

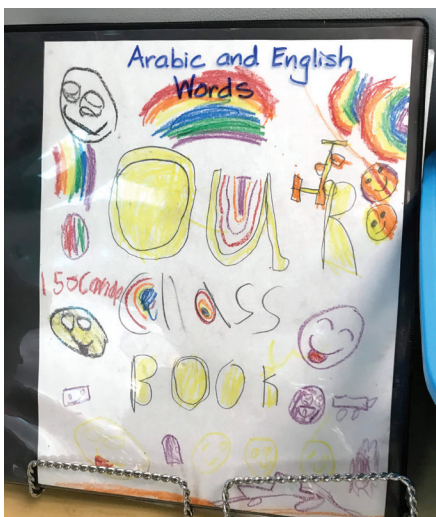
The Language Friendly School

An Inclusive and Equitable Pedagogy

The Language Friendly School network is a response to the growing diversity and multilingualism present in schools around the world, a result of people migrating to find employment, reunite with relatives, or escape war and conflict. Language Friendly School envisions schools as meeting places where students, parents, and staff from diverse backgrounds are united to share and build up knowledge. Within a Language Friendly School, everyone welcomes and values all languages spoken by the students, the parents, and all school stakeholders.

Emmanuelle Le Pichon and Ellen-Rose Kambel
Language Friendly School

It is estimated that over 200 million school children do not receive education in a language they understand.¹ In many countries, children are punished for speaking their home language at school. Punishments may vary from forcing children to stand outside the school, taping up their mouths, being barred from lunch, to being expelled from school altogether.² By encouraging schools to become language friendly, we wish to remedy these violations of human rights.



The Language Friendly School is the story of a meeting between Ellen-Rose Kambel, a lawyer and director of the Rutu Foundation, and Emmanuelle Le Pichon, an applied linguist specializing in language and culture teaching. As an advocate for the indigenous peoples of Suriname, Ellen-Rose Kambel recognized the crucial role that the languages and cultures of these peoples play in the well-being and self-determination of their communities. In 2008, together with indigenous parents and leaders, she organized an indigenous education festival that culminated in a bilingual math program. Despite the promising results of the intervention, she was concerned about the lack of sustainability for the project. When she met Emmanuelle Le Pichon, Emmanuelle was wrapping up a European international project focused on heritage languages in education and particularly in the education of very young students with a migrant background. She had become aware of the impact of national and local language policies on teachers' and schools' appreciation or rejection of students' languages and cultures. Together, they decided to reflect on a model that would ensure the sustainability of inclusive and anti-discriminatory measures in education. In 2019, the International Year of Indigenous Languages, the Language Friendly School was born and is managed as a program of the Rutu Foundation. There are currently 15 schools formally certified as Language Friendly Schools in the Netherlands, Canada, Spain, and Saba (Dutch Caribbean).

Arabic		
Conversational Arabic Expressions		
English	Transliteration	Translation
Welcome	Ahlan wa sahlan	أهلاً وسهلاً
Hello	Marhaban	مرحباً
Goodbye	Ilal liqaa	إلى اللقاء
Good morning	Sabahul-khayr	صباح الخير
Good afternoon	Masaul-Khayr	مساء الخير
Thank you	Shokran	شكراً
Sorry	Aasif	آسف
Please	Min fadlek	من فضلك
Yes	Naam	نعم
Yes	Naam	نعم
No	Laa	لا
Come here	Taala Ila huna	تعال إلى هنا
Well done	Ahsanta (Masc) Ahsanti (Femin)	أحسنت أحسنت

All schools should recognize and embrace their students' multilingualism, and take action to give space to their languages within the school community. Language Friendly Schools promote the inclusion of all members by inviting them to form a school community. To do this, their first step is to seek an understanding of who the members of that community are. This begins with an inventory of the languages present, and a celebration of the rich cultural diversity reflected by those languages. The more the better!

When a school contacts the Language Friendly School, they are asked to communicate their motivation to become a Language Friendly School. When they decide to commit, we meet with the team for an onboarding session. Then, the school often holds a celebration and enters the process.

Language Friendly Schools develop a language plan involving all members of the school: students, teachers, and staff. The plan is adapted to the school's own needs, with the goal of creating an inclusive and language-friendly learning environment for all students. A Language Friendly School plan is flexible, realistic, and allows for incremental changes. Small steps go a long way!

A Language Friendly Plan

1. Assessment of the situation

The school assesses its current situation. The process should start from the students' perspectives. How do they feel if they are forbidden to speak their home language in the classroom or schoolyard? How would the experience differ if it was allowed? And what are the teachers' and staff's attitudes toward languages different from the primary school language? What do they think when students speak a language they do not understand? Taking into account the perspectives and wishes of the entire school community is essential. To ensure that all stakeholders are informed about all the pros and cons involved, information sharing sessions with local multilingual education experts are strongly advised.

2. Formulating a language plan

Based on this assessment, a realistic set of educational and linguistic goals are put into a school language plan, accompanied by a time frame when each goal should be realized. The plan should state how the students will be encouraged to make use of their languages as resources. All teachers may define their own plans, which may vary depending on the activity. The overall goal is to stimulate the students' agency with regard to their languages, not to restrict it.

3. Implementation of the goals

Depending on each school's needs, implementation may include training of teachers in multilingual and mother tongue-based education, acquiring or developing multilingual teaching and learning materials, and/or designing ways parents and local communities may add to the implementation.

4. Monitoring and evaluation of the outcome

For a language plan to achieve its goals, active monitoring and evaluation is required. Creating a monitoring mechanism in which all stakeholders (teachers, management, parents, and students) are represented is recommended. This group gathers regularly to discuss what is being done and what can be improved. At regular intervals (every 3-5 years), the plan undergoes in-depth evaluation with all stakeholders (back to Step 1) and, if necessary, is adapted. The new plan is then monitored until it is ready for another evaluation. In this way, new teachers, students, and parents are continually included and the language plan stays relevant and up-to-date.

From <https://languagefriendlyschool.org>



During the winter of 2021, we interviewed eight educator-administrators from six of the 15 certified Language Friendly Schools in Canada and the Netherlands. Each administrator had a supervisory role in implementing a language-friendly pedagogy. The interviews allowed us to understand the impact of language- and culture-friendly pedagogy in different contexts and the role played by administrators. Their testimonies show cognitive and socio-emotional benefits of a whole school approach to language-friendly pedagogy—that is, a team approach that includes the entire school community.

They shared with us the feelings expressed by the children, their families, and the teachers, and showed the positive changes that language-friendly pedagogy has brought about for the classroom, the community, and the teachers.

Enriching the School Experience for Individuals and the Community

Roberto Di Prospero, the principal of Silver Creek Public School in Mississauga, Ontario, grew up in an Italian immigrant household, with parents who spoke Italian. Before becoming a principal, Roberto worked for many years as an educator in Toronto, gaining a lot of experience working with children of different abilities. He worked closely with Dr. Jim Cummins, who helped him and the school staff develop an English language learning plan that best met the needs of their linguistically diverse student population. Through this collaboration with Dr. Cummins, Roberto discovered the Language Friendly School.

“I went into school with two languages, and I left with one. This is the exact

opposite of what education should do; it should add things, not take away things.”

Roberto di Prospero, Principal of Silver Creek School, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada; number of students: approx. 320; top five languages spoken in school community: English, Urdu, Arabic, Telugu, Tamil; Language Friendly certified since 2020.

The social, academic, linguistic, and cultural practices we hold onto are very often dependent on our experiences of school and what we understand by schooling. The culture of a school or classroom is shaped by administrators’ and teachers’ own cultural practices that come out of these memories. Many of us have grown up in *monoglossic* environments (i.e., with a vision oriented by one language and one culture). Even the most multilingual among us have internalized this vision. Thus, we often hear the question: “Why

wouldn't it work with my students since it worked with us?"

Consider the following example: Ten children have never been on a bike before. To teach them, we put them on a bike without any support, give them a push, and simply tell them to pedal. Very likely, most children will fall and get injured to varying degrees. However, maybe one or two will make it work. They may think, "It worked for me, why shouldn't it work for the others?" The process of learning is not the same for every child, and so teaching should not be either.

In Language Friendly Schools, we recognize that students and their families, as well as all other stakeholders in the school, bring their own linguistic, academic, and cultural experiences with them. They may find it difficult to recognize themselves in schools where

their languages, knowledge, and worldviews are not reflected or even may be rejected. An important aspect of Language Friendly Schools is that its pedagogy is not exclusively, or even primarily, aimed at one or two children who do not yet speak the language of the school well. Rather, each member of the school community deserves to feel included, and valued for their own linguistic and cultural "funds of knowledge."³ At the very heart of the pedagogy is that these differences are not to be perceived as challenges, but rather as opportunities to enrich the school community for the benefit of all.

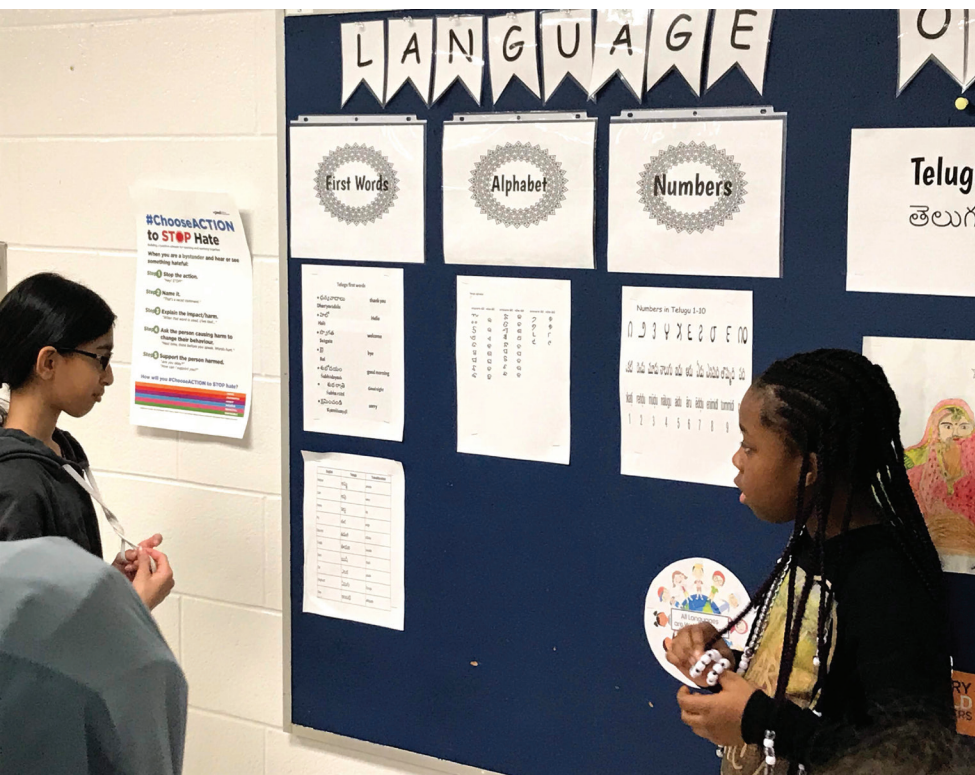
Developing a Stronger Sense of Identity and Belonging

Krista Sijbers is a trained elementary school teacher who worked at one time for an organization in Singapore that provides mother tongue education to

Dutch children. She is currently a site director at RISE International School in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. The Language Friendly School initiative helped her recognize the richness of the linguistic diversity in her school, where many students are learning a third or fourth language. At the time of the interview, Krista had been the principal for just over two years.

"Every child has the right to flourish at school. Language is an important part of their identity and is a powerful learning tool and resource. RISE is an international school in Eindhoven, offering their students lessons in English and Dutch, following the International Primary Curriculum and the Dutch curriculum. The mother tongues of students have a role in our program." *Krista Sijbers, principal, SALTO International School RISE, location: Eindhoven, the Netherlands; number of students: approx. 360; top four languages of the community: Dutch, Turkish, Portuguese, and Spanish; Language Friendly certified since 2020.*

For Krista, the most important motivation for becoming a language-friendly school was the desire to see students develop an identity based on who they are when they arrive at school, including their languages, their norms, their habits, and the cultures that have shaped them. For her, new interactions at school with the teacher, students, and other members of the school community must allow this identity to blossom and not stifle it.



Educators influence the construction of their students' identities through their pedagogical choices, as they emphasize linguistic talents and achievements rather than deficits (e.g., needing to learn the school language). These identities are shaped in interactions, also known as identity negotiation processes.⁴

In Language Friendly Schools, the main objective of these negotiations is to welcome the languages of the families as valuable instruments for learning. Welcoming these languages will allow students to show what they can do and to be proud of their linguistic and cultural heritage. Students feel accepted with their cultural background, which allows them to develop a sense of belonging and feel included in the school community.

"Children feel seen and heard, because they get to do something about their own language in their own language in the classroom. . . . I do see that children like it better when they can do things in their own language." *Arabella Ganze-man, principal at the SALTO School Floralaan, in Eindhoven, the Netherlands.*

Welcoming students' languages means making them visible—on the walls of the classroom, in the corridors, at the reception desk—and also giving them a chance to be heard. Some Language Friendly Schools ask students of different languages to welcome everyone in their own language during the morning announcements.

The development of a language-friendly school community values the languages of all members, including teachers:

"For teachers, it's kind of the same thing, I think. . . . We have many teachers from all over the world and for them there is also a bit of identity and language and that they can share that with the children. And bring a bit of 'home' into the school."

Krista Sijbers.

Enriching Critical Learning Based on Funds of Knowledge

Making students' languages visible in the environment has many advantages, one of which is to make a more informed diagnostic assessment of students' academic level. It allows teachers to better understand what students are capable of academically and how to strengthen students' knowledge and skills. Can they write, read, and/or count in another language? If you can count in one language, you can transfer that skill to another language.

Obtaining more accurate information about such skills in one of the student's languages allows for diagnosis and scaffolded learning. Students realize they can draw on differences and similarities in different languages and cultures, which allows them to develop a deeper level of metacognitive awareness. Teachers also may be able to question the ethnocentricity of their own practices, opening doors to education that is more focused on global citizenship.

"One unit was about Ancient Egypt and the teacher let the students determine . . . the Egyptian timeline . . . and then she added the Indian timeline and a timeline from Korea and because they 'display' timelines differently, she had asked the parents to provide the information . . . then that was also hanging in the classroom. . . . And, for example, during a lesson . . . she also had all the students who were in the class show the leaders [of their former countries]. . . . As soon as the students see the leaders . . . they go all glowing like 'Ah, I know them!' and so it's not just the language, but . . . something of the culture always comes back in every class. I can see that now."

Anne-Marie, principal of the Optimist International School, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

An Inclusive and Equitable Environment for All

In Language Friendly Schools, we acknowledge the influence of all the elements that make up the school, whether they are institutional (e.g., the presence of a library, a cafeteria, lockers in the hallways), academic (e.g., the curriculum or pedagogy in place), or social (e.g., how we greet each other, the way we communicate in the classroom, the decoration, the texts on the walls). All these elements contribute to the culture of the school and influence the students' experiences. Moreover, they are mediated through the local language and culture: we speak, write, and teach in a particular language; we teach some languages (and not



others); signs on the walls are in the school language; announcements are made in the school language; class hours and meals are distributed depending on our local culture schemes, which may not reflect those of some students, families, and staff in the school. It is important to realize how the pervasive presence of such elements in the school context can cause a transition to be challenging for any student previously educated in a different cultural environment.

“Normally, a lot of parents . . . dropped out, because everything was always done in English and Dutch. But we have parents who only speak their mother tongue, for example, because the company they work for doesn’t ask otherwise or because they themselves have not yet

been able to do a language course here. A lot of people dropped out . . . but now there are enough activities where parents can just participate—even if they don’t speak English or Dutch and only speak in their mother tongue.” *Petra van der Geest, teacher, team leader, and the language coordinator at DENISE, De Nieuwe Internationale School Esprit, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.*

In Language Friendly Schools, we recognize that we all—students, teachers, and staff—need to be included and our talents and knowledge recognized. This is why the action of the Language Friendly School is aimed at the environment and not at the individual: the underlying assumption is that everyone benefits from each other’s

knowledge when it is shared, negotiated, and made visible.

Leadership Is Distributed Among Teachers, Parents, Students, and Staff

In Language Friendly Schools, leadership is designed to involve all members of the community: administrators, teachers, parents, and, especially, students. The goal is to facilitate academic success by fostering engagement, establishing high-quality learning facilitated by communication around family, teacher, and school expectations.

At Silver Creek, students serving as language ambassadors welcome new students and their families to the school community. They give a tour of the school and answer questions from new students in their own languages. Ambassadors are encouraged to speak their mother tongue

whenever necessary to smooth and speed up the new student's transition into the new school community. At Silver Creek, ambassadors welcomed parents to a parent-teacher conference by greeting them in their own languages as they entered the room.

In order to better understand the expectations of families, the Silver Creek school requested that parents write a wish for their children in a language of their choice. The wish was written on a heart-shaped paper and posted on the school wall. In this way, parents' wishes for their children became central and their languages were presented to the community through the hallway display.

Parents and communities also play an essential role in providing access to literacy if they are given the means to do so. At Silver Creek, families were invited to work with their children on the development of a text in their language and its translation into the school language. Thus, in Language Friendly Schools, the skills acquired at school are reinforced through the languages and cultures of the home, but the reverse is also true.

The Language Friendly School: A Whole-School Approach

Our interviews with these administrators helped us understand the importance of the whole-school approach, a key facet of a language-friendly school pedagogy. The less involved administrators, teachers, families, and

Five Cool facts about Telugu

1. Telugu officially occupies 44% of the South Indian territory under the GoA!
2. Telugu is Primarily spoken in southeastern India, it is the official language of the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
3. In the early 21st century Telugu had more than 75 million speakers.
4. Like the other Dravidian languages, Telugu has a series of retroflex consonants pronounced with the tip of the tongue curled back against the roof of the mouth.
5. The Telugu script is derived from that of the 6th-century Calukya dynasty and is related to that of the Kannada language.

తెలుగు గురించి ఐదు కూల్ నిజాలు

దక్షిణ భారత భూభాగంలో 44% తెలుగు అధికారికంగా ఆక్రమించింది!
తెలుగు ప్రధానంగా ఆగ్నేయ భారతదేశంలో మాట్లాడుతుంది, ఇది ఆంధ్రప్రదేశ్ మరియు తెలంగాణ రాష్ట్రాల అధికారిక భాష.
21 వ శతాబ్దం ప్రారంభంలో తెలుగులో 75 మిలియన్లకు పైగా మాట్లాడేవారు ఉన్నారు.
ఇతర ద్రావిడ భాషల మాదిరిగానే, తెలుగులో నాలుక కొనతో నోటి పైకప్పుకు వ్యతిరేకంగా వంకరగా రెట్రోఫ్లెక్స్ హల్లులు ఉన్నాయి.
తెలుగు లిపి 6 వ శతాబ్దపు కాలూక్య రాజవంశం నుండి ఉద్భవించింది మరియు ఇది కన్నడ భాషకు సంబంధించినది.

WINTER Word Mat

Winter الشتاء 	Blizzard عاصفة الثلج 	Igloo المبنى القبي 	Ice Skating تزلج جليد 	Skiing التزلج
Snowman الرجل الثلجي 	Gingerbread House بيت خبز الزنجبيل 	Cocoa كاكو 	Hat قبعة 	Jacket السترة

students are, the more difficult the implementation process becomes. With more involvement, and behavioral and attitudinal changes, teachers increase classroom and school-wide activities and initiatives to include families, the community, and, of course, students in a meaningful way.

Becoming a Language Friendly School has a direct effect on the behavioral and attitudes observed in the students themselves. The principals shared many examples of the students' and parents' reactions

to hearing and using their languages in the classroom and at school. These anecdotes reflect the importance of a language-friendly pedagogy, as well as the importance of intentionality in the implementation process.

One of the most telling examples is the report by Roberto di Prospero in Ontario, who noted a dramatic change in student behavior following their involvement in the network, which he attributes to being a Language Friendly School:

“So, when they come in, I think them seeing their language and knowing how much their language is just

part of the fabric of the school has certainly helped their engagement. Which, in turn, helps their overall behavior. So, there’s no behavior issues in this school that you might see in other places where students who aren’t engaged don’t care about the school, don’t feel a part of it.” *Roberto di Prospero.*

Language Friendly Schools seem to have a resonance that goes far beyond the inclusion of languages and cultures, allowing the blossoming of each person in their own difference.

We would like to thank the teachers and school leaders who

have trusted us and agreed to share their experiences with us. Without them, the Language Friendly School would never have been possible.

Notes:

¹ Global Education Monitoring Report. (2016). *If you don’t understand, how can you learn? Policy Paper 24*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243713>

² Hurwitz, D. R., & Kambel, E. R. (2020). Redressing language-based exclusion and punishment in education and the Language Friendly School initiative. *Global Campus Human Rights Journal*, 4(1), 5-24.

³ Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), 132-141.

⁴ Cummins, J., & Early, M. (2011). *Identity texts: The collaborative creation of power in multilingual schools*. Trentham Books.

Language Explorers: Supporting Linguistic Diversity in Ireland

The Language Explorers program, an award-winning initiative by Mother Tongues, focuses on linguistic diversity to promote intercultural dialogue, while increasing children’s interest in the languages spoken in their community. The goals of Language Explorers are to encourage children to embrace all languages positively, to be proud of and share their heritage, and to respect and value diversity. Rather than focusing on teaching foreign languages, the initiative encourages children to make use of all the languages they know, even if they only know a few words.

Language Explorer workshops are delivered in preschools, primary and secondary schools, community centers, and libraries. Through the workshops, children discover the origins of words, recognize sounds of familiar and unfamiliar languages, learn new words from many different languages, and reach a deeper understanding of the languages they use in school and at home. Children use language as a tool and appreciate their own language abilities as they participate in interactive games, art making, singing, storytelling, and creative writing.

Language Explorers also provides training for teachers who want to implement this approach in their own school. Facilitators are native speakers of Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Swahili, Xhosa, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and many other languages.

<https://mothertongues.ie/language-explorers/>

