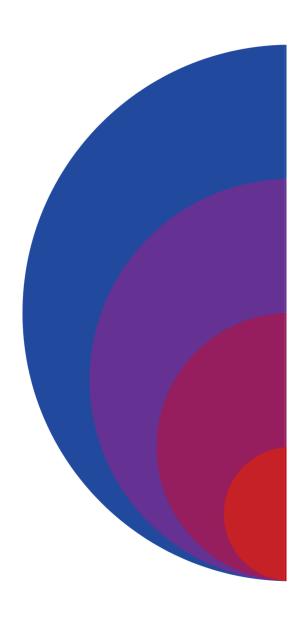


MLRC School Improvement Framework

The MLRC School Improvement Framework identifies key research-based components essential for the success of multilingual students in international schools. The framework has been designed to reflect the nested nature of schools as complex ecosystems, with students at the center. The framework is organized across four levels: student, classroom, program, and school. For each of the levels, the framework identifies important themes, research connections and key indicators.



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1. SCHOOL LEVEL: Values, Strategic Planning, & Growth

1.1. Role of Multilingualism

Research Connections

The first language or languages that a child learns play a critical role in their educational development. This is the foundational medium through which children first interact with the world, construct knowledge, and develop cognitive and social skills. Research indicates that the continued use and development of home language(s) are essential for academic, linguistic, and social development, especially when the main language of education is a different language.

Beyond cognitive and academic benefits, learning in a student's home language(s) affirms cultural identity, promotes self-esteem, strengthens family and community ties, and is key to future opportunities for multilingual, multicultural children.

Collaboration between home and school is key for effectively supporting multilingual learners. As families and caregivers engage with students in different languages, mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities and effective practices will help bridge the home and school worlds for multilingual learners.

(Baker & Wright, 2017; Bettney Heidt & Olson-Wyman, 2025; Chalmers & Crisfield, 2019; Chumak-Horbatsh, 2012; Cummins, 2021; García, 2009)

<u>Key</u> <u>Indicators</u>

- **1.1.1. Language policy:** School has a clear, mission-aligned language policy that includes the use of language by all community members and across language programs.
- **1.1.2. Language policy implementation:** Language policy includes details on implementation, is easily accessible, widely used, and understood by faculty, students, families, and caregivers.
- **1.1.3. Dispositions about multilingualism:** Faculty explicitly share positive beliefs about multilingualism. They consider languages and multilingualism to be part of the core provision of the school.
- **1.1.4. School-wide events:** Diverse languages and cultural assets are regularly recognized and celebrated at school-wide events.
- **1.1.5. Engagement with local community:** School prioritizes engagement with local community and recognizes community's linguistic and cultural assets.

Students and staff are provided with opportunities to develop community languages and to engage with the local community.

1.1.6. Engagement with families and caregivers: School provides regular, accessible opportunities for families and caregivers to participate in, support and provide feedback on their multilingual students' learning.

1.1.7. Linguistic landscape: School's physical, virtual, and social environment reflects the multilingual nature of students, families and community.

1.2. Leadership Roles & Responsibilities

Research Connections

School leadership plays a pivotal role in ensuring the successful implementation of culturally and linguistically inclusive programs and practices. Effective leaders focus on diversity as a strength, fostering an environment where all students and staff feel valued, respected, and supported. School leadership is also instrumental in allocating resources to support initiatives such as professional development for staff and parents, supporting the development of linguistically and culturally inclusive curricula, and modelling inclusive attitudes and practices.

Strong leadership ensures accountability by monitoring the effectiveness of inclusive practices and addressing barriers to implementation. Leaders engage with families and communities, building partnerships that bridge cultural and linguistic divides and creating a shared commitment to student success. Furthermore, they promote the recruitment and retention of a diverse teaching workforce that reflects the student population.

(García & Kleyn, 2020; Hansen, 2001; Hélot & Ó Laoire, 2011; Huckle, 2025; Mehisto & Genesee, 2015; Menken & García, 2010; Piller, 2016; Ruiz, 1984; Spiro & Crisfield, 2018)

- **1.2.1. School leadership's value and vision for languages:** School leaders consider languages and multilingualism to be part of the core provision of the school.
- **1.2.2. School leadership of language programs:** A leadership role is allocated to oversee the breadth and quality of language provisions.
- **1.2.3. Professional and research expertise:** School leaders demonstrate professional expertise and research knowledge which informs the support of multilingual learners at all levels.
- **1.2.4. Supportive funding and resourcing for MLs:** School leaders ensure sufficient funding and resources for MLs and language programs. Provision for

MLs who are learning the language of instruction is provided at no extra cost to families.

1.2.5. Cross-section alignment on languages: Faculty show a common understanding of language development and monitoring growth to ensure smooth transitions for MLs across sections and programs of the school.

1.3. Staffing Capacity

Research Connections

Teachers are at the forefront of implementing linguistic and culturally appropriate teaching and learning experiences. As educators play a central role in shaping classroom dynamics and learning experiences, their ability to effectively address the diverse cultural and linguistic needs of students directly impacts educational equity and success. Professional development and engagement with research equip teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to create inclusive environments that value and leverage diversity as an asset.

(Andrews, 2001; Baker & Wright, 2017; Beeman & Urow, 2011; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; García & Kleyn, 2020; García, 2017; Gibbons, 2014; Hansen, 2001; Mary & Young, 2020; Motha, 2014; Pine, 2009; West, 2011)

- **1.3.1. Teacher qualifications:** Faculty have necessary qualifications specific to teaching MLs.
- **1.3.2. Human Resource policies & practices:** Staffing aims to represent the diversity of the student body in terms of linguistic and cultural diversity. Locally hired faculty are valued for their unique cultural and linguistic expertise, and their conditions are given all due consideration in terms of equity and respect.
- **1.3.3. External learning opportunities:** Faculty are provided as appropriate with external professional learning opportunities to develop their capacity to serve MLs.
- **1.3.4. Internal learning opportunities:** Faculty are provided with internal professional learning opportunities to develop their capacity to serve MLs.
- **1.3.5. Research engagement:** Faculty are developing their capacity to engage with and in educational research.

2. PROGRAM LEVEL: Policies, Programs, & Processes

2.1. Identification & Placement

Research Connections

Effective assessment practices for identifying and placing multilingual students are key in ensuring that students are supported effectively. Recognizing their diverse linguistic repertoires as assets, schools should adopt an asset-based admissions policy that values students' home languages and prior schooling experiences, which are proven to enhance cognitive development and academic achievement. A comprehensive understanding of each student's linguistic profile—including all home languages and previous instructional languages—gained through clear admissions and intake processes, enables educators to tailor instruction and scaffold learning effectively, leveraging existing knowledge.

(Baker & Wright, 2017; Baker 2011; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2000; García & Sylvan, 2011; Genesee & Cloud, 1998; Hamayan & Peregoy, 2017; Kusuma-Powell, 2004; Lucas, 2011; Piller, 2016)

- **2.1.1. Admissions policy:** School has a clearly defined and mission-aligned admissions policy which reflects an asset-based and research-informed understanding of the academic strengths and needs of multilingual students.
- **2.1.2. Admissions & intake processes:** School has clearly defined and implemented admissions and intake processes which ensures adequate understanding of each student's linguistic profile, including home languages and previous languages of schooling.
- **2.1.3. Accurate use of data:** School has policies and processes to guide the appropriate use of data, from collection to interpretation to storage.

2.2. Assessment

Research Connections

Effective assessment of what multilingual learners know and do necessitates policies that integrate adaptations for assessments, acknowledging that linguistic proficiency can impact the demonstration of content knowledge. Strategic selection of external assessments and interpretation of all data must account for students' diverse linguistic profiles to ensure validity and avoid misidentification. This requires modifying assessment approaches to prioritize students' progress and well-being.

To achieve this, schools should implement a balanced assessment system that strategically uses a variety of tools and methods. This system is guided by three purposes: assessment for learning (providing continuous feedback), assessment as learning (developing self-regulation skills), and assessment of learning (evaluating achievement at key points). An asset-based approach further refines this framework by focusing on what multilingual learners can do. By utilizing performance-based tasks and multiple formats, educators can gain a more valid and comprehensive understanding of students' knowledge, fostering their academic success within an inclusive educational environment.

Continuous and accurate measurement of language proficiency at regular intervals, combined with other relevant data, is crucial for determining appropriate language support programs and informing exit criteria from language services. Research-informed practices ensure that assessments genuinely reflect students' knowledge and foster their academic success within an inclusive educational environment.

(Abedi & Sato, 2008; Cook, 2017; Earl & Katz, 2006; Genesee et al., 2013; Gottlieb, 2023; Grosjean, 2010; WIDA Consortium, 2020)

- **2.2.1. Assessment policy:** Assessment policy includes required modifications for students who are learning the language of instruction for assessments within a balanced system.
- **2.2.2. Choice of assessments:** The linguistic profiles of students are considered in the selection of all assessments and in the interpretation of all assessment data. There are various tasks and formats, leveraging assessment for, as, and of learning to prioritize the holistic progress and well-being of multilingual learners.
- **2.2.3. Modification of assessment approaches:** Where necessary, approaches to assessments are modified to prioritize the progress and well-being of MLs.
- **2.2.4. Progress monitoring and exit criteria:** Language proficiency is accurately measured at regular intervals as part of a balanced assessment

system, and all data is used coherently to determine appropriate language support programming.

2.3. Language Programming

Research Connections

Policies and practices that prioritize home language instruction, particularly in the early years, have been shown to improve educational outcomes in terms of linguistic development, academic achievement, and well-being. Schools should proactively support English as an Additional Language (EAL) through targeted programming and inclusive teaching that integrates language and content instruction, recognizing that language learning is intertwined with subject matter acquisition. Concurrently, valuing and developing students' home and community languages, through dedicated programs, extracurricular activities, and school-community partnerships, is crucial for cognitive development, academic achievement, and strong cultural identity. Bilingual and dual language programs are particularly effective in fostering biliteracy and content mastery in multiple instructional languages, leading to superior academic outcomes for all learners. To facilitate these comprehensive language provisions, supportive timetabling must prioritize consistent language programming. Moreover, effective collaboration between all language programs and educators is essential to create a cohesive and robust support system for MLs, ensuring their holistic linguistic and academic growth.

(Baker & Wright, 2017; Carder, 2007; Coelho, 2012; Crisfield, 2018; Cummins, 2021; Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2013; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Piller, 2016; Spiro & Crisfield, 2018)

- **2.3.1. EAL:** Students are supported in developing English as an Additional Language, through school programming and inclusive teaching practices.
- **2.3.2. Community and world languages:** Regardless of the language program model(s) available, students are supported in developing their community's and/or world language(s), through school programming, inclusive teaching practices, extracurricular activities and/or school-community partnerships. Community and World languages selections reflect the linguistic diversity of students and the community.
- **2.3.3. Bilingual/dual language programs:** Bilingual/dual language programs, if offered, are designed and implemented to support students' language and content learning in two or more instructional languages.
- **2.3.4. Home languages:** Regardless of the language program model(s) available, students are supported in developing their home language(s),

through school programming, inclusive teaching practices, extra-curricular activities and/or home-school partnerships.

- **2.3.5. Supportive scheduling:** Provision for language programs is considered a scheduling priority, in order to create consistent structures and programs for students. Schedules provide MLs with equitable opportunity and access to a variety of challenging and engaging offerings.
- **2.3.6. Collaboration between language programs:** School has established collaborative relationships and processes between various language programs to effectively serve MLs.

2.4. Inclusion

Research Connections

All students have the potential to learn languages, even if they have additional learning challenges. The presence of a learning difference does not preclude access to language support or language development opportunities.

Effective inclusion of MLs, especially those with learning exceptionalities, requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Schools must provide access to diverse language courses and English language development support in addition to any specific educational interventions. Crucially, research emphasizes that MLs with learning exceptionalities benefit immensely from support that fosters language proficiency across their home, instructional, community, and world languages, ensuring their holistic linguistic development. This necessitates robust processes for identifying and supporting these students, driven by strong collaborative relationships between student services and language departments. Ultimately, the successful education and inclusion of all multilingual learners should be a shared responsibility among all faculty, ensuring consistent support and a cohesive educational experience.

(Baker & Wright, 2017; Bialystok, 2001; Cummins, 2000; García & Wei, 2014; Genesee & Baker Wright, 2017; Genesee & Crago, 2011; Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2013; Mahoney, 2017; Ortiz & Jiron, 2012; Snyder, 2019)

<u>Key</u> <u>Indicators</u>

- **2.4.1. Inclusion policy:** Access to language courses/lessons is provided in addition to support for English language development or additional educational support.
- **2.4.2. Language development for students with learning exceptionalities:** School ensures MLs with learning exceptionalities are developing home, instructional, community and/or world languages.
- **2.4.3. Services for MLs with learning exceptionalities:** School identifies and supports MLs with learning exceptionalities.

- **2.4.4. Collaboration between students services and EAL:** School has established collaborative relationships and processes between Students Services and Language departments to serve MLs with learning exceptionalities.
- **2.4.5. Shared responsibility for all MLs**: Clear communication and processes to ensure education and inclusion of multilingual learners is a responsibility shared by all faculty.

3. CLASSROOM LEVEL: Teaching & Learning

3.1. Curriculum

Research Connections

Modifying curricula is essential when working with multilingual students to ensure equitable access to education and accurate interpretation of their learning potential. International school curricula should leverage students' linguistic and cultural strengths as assets, to enhance engagement and academic achievement. By designing content that is both appropriate and relevant, teachers can create meaningful learning experiences that connect new knowledge to students' prior experiences and use their languages as assets for learning and assessment.

(Baker & Wright, 2017; Bismilla, et al., 2005; Chalmers & Crisfield 2019; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2021; Gibbons, 2014; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010; Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012; Mehisto & Genesee, 2015; Piller, 2016; Spiro & Crisfield, 2018)

Key Indicators

3.1.1. Planning for MLs in the curriculum: Curriculum is designed with needs of MLs in mind, and there is evidence of planning for language development opportunities throughout all curriculum planning.

3.2. Collaboration

Research Connections

Collaboration between specialists and classroom teachers is a cornerstone of effective educational practice, ensuring that diverse student needs are met comprehensively. Teacher collaboration between English as an Additional Language (EAL) specialists and classroom teachers has been linked to improved learning outcomes and engagement, particularly for MLs. One study found that peer learning among small groups of teachers was the most powerful predictor of improved student achievement over time, and another found a significant direct effect of leadership on teacher collaboration and a significant direct effect of collaboration on student achievement. Specialist teachers, such as language support or learning support, bring specialized knowledge and strategies tailored to specific challenges, while classroom teachers bring a deep understanding of the curriculum and the children they are teaching. Effective collaboration between classroom teachers and

specialists allows for a more holistic approach to teaching and fosters professional growth and understanding.

(Beeman & Urow, 2011; Gibbons, 2014; Goddard et al., 2010; Greenberg Motamedi et al., 2019; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010; Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011)

<u>Key</u> Indicators

- **3.2.1. Co-planning:** Classroom/subject teachers work collaboratively in teams and with language specialists to co-plan scaffolded language and content integration in lessons and activities
- **3.2.2. Co-teaching**: Classroom/subject teachers collaborate with language specialists to provide specific and intentional in-class support for MLs during targeted lessons or activities
- **3.2.3. Co-assessing and co-reflecting:** Classroom/subject teachers work collaboratively in teams and with language specialists to develop appropriate assessments and interpret ML performance.
- **3.2.4. Home-school partnerships:** Faculty communicate regularly and effectively with families and caregivers to build partnerships to support learning of content and language development.
- **3.2.5. Peer collaboration:** Faculty ensure all students have opportunities to make meaning through language and to share their knowledge and language with peers.

3.3. Instruction

Research Connections

Culturally and linguistically inclusive pedagogy is a necessary component of international education. The diversity of the student body in school requires approaches that recognize and value the cultural and linguistic identities of learners, positioning them as assets rather than barriers. By integrating students' cultural backgrounds and linguistic repertoires into the classroom we enhance engagement, motivation, and academic achievement.

(Andrews, 2001; Beeman & Urow, 2011; Carder, 2007; Chumak-Horbatsch, Linguistically Appropriate Practice, 2012; Cummins, 2021; Strand & Lindorff, 2020; Weber, 2014)

<u>Key</u> <u>Indicators</u>

3.3.1. High leverage/core practices: Faculty implement high-leverage/core teaching strategies to meet the needs of MLs with varied levels of language proficiency.

- **3.3.2. Content-area language instruction:** Language is explicitly developed across all areas of the curriculum in primary, and in secondary there is attention paid to disciplinary literacy in subject areas.
- **3.3.3. Culturally and linguistically appropriate resources:** School resources, including the library, reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of the student body at all levels.
- **3.3.4. Adaptive teaching:** Faculty implement adaptive teaching strategies to meet the needs of students with varied levels of language proficiency.
- **3.3.5. Supportive use of technology and Al:** Faculty are comfortable with and use a variety of technology options to support MLs.

3.4. Assessment

Research Connections

Informed assessment practices are essential for accurately evaluating multilingual students' knowledge and skills, a process that must be fair and appropriate for students' dynamic language acquisition. Traditional assessments often disadvantage multilingual learners by linking proficiency in English with demonstration of learning. To counter this, a balanced classroom assessment system employs an asset-based approach that is culturally responsive and embedded in the curriculum. This approach focuses on what students can do, not on what they cannot. Teachers use a variety of authentic performance-based tasks and formative assessments to provide continuous, in-the-moment feedback and scaffolding. These practices allow for the use of translanguaging, enabling students to demonstrate their understanding through all of their linguistic resources and multiple modalities. Ultimately, these approaches ensure that assessments serve as a tool for teaching and learning, accurately measuring student understanding while promoting student self-regulation and ensuring equity in assessment practices.

(Abedi & Sato, 2008; Baker & Wright, 2017; Brisk, 2015; Cook, 2017; Cummins, 2021; Earl & Katz, 2006; Gottlieb, 2023; Hakuta, 2000; Rivera, 1994; Valdés, 2015; WIDA Consortium, 2020)

<u>Key</u> Indicators

3.4.1. Modified assessment and monitoring: Faculty implement, and modify where applicable, balanced assessment strategies to provide continuous monitoring and scaffolded feedback, supporting student self-regulation and progress for all learners.

4. STUDENT LEVEL: Individual Development

4.1. Language Development

Research Connections

Research consistently shows that multilingual language development can provide cognitive advantages, including enhanced problem-solving skills, creativity, and academic achievement across the curriculum. A key benefit of multilingualism is the development of metalinguistic awareness—the ability to understand and analyze the underlying structure of language independently of its meaning. Metalinguistic awareness allows MLs to consciously reflect on language, transfer linguistic knowledge between languages, and ultimately deepen their understanding of how language works, which supports both literacy development and critical thinking.

(Bialystok, 2001; Cummins, 2000; García & Wei, 2014; Jessner, 2006)

<u>Key</u> Indicators

4.1.1. Development of instructional languages(s): MLs demonstrate appropriate development of instructional languages.

4.1.2. Development of home, community and/or world languages(s): MLs demonstrate appropriate development of home, community and/or world languages(s)

4.1.3. Metalinguistic awareness: MLs demonstrate appropriate development of metalinguistic awareness, supporting their ability to understand and analyze the underlying structure of language, separate from its meaning.

4.2. Academic Development

Research Connections

Access to a rigorous, grade-level academic curriculum with appropriate support is paramount for multilingual learners (MLs) to achieve strong academic outcomes. Research indicates that MLs thrive when given challenging content, alongside scaffolding that facilitates comprehension and participation. In addition to standard academic pathways, it is crucial to offer adaptive trajectory options, providing flexible learning pathways that cater to individual needs and strengths, especially within the constraints of school size. Furthermore, fostering high levels of metacognition is essential; MLs who can reflect on their own learning processes and employ effective strategies are

better equipped to navigate their linguistic and academic journeys independently.

(García & Wei, 2014; Genesee et al. 2013; Walqui & van Lier, 2010)

<u>Key</u> Indicators

- **4.2.1. Access to rigorous curriculum:** MLs have access to a rigorous grade-level academic curriculum with appropriate supports.
- **4.2.2. Academic outcomes measures:** MLs achieve appropriate academic outcome measures.
- **4.2.3. Adaptive trajectory options:** MLs have access to flexible pathways for learning, as possible within the school size.
- **4.2.4. Metacognition:** MLs develop high levels of metacognition to reflect on and support their own learning journeys.

4.3. Socio-Emotional

Research Connections

Recognition of the relationship between students' socio-emotional well-being, their identities, and their place in the school community is paramount. Culturally and linguistically inclusive programs and practices play a pivotal role in enhancing student engagement and well-being. By affirming and integrating students' cultural identities and linguistic backgrounds into educational settings, these approaches foster a sense of belonging and validation, which are foundational to both emotional well-being and active participation in learning. Furthermore, these programs support social-emotional development by promoting positive interactions and mutual respect among diverse peers. They equip students with the intercultural skills needed to navigate and thrive in pluralistic societies, thereby contributing to their long-term social and emotional resilience.

(Baker & Wright, 2017, Bismilla, et al., 2005; Chalmers & Crisfield, 2019; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2021; Hansen, 2001; Piller, 2016; Tanau, 2020, Weber, 2014)

- **4.3.1. Belonging**: MLs express and exhibit high levels of social and academic belonging within the school context.
- **4.3.2. Well-being:** MLs demonstrate high levels of well-being. In particular, attention is paid to new arrivals and/or students with lower levels of proficiency in instructional languages, to support their transition to academic and community life.
- **4.3.3. Intentional peer support:** MLs receive intentional support from peers with shared and different linguistic profiles, in both classroom activities and to support social integration throughout the school day.
- **4.3.4. Multilingual identity:** Students' linguistic identities are recognized and nurtured as complex, dynamic, and essential parts of who they are. Students

embrace multilingual, multicultural identities rather than focusing on English proficiency as a marker of identity.

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