
 DATA: 6 listopada 2018
 DZIEŃ TYGODNIA: wtorek

MÓJ DZIEŃ

SPÓŹNIENIE

SPRAWDZAM LISTĘ OBECNOŚCI. CZY JEST

JESTEM.

HANIA KUBECKA?

NIE MA JEJ. JEST NIEOBECNA.

DZIEŃ DOBRY.

DZIEŃ DOBRY, HANIU. SPÓŹNIŁAŚ SIĘ. SIADAJ NA SWOJE MIEJSCE.

TAK, SPÓŹNIŁAM SIĘ. PRZEPRASZAM.

PAMIĄTKA DNIA:



JAK SIĘ DZISIAJ CZUJĘ:



DZISIAJ JEST:
 DATA: 22 maja 2018
 DZIEŃ TYGODNIA: wtorek

MÓJ DZIEŃ

WYCIECZKA

DZIŚ IDZIEMY NA WYCIECZKĘ DO ZOO.

CIESZĘ SIĘ, ŻE IDZIEMY DO ZOO! A TY?

JA TEŻ SIĘ CIESZĘ!

PAMIĄTKA DNIA:



JAK SIĘ DZISIAJ CZUJĘ:



*If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head.
If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.*

Nelson Mandela,
former president of South Africa, leader of anti-apartheid movement

How to use a Diary for learning the mother tongue?

You should give yourself and your child this opportunity so that the things you say to each other go not only to your head but also to your heart.

If Polish is not the parent's mother tongue, it is recommended that you make special efforts to ensure that the child learns not only Polish but also your mother tongue. It is important to actively support the child with learning that language. Even if the child speaks the parent's language, by attending a Polish school they will have many more opportunities to come into contact with Polish, which – over time – may start to dominate over the parent's mother tongue.

The “Diary – Dictionary” can also help the parent develop their child's ability to speak their mother tongue. If you want to develop two languages simultaneously, you should keep a bilingual diary – making entries in two languages. When Polish no longer needs to be additionally reinforced, you should continue to keep the Diary in the language you want to develop.

Who created the “Diary – Dictionary”?

Zuzanna Rejmer – multicultural psychologist, who has been supporting multilingual families in using the potential of their mother tongues for many years. She also works with teachers and schools – provides training for teachers and implements programmes which support children with a migrant background at Polish schools. In private life, she's the mom of a bilingual girl called Laura, who also keeps a Diary.

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