A toolkit for self-evaluation and supporting cultural and linguistic diversity in our schools

Overview

Between 2016 and 2019, the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) developed a project called A Roadmap to Support the Languages of Schooling. The aim of this project is to enable schools to set up a tailor-made, whole-school strategy to support the development of students' competences in the language(s) of schooling".

Using the ECML project as a springboard, we have adapted and contextualised the ECML Roadmap for Use in Post-Primary Schools in Ireland. The result is this toolkit for self-evaluation and support for intercultural and linguistic diversity in schools wishing to address inclusion.

Aim

An Intercultural Look at out Schools: A Toolkit for Self-evaluation and Support for Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Our School is intended for post-primary schools in Ireland. It provides a framework for schools wishing to adress the intercultural dimension in the school. It aims to raise awareness of the role students' plurilingual and pluricultural identities and competences play in their learning in a school setting. It also aims to support teachers and school management in facilitating and promoting students' access to the curriculum. When schools consider the intercultural dimension of teaching and learning, they are ensuring that students develop and can reach their potential in all subjects. The toolkit also encourages schools to cast an intercultural look at aspects of school life beyond the classroom to ensure that all languages and cultures of the school community are included and valued.

The framework takes a holistic view of the school community, the teaching and learning and the learner. It will be used to inform school policy and improvement. The framework has been aligned with school self-evaluation documents and Looking at Our Schools. The common themes and issues that are surveyed/addressed across all these school developement tools will facilitate reflection and change as well as encourage meaningful dialogue between all members of the school community in relation to the intercultural and linguisitc diversity in schools.

Stakeholders

An Intercultural Look at our Schools Toolkit involves a number of stakeholders who are members of the school community including the Board of Management, principals, deputy principal(s), teachers, non-teaching staff, students and parents/guardians. Non-teaching staff may include a range of people in the school. For example, caretakers, SNAs, canteen staff, secretaries, cleaners and the librarian. **The opinions and reflection of part time members of staff will also be captured**.

A whole-school approach should include all members of the school community.

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Resources included in the toolkit

1. Statements of Practice

- A set of Statements of Practice for each **group of stakeholders.** These are to be used by the school to identify and reflect on the intercultural dimensions in the life of the school. The statements are organised under domains aligned with those in Looking at Our Schools. The statements allow for an identification of strengths as well as areas for improvement. The statements of practice should enable members of the school community to **contribute to** an evidence-based evaluation of intercultural aspects of school life.

  – An online survey with statements adapted for the five different stakeholders from the school community.

  – A customised evaluation of the survey results in order to identify possible gaps between the points of view of different stakeholders and to initiate a reflection on how inclusive the school is.

2. Examples of Good Practice

- **Examples of good practice resouces ready for use in the classroom**
- Links to examples of good practice gathered from all over Europe, including Ireland and organised in a searchable database hosted by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML)
- Links to other documents (NCCA, etc.)

  The purpose of the practices is to both inspire and help the school to plan a whole-school strategy according to the needs identified in this self-assessment process.

3. The Toolkit contains a set of documents in order to facilitate its implementation and use.

- **Overview of the toolkit**

  How to get a general understanding of the Toolkit
  How to choose a lead person for the implemenataion of the Toolkit
  A few elements to take into account when choosing the lead person

- **Lead-person(s)' step by step to-do list**

  Things to do for a successful implementation of the Toolkit

- **How to involve members of the school community**

  Ideas for introducing the Toolkit project to the school community

- **Model PowerPoint Powtoon Adobe Spark presentation for promotion**

  Key ideas of the Toolkit project and benefits for the school

- **Model letter for parents**

  A letter which can be adapted to your context in order to present the Toolkit to parents and to ensure their collaboration. The letter will be translated into the languages spoken by the school community.

- **Parental consent forms for student participation**

  Parental consent for students' participation is compulsory. The sample letter can be adapted and used for this purpose.

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- **Statements of practice**

    Statements of practice for school leaders, teachers, non-teaching staff, students and parents.

- **Promotional leaflet**

    A user-friendly leaflet enabling you to present the Toolit to all the stakeholders

- **Summary of self-evaluation report template**

Data protection

The Roadmap developed by the ECML seeks to comply with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR); therefore, all data entered will be strictly used for the self-assessment of your school and is for internal use only. It is possible to use the real name of the school or, alternatively, a fictional name. The administrators or coordinators of your schools' project only have access to the overall data relating to their school and not to the data generated by individuals.

After using the self-assessment tool

Sharing the results of the self-assessment tool should spark fruitful discussion in the school. Meetings should be set up to discuss and disseminate the results among all stakeholders.

The following questions can be used to provoke discussion and help identify areas of school life that can be improved:

✔ Did you anticipate the responses to the statements of practice?

✔ If not, what are the biggest revelations? What are the reasons for these differences?

✔ Is there any aspect of school life that needs to be tackled immediately?

✔ What aspects of school life are working well? Why?

✔ What are the areas for improvement? Why?

✔ What should be changed in the short-, medium- and long-term?

Following the discussions, an action plan (with goals set for certain dates) should be implemented. A second assessment is recommended, for example a year later, in order to be able to follow up on the changes and become aware of the progress made by the school and its stakeholders regarding the importance given to cultural and linguistic diversity in the school.

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