

LANGUAGE FRIENDLY

SCHOOL

A NETWORK OF SCHOOLS
WHERE ALL **LANGUAGES** ARE
WELCOME



A quality label for schools welcoming language diversity

People have always been on the move: looking for work, for new adventures, to join loved ones or to escape war and conflict. Whatever the reason, worldwide there are more and more children who go to school speaking a different language than the school language.

And this multilingualism is welcomed with open arms at a Language Friendly School: a quality label for schools where all languages are welcome.

Multilingualism is not an obstacle to overcome but a valuable resource to utilize

Language Friendly Schools build on the knowledge that children bring from home. They provide opportunities for students and their families to continue to develop and express their own languages and identities.

Doesn't the school language suffer?

On the contrary: research indicates that when students' home languages are supported, their self-esteem and motivation increase, leading to improved academic performance. The stronger their foundation in the home language, the better and faster they learn the school language as well as other languages.

And what about monolingual students? They also benefit from a language-friendly approach! They learn about other languages and cultures, and their interactions with classmates are improved.

The Language Friendly School was selected as one of the ten most inspiring educational innovations in Bilingual Education by the Finnish education platform [HundrED.org](https://hundur.org)

The logo for hundrED, featuring the word "hundrED" in white lowercase letters with a capital "D" on a solid purple rectangular background.

hundrED

What Language Friendly Schools (Don't) Do

Each school is different. That is why every Language Friendly School designs their own **Language Friendly School Plan**. This is a plan adapted to the school's own needs and aimed at creating an inclusive and language-friendly learning environment for all pupils. Everyone is involved in creating the plan: the whole school team, students and parents.

Example of a Language Friendly School Plan:

A Language Friendly School Plan may look like this:

- During the first year we create a **multilingual wall** featuring 'welcome' signs in all languages and we build a **multilingual library** with the help of parents.
- During the second year we organize **professional development** for the whole team so we all use language friendly strategies in the classroom; we also elect **student language ambassadors** and help them organize **Language of the Month-activities**.

Language Friendly Schools:

- ✓ develop a Language-Friendly School Plan
- ✓ have a Language Friendly School Coordinator.
- ✗ do not prohibit, punish or discourage the use of other languages at school.
- ✗ do not advise parents to speak another language at home with their children.
- ✗ do not allow exclusion or bullying around languages, dialects or accents.

There is a huge diversity of Language Friendly Schools within our network including schools that are just starting and schools with many years of experience in language inclusive learning. School plans thus vary widely as well.

For **more examples**: Visit our [Road Map](#). Watch a video of the [Salto-school Floralaan](#) in the Netherlands. Or listen to the students of the [Plat Douet school](#) in Jersey, UK.

Equal Opportunities: An International Obligation

Every child has the right to an education that respects his or her cultural identity and language (Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child). Unfortunately, more than 200 million children are educated in a language they do not understand. Many students are prohibited, sometimes even punished from using their own language at school.

In 2015, each country pledged to achieve **quality education for all** children by 2030 (Sustainable Development Goal no. 4).

According to UNESCO (2017), language plays a crucial role in achieving this goal:

"Equal access to quality education ... is only possible if the multilingual character of society is reflected in education. Because Goal 4 is so fundamental to the other Sustainable Development Goals, the remaining 16 goals will remain unattainable without multilingual education based on the mother tongue".



Language Friendly Schools promote **inclusion**: the full identity of each student is seen and heard, including all of their languages.

What this means is that teachers get to know their student better, expectations go up and parents become more involved in the learning process. This improves the quality of education and thereby increases equal opportunities for all children - particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Impact

The network currently includes almost 50 schools in ten countries: the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, Curacao, Denmark, Germany, Saba (Caribbean), Spain, China, and the UK. These are primary and secondary schools, K12, public schools, private international schools; and schools catering to newly arrived migrant and children.

Initial research results show that:

- The participation of multilingual students and their parents [increased in all schools](#) interviewed
- Vocabulary development in Dutch and math [improved significantly](#) compared to control schools (study by the University of Amsterdam)

What Schools Say

"There is a big difference. I can't explain it. But I just see that sparkle in the eyes of my students when they are allowed to say something in their own language."
– teacher Spain.

"We see far less behavioral problems with our pupils compared to schools in the area who have the same background and social problems. We think it's because our students are allowed to be completely themselves. We offer them every opportunity to use their own language in their learning process"
– school leader Canada.

Video: Principal Roberto di Prospero from Canada explains [why his school is a Language Friendly School](#).



How to become a Language Friendly School?

All schools **register** via this [link](#)

1. Indicate what your team is already doing and what your ambitions are to become (more) language friendly.
 - Tip: See our **Road Map** below for ideas
2. Meeting with the school leader: we consider the full support of the school leadership as essential for the long term sustainability of the language friendly approach.
3. Contract: the school signs an agreement with the Rutu Foundation and pays the membership fees.
4. Fees are currently set at 345 euros (ex VAT) per year for public schools.
 - Note: different fees apply for private schools.
5. Upon completion of the onboarding process, the school will be issued a membership certificate and take advantage of all the membership benefits.

Benefits of membership:

- Personalized support for two years to work on your Language Friendly School plan
- Participation in online Network Meetings with schools and experts worldwide
- Exclusive access to our online platform including a **Toolkit** of Language Friendly Activities and a research library
- Use of our logo
- A **5% reduction** on all professional development offers through our **Language Friendly Academy**.



More information

The Language Friendly School is a programme of the [Rutu Foundation for Intercultural Multilingual Education](#), a non-profit organization based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.



Co-founders of the Language Friendly School are:



- [Dr Ellen-Rose Kambel](#)
founder/director Rutu Foundation
- [Dr Emmanuelle Le Pichon-Vorstman](#)
associate professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

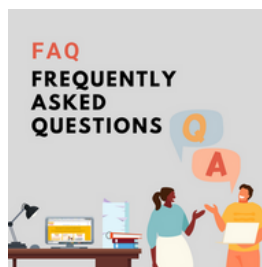
"The ideal school to think about for multilingual children is what has come to be known as the Language Friendly School"

Prof. Jim Cummins - emeritus professor at University of Toronto

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BECOMING A LANGUAGE FRIENDLY SCHOOL



The Roadmap to welcoming all languages



- ✓ We nominate a Language Friendly School Coordinator
- ✓ We develop a Language Friendly School plan together.
- ✓ We do not allow exclusion or bullying around languages, dialects or accents.

- ✓ We do not prohibit, discourage or punish the use of other languages at school
- ✓ We do not prohibit or discourage parents to use own languages at school.
- ✓ We do not advise parents to use a different language at home with their children



Let's make a Language Friendly School plan together. Be inspired by the examples below from other Language Friendly Schools

School level

Draft an anti-bullying plan that includes languages, dialects and accents

Inform the whole school community about the importance of home languages

Facilitate after-school language activities

Create awareness of multilingual language acquisition and development

Discover all the languages spoken within the school community

Foster teacher-parent collaboration to support childrens' learning

Facilitate meetings where parents can use their home languages

Make each of the languages visible

Encourage students to become language ambassadors

Create a language friendly library

Facilitate communication in different languages with parents

Classroom level

Make room for students' home languages as part of the learning process

Offer regular training and professional development to improve language friendly classroom strategies

Make each of the students' languages visible in the classroom

Reflect as a team on our own norms, values and attitudes towards language, cultural, and ethnic diversity

Encourage all students to develop their whole language repertoire, including dialects and accents

Inform teachers on the role of home languages in learning additional languages.

Promote written, oral, gestural, and graphic students' communication

Share and regularly update our approaches and the materials we use with our team

Find ways to provide instruction in the various languages present in school