

# Germany's schools preparing to accept thousands of Syrian refugee children

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel (right) speaks to the media after visiting a "Welcome Class," a special school class for migrants and refugees at the Ferdinand-Freiligrath school in Berlin, Germany, Sept. 10, 2015. Photo: AP Photo/Markus Schreiber

MUNICH, Germany — Zaid Taha and his family are from Syria. For the last four years, war inside his country has made life very dangerous. After a bomb exploded next door to their house in Aleppo, he decided it was time to leave.

Zaid Taha and his family set out for Germany to make a new life for themselves. The trip across half of Europe was not easy.

He said he did it all for his two boys, Yasser and Taha. Yasser is 6 and Taha is 9.

Zaid Taha wanted his boys to be safe. He also wanted them to get a good education.

School is "the most important thing," he said.

“Education, that’s their life,” he said, laying one hand on each boy’s head.  
“That’s my goal.”

## **German Schools Preparing For Flood Of Foreign Students**

Zaid Taha and his family are not the only people fleeing war and hunger. Hundreds of thousands of people from many different countries have come pouring into Europe, hoping to find a new home. Most want to go to Germany, a rich country that has offered to take in a large number of people.

Many of those pouring into Germany are children. They will need to go to school, which starts on Sept. 15. Teachers are rushing to get ready for all the new students.

Teaching them will not be easy. Most do not speak German, and many have had terrible experiences that may make them nervous or distracted in class.

Most of the new students are not yet ready for regular classes. They will first take special courses that will prepare them for regular classes. Such courses will last from a few months to two years, depending on the student. Once they are finished with those courses, students will be moved into regular classes.

## **Children Will Learn Language, Social Customs First**

The new students will learn the German language. They will also be taught social customs that may be different from those they learned. For example, boys and girls will be taught to look directly in the eye when speaking to one another.

The new students speak many different languages, including Arabic, Somali and Dari, a language spoken in Afghanistan. Young children usually learn languages faster than older children or grown-ups. The youngest of the new students will probably pick up German very quickly. Some will probably be moved into regular classes in just a few months.

However, problems sometimes arise when young children learn a new language faster than anyone else in their family. The children are expected to do a lot of things to help their family. For example, they often have to tell their parents what people are saying or what written things mean. Sometimes all that extra work can make children do poorly in school.

## **Life In War May Lead To Struggles In School**

Also, many of the new students may have trouble doing well in school because of the terrible things they have experienced. Their bad memories may make it hard for them to concentrate or feel relaxed. Teachers may not understand what is going on. They may be puzzled if a student who was doing well suddenly starts doing poorly.

It is very important that the new students do well in school and that they feel like they fit in. If they succeed in school, their families are more likely to do well in their new country.

“The children first have to calm down and start feeling safe,” said Monika Steinhauser, head of the aid group Refugee Council. Going to school will help with that, she said. It will make children feel like life has become ordinary and safe again.

Zaid Taha said he and his family began studying German as they made their way here. His children learned much faster than he did, he said.

“Their minds are so fresh, so lively,” he said. They need to learn, he added. Their minds are “like plants that must be watered.”

## Quiz

- 1 According to the section "German Schools Preparing For Flood Of Foreign Students," what will most students need to do before taking regular classes?
  - (A) take special classes
  - (B) learn to speak German
  - (C) learn more about Germany
  - (D) know how to behave in class
  
- 2 Which paragraph in the section "Children Will Learn Language, Social Customs First" explains a concern about children learning a new language?
  
- 3 Which sentence from the article would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?
  - (A) The children are expected to do a lot of things to help their family.
  - (B) Some will probably be moved into regular classes in just a few months.
  - (C) Zaid Taha said he and his family began studying German as they made their way here.
  - (D) It is very important that the new students do well in school and that they feel like they fit in.
  
- 4 Which of the following is the central idea of the section "German Schools Preparing For Flood Of Foreign Students"?
  - (A) Teaching in Germany is often a challenge.
  - (B) Germany is very rich, so many people want to live there.
  - (C) Many children are coming to live and go to school in Germany.
  - (D) Most of the new students in Germany do not speak German.

## Answer Key

- 1 According to the section "German Schools Preparing For Flood Of Foreign Students," what will most students need to do before taking regular classes?

**(A) take special classes**  
(B) learn to speak German  
(C) learn more about Germany  
(D) know how to behave in class

- 2 Which paragraph in the section "Children Will Learn Language, Social Customs First" explains a concern about children learning a new language?

**Paragraph 12:**

**However, problems sometimes arise when young children learn a new language faster than anyone else in their family. The children are expected to do a lot of things to help their family. For example, they often have to tell their parents what people are saying or what written things mean. Sometimes all that extra work can make children do poorly in school.**

- 3 Which sentence from the article would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?

(A) The children are expected to do a lot of things to help their family.  
(B) Some will probably be moved into regular classes in just a few months.  
(C) Zaid Taha said he and his family began studying German as they made their way here.  
**(D) It is very important that the new students do well in school and that they feel like they fit in.**

- 4 Which of the following is the central idea of the section "German Schools Preparing For Flood Of Foreign Students"?

(A) Teaching in Germany is often a challenge.  
(B) Germany is very rich, so many people want to live there.  
**(C) Many children are coming to live and go to school in Germany.**  
(D) Most of the new students in Germany do not speak German.