MODULE 9 · LANGUAGE-FRIENDLY PRACTICE PLANNER

Welcoming a new *multilingual learner*

A language-friendly classroom treats a child's home language as an asset, not a barrier. This planner is a five-stage path for welcoming a newly arrived child, from belonging and immediate access to learning, through to voice, new-language growth and family partnership.

For any newly arrived multilingual child | **Format** 5 stages | **Partners** students · parents · staff

> *A child should not have to wait until they are fluent in the language of instruction before they can think, contribute, belong and learn.*

Fluency in the language of instruction is something children grow into over time; thinking, belonging and learning cannot wait that long. When we let children reason and contribute in their strongest language while they acquire the new one, we protect both their learning and their dignity. Moving between languages to make meaning, known as *translanguaging*, is a legitimate and powerful strategy, not a problem to be corrected. Technology here is used to open access to learning, never to replace human relationships.

THE FIVE STAGES

1 **Welcome and belonging** · name, home language, ambassador, Let's Talk key ring

2 **Immediate access to learning** · translated instructions, visuals, home-language thinking

3 **Voice and contribution** · sharing ideas in the strongest language, made visible

4 **Building the new language** · from known concepts, in meaningful, repeated contexts

5 **Family partnership** · accessible communication, shared language and culture

HOW TO USE IT

Begin at Stage 1 the moment you know a child is joining, and let the stages overlap rather than run strictly one after another. The checklists are a starting point; personalise everything to the child in front of you. Page 3 is a printable Let's Talk key ring template to prepare before the child's first day.

1 STAGE 1 · BEFORE AND ON ARRIVAL

Welcome and belonging

Prepare so the child feels expected, known and safe from the first moment

Belonging comes first. Before a child can learn in a new language, they need to feel that they were expected, that their name and language matter, and that there are people and tools ready to help them. Prepare these in the days before they arrive.

Prepare this before the first day

- [ ] Identify the child's **home language** (and any other languages spoken at home).
- [ ] Learn how to **pronounce their name correctly**, and practise it; ask the family if unsure.
- [ ] Appoint a **Language-Friendly Ambassador** to welcome them and show them the ropes.
- [ ] Prepare the personalised **Let's Talk key ring** (see the template on the next page).
- [ ] Provide a **multilingual visual timetable** so the day is predictable.
- [ ] Identify the **key adults and peers** the child can turn to.

The Language-Friendly Ambassador

A classmate, ideally one who shares the language where possible, who greets the new child, sits with them, and helps them navigate routines, lunch and playtime. Being an ambassador is an honour and a responsibility the whole class can take turns to hold.

Getting the name right

A correctly pronounced name is the first message of belonging. Write it phonetically for yourself, practise it, and never shorten or change it for convenience. Invite the child to teach the class to say it well.

NOTES ON THIS CHILD'S WELCOME

PRINTABLE · PERSONALISE AND CUT OUT

The "Let's Talk" key ring

Immediate communication from day one, while vocabulary grows

Make a small key ring of picture cards for everyday school needs. Each card carries a **pictogram**, the word in the **child's home language**, and the word in the **language of instruction**. The child can point to communicate at once, and sees the two languages side by side, which supports vocabulary acquisition. Fill in the two language columns below, add a simple pictogram to each, then print, cut and ring together.

CHILD'S NAME _____ HOME LANGUAGE _____ LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION _____

MEANING (ADD A PICTOGRAM)	IN THE HOME LANGUAGE	IN THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION
toilet		
water		
help		
stop		
finished		
I do not understand		
please repeat		
my turn		
your turn		
lunch		
playground		
teacher		
friend		
home		
yes		
no		

Tip: add any words this child needs most, and let them suggest their own. The ring belongs to the child.

2 STAGE 2 · FROM DAY ONE

Immediate access to learning

Participation does not wait for fluency

A child can take part in meaningful learning on their first day, long before they are fluent, if we translate what matters and pair every instruction with a visual. The aim is simple: this child can participate without waiting for language proficiency.

Put in place

- [ ] Translate the **essential lesson instructions** and learning intentions.
- [ ] Provide **visual vocabulary**: dual-language word cards with images.
- [ ] Allow **home-language thinking**, planning and discussion.
- [ ] Use **digital translation tools** so ideas can flow both ways.
- [ ] Use **images, gestures and concrete materials** alongside speech.
- [ ] Check the child **can participate** in each activity from the start.

Translate and caption

- Translated lesson instructions and dual-language vocabulary cards.
- Translated visual timetables and bilingual captions.
- QR codes linking to a translated explanation.

Let technology open the door

- Audio translation, text-to-speech and speech-to-text.
- Translation apps for two-way exchange.
- Tools to translate the child's thinking for the class.

KEEP IT HUMAN

Technology is there to open access to learning, never to replace human relationships. A translation app helps a child understand a task; it is the teacher's warmth, patience and attention that helps them belong.

3 STAGE 3 · BEING HEARD

Voice and contribution

A child's ideas count long before their new language is fluent

Fluency and thinking are not the same. A child may have rich ideas they cannot yet say in the language of instruction. Stage 3 makes sure those ideas are welcomed, captured and made visible, so the child is a contributor from the start, not a spectator.

Make voice possible

- [ ] Give children opportunities to **share ideas in their strongest language**.
- [ ] **Translate or transcribe** their thinking so others can access it.
- [ ] Make their ideas **visible in classroom documentation** and displays.
- [ ] Allow **bilingual labels, captions or recordings** of their contributions.
- [ ] Invite the child to **teach words from their own language** to peers.

Capture the thinking

Let a child record an idea as audio in their first language, or draw it, then translate or transcribe it together. Display the idea with both languages side by side, so the contribution is honoured exactly as it was made.

The child as teacher

Inviting a child to teach the class a greeting or a word from their language flips the usual position: the newcomer becomes the expert for a moment. It builds status, belonging and the whole class's curiosity about language.

HOW THIS CHILD CONTRIBUTED THIS WEEK

4 STAGE 4 · GROWING THE NEW LANGUAGE

Building the new language

New words grow from concepts the child already holds

The new language grows fastest when it is anchored to meaning the child already understands, and met often, in predictable, low-pressure contexts. We add the new language alongside the home language; we never ask a child to trade one for the other.

Grow it gently

- [ ] Connect new vocabulary to **concepts the child already understands**.
- [ ] Repeat key words in **meaningful contexts**, not in isolation.
- [ ] Use **songs, routines and predictable language** the child can anticipate.
- [ ] Pair **spoken language with visuals** every time.
- [ ] **Celebrate progress** without pressuring the child to abandon their home language.

Anchor to the known

If a child knows the concept of "half" in their home language, they are learning only a new word, not a new idea. Teach the word onto the concept they already own, and learning is quicker and more secure.

Predictable language

Daily routines, songs and repeated phrases give the ear something it can rely on. The same tidy-up song or line-up phrase each day becomes language the child can join in with long before they could compose it.

ADDITIVE, NEVER SUBTRACTIVE

We are adding a language, not replacing one. A child's home language carries their identity, their family and their deepest thinking. Celebrate the new words while keeping the home language visible, valued and in use.

5 STAGE 5 · WORKING TOGETHER

Family partnership

Families are partners in their child's learning, not bystanders

Invite families in

- [ ] Invite parents into the learning process, not only to formal meetings.
- [ ] Communicate in **accessible language**: translated welcome information and notices.
- [ ] Hold **multilingual parent meetings**, with interpreters or translation technology where needed.
- [ ] Let parents **contribute in their strongest language**.
- [ ] Ask families for **useful vocabulary and cultural knowledge**.
- [ ] Make **home languages visible** in the classroom environment.

A quick reference for all staff

THE ONE THAT MATTERS MOST

Never equate limited English or Dutch with limited intelligence. A child thinking hard in a second language is not a child who cannot think.

- Allow additional processing time, and wait without rushing to fill the silence.
- Use visual and contextual support alongside every instruction.
- Check understanding by asking the child to show or do, rather than only asking "Do you understand?"
- Let children demonstrate knowledge in different ways: drawing, making, pointing, acting, home-language talk.
- Actively learn key words from the child's home language, and use them.
- Encourage multilingual resources, and model curiosity and respect towards language difference.

> *When a child's whole self, their language, culture and family, is welcomed into the room, they do not have to choose between belonging and learning. They can do both, from day one.*