

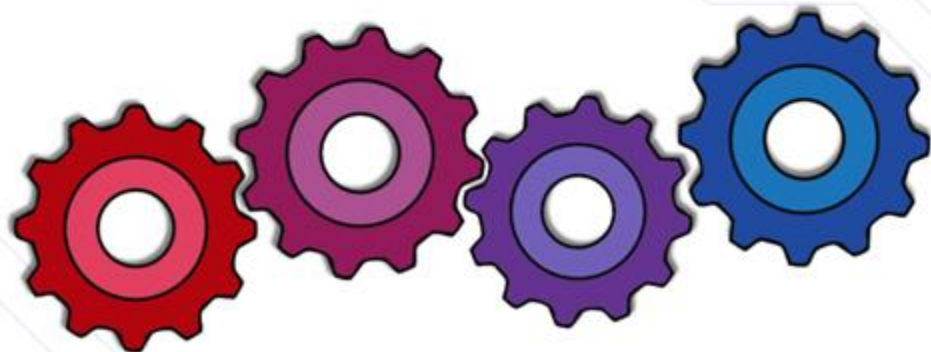


mlrc

Multilingual Learning
Research Center

School Improvement Pathways

PLAYBOOK



*School Improvement
Pathways – Playbook
Apr. 15, 2026*

Welcome!
Please introduce yourself

**In the chat, please share
your school and location.**



Today's Webinar:

What is
the MLRC
School
Network?

How do
we
support
schools?

What is
the
impact of
our
work?

How can
you get
involved?

Today's Facilitators



**Esther
Bettney Heidt**

*MLRC School
Network Researcher*



Jon Nordmeyer

*MLRC School
Network Director*



Jacob Huckle

*Head of Multilingual
Learning, Dulwich
College Suzhou*

The MLRC is a research center based at the top-ranked School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

We **collaborate** with scholars and schools around the world with a focus on **equity** and **innovation** to improve outcomes for **multilingual learners**.

Collaborate.

Discover.

Transform.

The MLRC School Network



150+ schools in 60+ countries

A global **research–practice partnership** dedicated to excellence and equity for multilingual learners. We explore challenges and co-create impactful solutions through **access, improvement, action** and **insights**.

Why (not) Research?



Research

Practice

- Only **1/3** of teachers regularly engage with research
- Research is either **not accessible** or **not relevant** to practice
- Researchers are often **disconnected** from classrooms

(Walsh et al., 2022)

The MLRC School Network

Access

Research-based tools for professional learning *to build knowledge and skills in teaching MLs*

Improvement

Collaborative inquiry *to identify assets, provide feedback and set school goals for serving MLs*

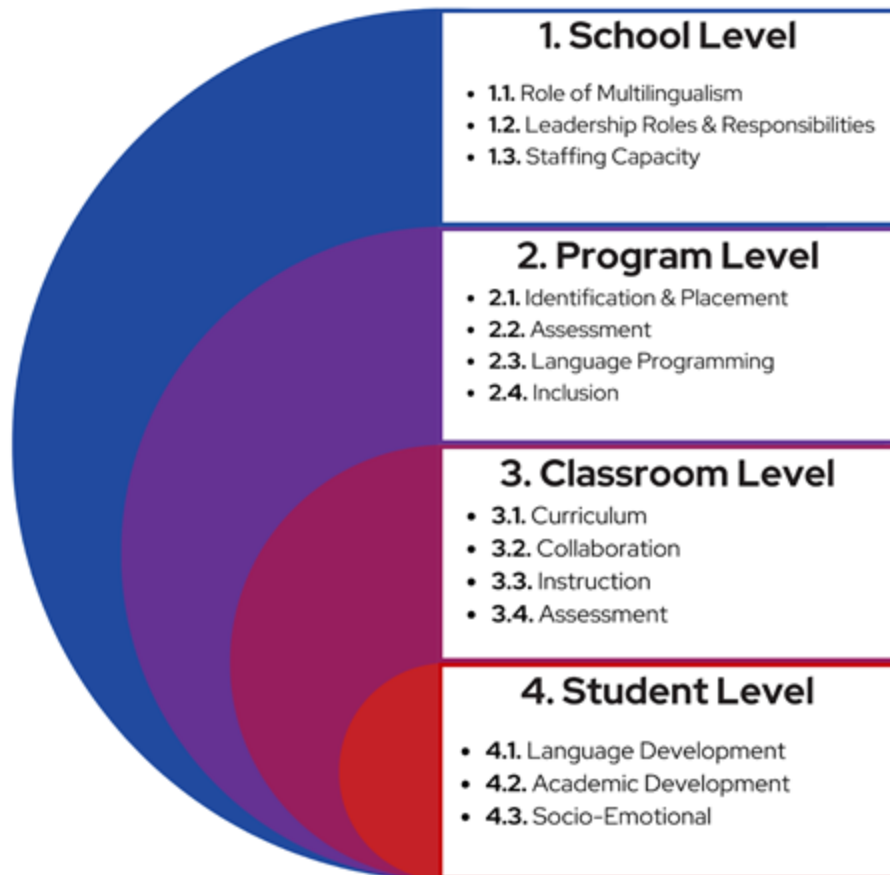
Action

School-based action research, implementation and dissemination *to build collective efficacy*

Insights

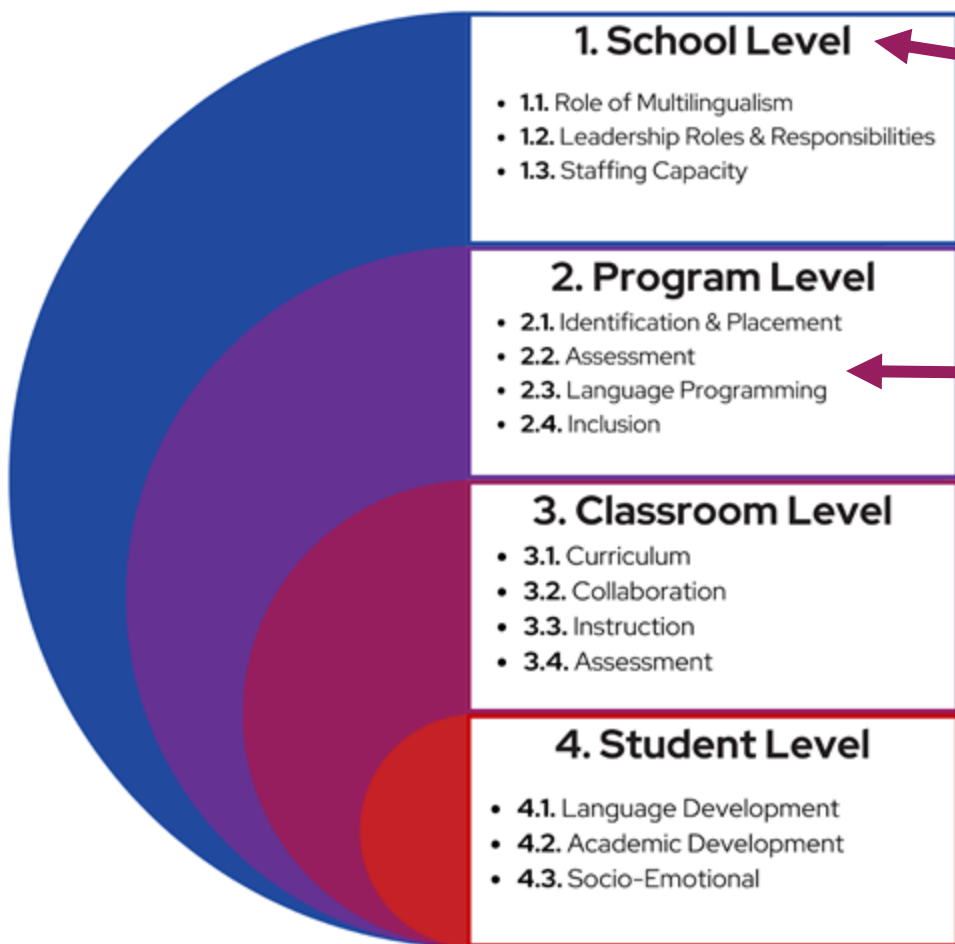
Shared investigation across schools *to create new knowledge about teaching MLs*

The MLRC School Improvement Framework



- **Indicators of quality** for schools serving MLs
- Created by the MLRC with a **team of global researchers**
- Reviewed by **international experts**
- Grounded in **current research and practices** in international schools
- Complements **strategic planning and accreditation** for continuous improvement

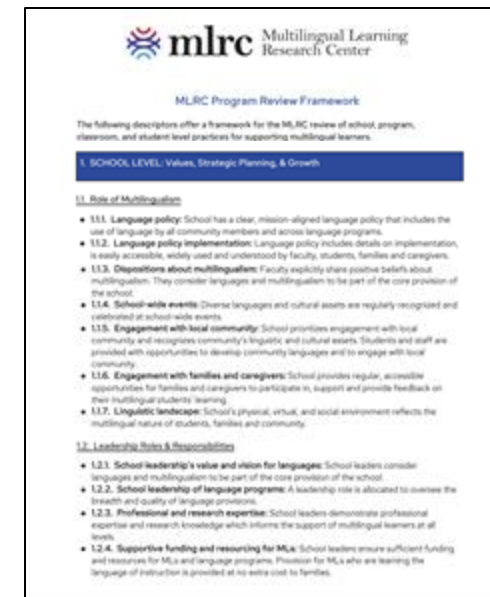
The MLRC School Improvement Framework



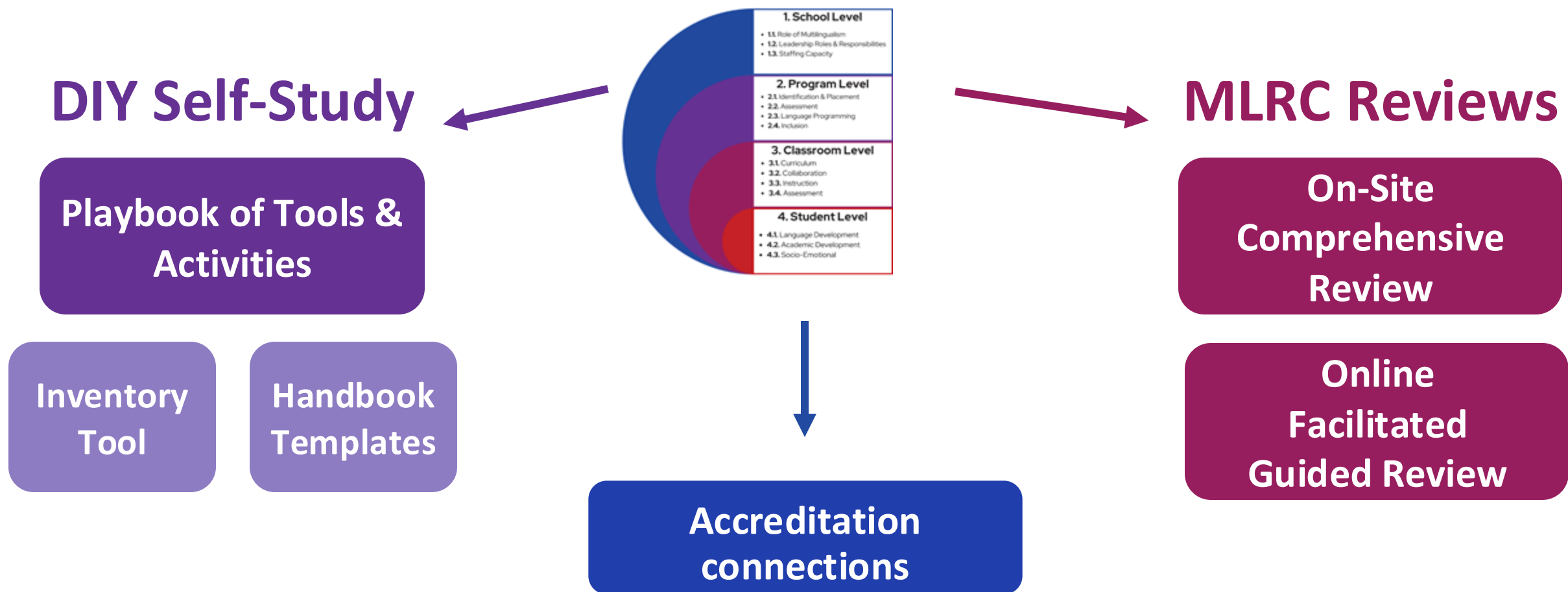
4 Levels

14 Themes

65 Indicators



MLRC School Improvement Framework





Welcome!

At the MLRC, we're passionate about helping educators like you use evidence-based practices to support multilingual students—and we believe we can all get smarter together. As a global research-practice partnership, we connect educators and researchers to explore shared challenges and opportunities. The MLRC School Network serves as a global research-practice partnership focused on improving outcomes for multilingual learners. As a member of this innovative network, you have access to powerful learning tools and collaborative research opportunities. And remember, MLRC Hub accounts are available for every staff member at your school!

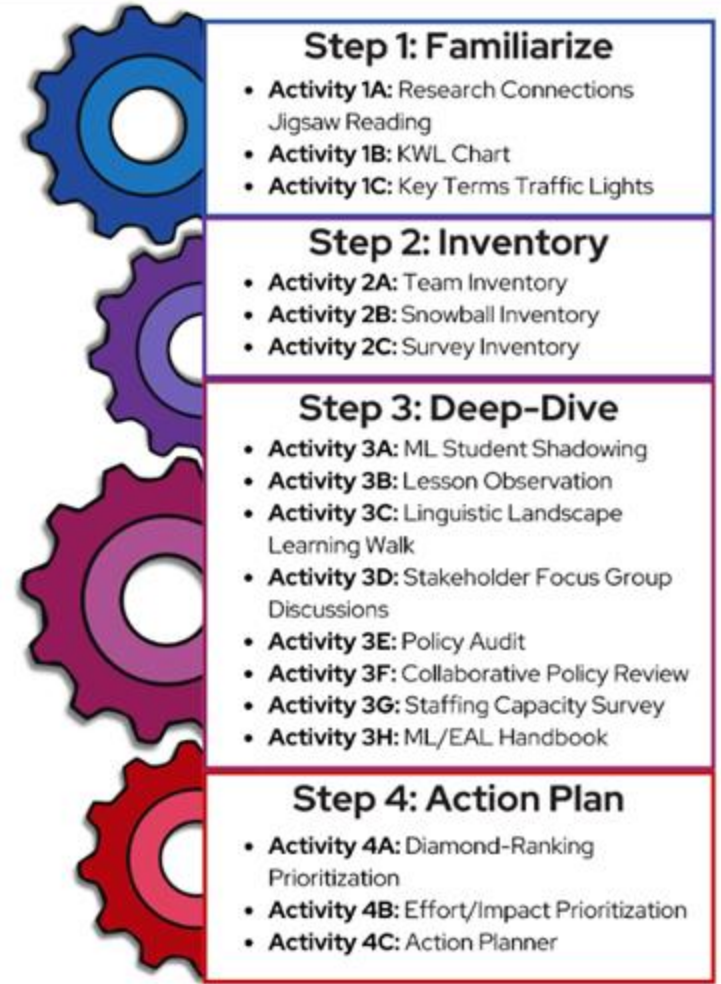
[Pathways](#)[Framework](#)[Inventory](#) for[Playbook](#) ←[Guided Review](#) to[Comprehensive Review](#) ss to

Powerful Tools for Reflection, Inquiry, and Improvement

The MLRC School Improvement Framework is a collection of tools, activities and protocols that schools can use independently for **reflection, evaluation and improvement**. We have designed this tool to help schools:

- Catalyze inquiry about multilingual learners
- Discuss strengths & areas for growth
- Focus on a single division or particular program or whole school
- Build capacity for team/ leaders to connect research to practice

As a research-practice partnership, we encourage our member schools to use, adapt and remix these activities to meet the needs of their local context as they build connections between research and practice. We also encourage schools to invent their own protocols and activities for utilizing the MLRC School Improvement Framework, and welcome schools to share these activities with the MLRC for inclusion in future versions of the Playbook.



Step 1: Familiarize

Become familiar with the MLRC School Improvement Framework

Use one or more of the activities in this section to become familiar with the Framework, Inventory Tool, and the underpinning research which informs these resources. These activities help school teams prepare for completing the MLRC School Improvement Framework inventory in Step 2.

Activity 1A: Research Connections Jigsaw Reading



Activity 1B: KWL Chart



Activity 1C: Key Terms Traffic Lights



Activity 1A: Research Connections Jigsaw Reading



Overview

Participants work in groups to engage in a jigsaw protocol to read and share about the Research Connections sections of the MLRC School Improvement Framework.

Goal

To familiarize participants with the research that informs the MLRC School Improvement Framework and the research-based components essential for the success of multilingual students in international schools.

Resources



[Download Research Connections Jigsaw Reading](#)
(PDF)



[Download MLRC School Improvement Framework](#)
(PDF)



Format

Four groups work separately and then combine as a larger group

Participants

Teachers, staff members, and/or school leaders

Outline

1. Form four groups of participants. If possible, each group should consist of participants from different roles, divisions, grade levels, etc., to reflect diverse perspectives.
2. Assign each group a number 1 – 4. Each group will focus on one of the four levels of the framework:
 - Group 1:** School Level
 - Group 2:** Program Level
 - Group 3:** Classroom Level
 - Group 4:** Student Level
3. Provide each group member with the relevant pages from the *Research Connections Jigsaw Reading* document for their focus level.
4. After breaking into the four groups, participants read their section from the *Research Connections Jigsaw Reading* document.
5. As they read, participants:
 - Identify** (e.g. highlight, underline) important details
 - Note any **questions** they have
 - Note any **connections** they can make to their school context
6. After reading, participants discuss the important details, questions, and connections as a small group to consolidate their thoughts and clarify their understanding of the research connections.
7. After the small group discussion, participants all come back together as a larger group. Each small group shares their insights with the larger group, summarising the important details of their assigned level's research connections, and summarising the questions and connections they discussed.

Activity 1C: Key Terms Traffic Lights



Overview

Participants reflect on some key terms used within the MLRC School Improvement Framework, considering how well they know what the terms mean.

Goal

To become more familiar with and build a shared understanding of some of the terminology used within the MLRC School Improvement Framework.

Resources



[Download Key Terms \(PDF\)](#)

"I am familiar with this term" (3=green; 2=orange; 1=red)

language proficiency

linguistic repertoire

linguistic landscape

scaffolding

translanguaging

metalinguistic awareness

adaptive teaching

learning exceptionalities

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree



Key Terms

multilingual learner (ML)	multilingual identity	English as an additional language (EAL)
home language	community language	world language
bilingual/dual language program	instructional language (or language of instruction, languages of schooling)	language proficiency (or linguistic proficiency)
diversity	equity	inclusion
language provision (or language programming)	language development	language support
content-area language instruction	disciplinary literacies	linguistic repertoire
linguistic profile	linguistic landscape	learning exceptionalities
culturally and linguistically appropriate (practices, pedagogy, resources)	asset (asset-based approaches, cultural assets, linguistic assets)	social and academic belonging
social integration	scaffolding	translanguaging
adaptive teaching	modifications	co-teaching
co-planning	co-assessing	co-reflecting
metacognition	metalinguistic awareness	modalities

Pause for reflection

**Any questions or comments
about Step 1: Familiarize?**

Step 2: Inventory

Complete the MLRC School Improvement Framework Inventory Tool

Use one or more of the activities in this section to reflect on the MLRC School Improvement Framework indicators and identify your school's strengths and areas for growth.

Activity 2A: Team Inventory

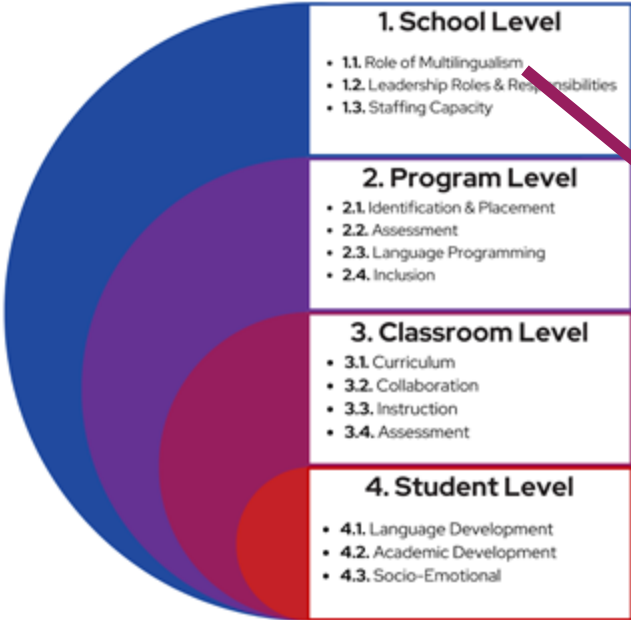


Activity 2B: Snowball Inventory



Activity 2C: Survey Inventory





Key Indicator	Rating	Reflection	Evidence
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.	Select a rating ▾ <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-top: 5px;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Select a rating <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3. Well developed <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Developed <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Started <input type="checkbox"/> 0. Not yet started <input type="checkbox"/> + Add/Edit options </div>		
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.	Select a rating ▾		
1.1.5. Engagement with local community: School prioritizes engagement with local community and recognizes community's	Select a rating ▾		

Format

Four groups work separately and then combine as a larger group

Activity 2A: Team Inventory



Format

Participants work individually, then in pairs, then in small groups.

Activity 2B: Snowball Inventory



Format

All staff complete a survey which is then analyzed by a core team.

Activity 2C: Survey Inventory



Pause for reflection

**Any questions or comments
about Step 2: Inventory?**

Step 3: Deep-dive

Engage in a more detailed and focused reflection

Use one or more of the activities in this section to engage in a deep-dive reflection focusing on particular aspects of the MLRC School Improvement Framework. These activities support you in gathering more evidence, gaining new insights from diverse perspectives, and prioritizing areas for further development.



Activity 3A: ML Student Shadowing



Activity 3B: Lesson Observation



Activity 3C: Linguistic Landscape Learning Walk



Activity 3D: Stakeholder Focus Group Discussions



Activity 3F: Collaborative Policy Review



Activity 3G: Staffing Capacity Survey



Activity 3H: ML/EAL Handbook



Activity 3E: Policy Audit



Activity 3C: Linguistic Landscape Learning Walk



Overview

Teachers/leaders engage in reflective learning walks around the school and follow-on reflection focused on the role of multilingualism on a school level.

Goal

To reflect on the role of multilingualism on a school level and identify areas of strength and areas for improvement related to this theme.

Resources



[Linguistic Landscape Learning Walk Reflection](#)

Format

Participants work as individuals or in small groups to complete the linguistic landscape learning walks.

Participants

Individual or groups of teachers, staff members, and/or school leaders, possibly collaborating with students and/or families/caregivers.

Outline

1. If completing the task as a group, identify who will conduct a learning walk. The activity might be completed by an existing team (e.g. the school leaders, the EAL team) or teachers might be asked to volunteer to participate. Students and families/caregivers might also be involved in the learning walk activity.
2. Share the *Linguistic Landscape Learning Walk Reflection* sheet with all participants.
3. Participants, individually or as a group, walk around the school campus at a time when the school is in session. As they walk around, they reflect on the questions on the *Linguistic Landscape Learning Walk Reflection* sheet and take notes about what they notice.
4. Immediately after the learning walk, participants review their sheet and note down their general reflections about what is going well and what could be improved.
5. If participating as a group, a further meeting can be arranged for all participants to meet together to share their insights from the learning walk and discuss possible future action to build on strengths or address areas for improvement.

MLRC Program Review Framework

The following descriptors offer a framework for the MLRC review of school, program, classroom, and student level practices for supporting multilingual learners.

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

1.1. Role of Multilingualism

- **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 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.

Linguistic Landscape Learning Walk Reflection

Walk around the campus at a time when school is in session. Try to include different places in the school, including classrooms, the canteen, playgrounds, etc. As you walk around, reflect on some or all of the questions below and make notes about what you notice

<p>Linguistic landscape (1.1.7) What evidence do you see of the school's environment reflecting or not reflecting the multilingual nature of students, families, and community? Which languages and cultures are represented/not represented?</p>	
<p>Language Policy Implementation (1.1.1 & 1.1.2) What evidence do you see of the language policy being effectively or ineffectively implemented? What behaviors do you notice that align with or go against the language policy?</p>	
<p>Dispositions about multilingualism (1.1.3) What evidence do you see that suggests faculty have or do not have positive beliefs about multilingualism?</p>	
<p>School-wide events (1.1.4) What evidence do you see of events being held in school to celebrate diverse languages and cultural assets? What evidence do you see of events missing these opportunities?</p>	

- Imagine you are doing a linguistic landscape learning walk in your school.
- What do you notice in your school?
- Share any observations in the chat

Linguistic Landscape Learning Walk Reflection

Walk around the campus at a time when school is in session. Try to include different places in the school, including classrooms, the canteen, playgrounds, etc. As you walk around, reflect on some or all of the questions below and make notes about what you notice

<p>Linguistic landscape (1.1.7) What evidence do you see of the school's environment reflecting or not reflecting the multilingual nature of students, families, and community? Which languages and cultures are represented/not represented?</p>	
<p>Language Policy Implementation (1.1.1 & 1.1.2) What evidence do you see of the language policy being effectively or ineffectively implemented? What behaviors do you notice that align with or go against the language policy?</p>	
<p>Dispositions about multilingualism (1.1.3) What evidence do you see that suggests faculty have or do not have positive beliefs about multilingualism?</p>	
<p>School-wide events (1.1.4) What evidence do you see of events being held in school to celebrate diverse languages and cultural assets? What evidence do you see of events missing these opportunities?</p>	
<p>Engagement with local community (1.1.5) What evidence do you see of the school's engagement with the local community's linguistic and cultural assets? What evidence do you see of missed opportunities to engage with the local community?</p>	
<p>Engagement with local community (1.1.6) What evidence do you see that suggests families and caregivers participate in/support multilingual students' learning? What evidence do you see that suggests some families and caregivers are not able to participate in/support multilingual students' learning?</p>	

Following your learning walk, review your notes and reflect on what you think is going well and what could be improved.

<p>What are we doing well?</p>	<p>What could we improve?</p>
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Linguistic Landscape Learning Walk Reflection

Walk around the campus at a time when school is in session. Try to include different places in the school, including classrooms, the canteen, playgrounds, etc. As you walk around, reflect on some or all of the questions below and make notes about what you notice

Linguistic landscape (1.1.7)

What evidence do you see of the school's environment reflecting or not reflecting the multilingual nature of students, families, and community? Which languages and cultures are represented/not represented?

Language Policy Implementation (1.1.1 & 1.1.2)

What evidence do you see of the language policy being effectively or ineffectively implemented?
What behaviors do you notice that align with or go against the language policy?

Activity 3H: ML/EAL Handbook



Multilingual Learning Handbook: Instructions

Schools can use or adapt this outline to create their own Multilingual Learning Handbook that provides the school community with a comprehensive overview of the school's provision for multilingual learners (MLs). The handbook is aligned with the [MLRC School Improvement Framework](#) and directly references the research connections and indicators within the four levels of the Framework: school level, program level, classroom level, and student level.

Text in black font constitutes the skeleton of the handbook and can be used directly or adapted to fit the school context. **Text in red font** contains directions / guidance and should be changed to describe specific practices used within the school.

The outline is intended to be a flexible, working document that can be modified for each school context. For example, schools might decide to remove some sections or add new parts.

Suggestions:

- The Find and Replace function can be used to change the placeholder 'SCHOOLNAME' to your own school's name.
- Quote text from internal documents you already use (e.g. language policy, strategic plan) and include a link.
- Highlight any suggestions, aspirations or new practices that will need approval in **green**. (i.e. green-light thinking)

Schools that would like to create a more focused handbook that pertains only on EAL programs (rather than multilingual learning more comprehensively) should refer instead to our MLRC [EAL Handbook](#).

SCHOOLNAME Multilingual Learning Handbook

Introduction	1
1. SCHOOL LEVEL: Values, Strategic Planning, & Growth	2
1.1. Role of Multilingualism.....	2
1.2. Leadership Roles & Responsibilities.....	3
1.3. Staffing Capacity.....	4
2. PROGRAM LEVEL: Policies, Programs, & Processes	5
2.1. Identification & Placement.....	5
2.2. Assessment.....	6
2.3. Language Programming.....	6
2.4. Inclusion.....	8
3. CLASSROOM LEVEL: Teaching & Learning	10
3.1. Curriculum.....	10
3.2. Collaboration.....	10
3.3. Instruction.....	11
3.4. Assessment.....	12
4. STUDENT LEVEL: Individual Development	14
4.1. Language Development.....	14
4.2. Academic Development.....	14
4.3. Socio-Emotional.....	14

Introduction

This Multilingual Learning (ML) Handbook provides a comprehensive overview of **SCHOOLNAME's** provision for multilingual learners (MLs). It aims to develop a shared understanding among our school community by outlining the policies, processes, and practices we use to effectively serve MLs in our school.

As a member of the [MLRC School Network](#), we have structured this handbook using the four levels of the [MLRC School Improvement Framework](#): school level, program level, classroom level, and student level.

This handbook is informed by the key research-based components that are essential for the success of multilingual students in international schools. More information about this

Pause for reflection

**Any questions or comments
about Step 3: Deep-dive?**

Step 4: Action plan

Plan your future action for further development

Use one or more of the activities in this section to plan what action you and others in your school will take to further develop in the areas of growth identified through the inventory process.

Activity 4A: Diamond-Ranking Prioritization



Activity 4B: Effort/Impact Prioritization



Activity 4C: Action Planner



Activity 4B: Effort/Impact Prioritization



Overview

A group of educators take part in a prioritization activity using an effort/impact matrix to reflect on which areas should be prioritised as areas for improvement.

Goal

To assess areas for growth identified in the Inventory (and deep-dives) and and prioritize areas for further development.

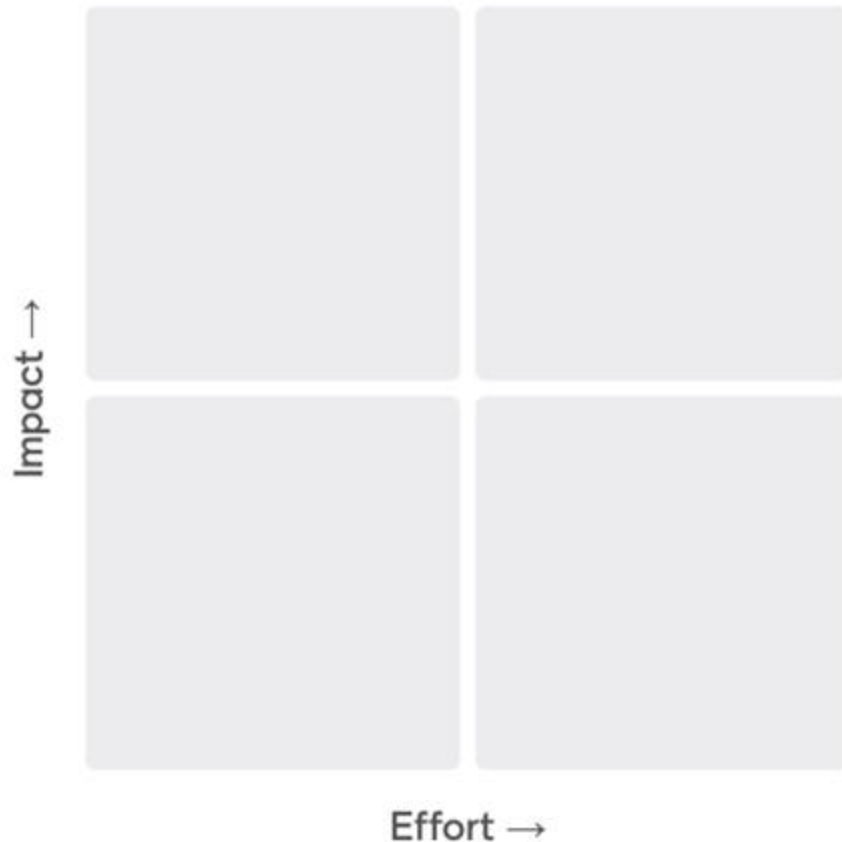
Resources



[Effort/Impact Matrix template](#)

Post-it notes

Where would you place these actions on the impact / effort matrix?



- 1 Creating a more inclusive language policy
- 2 Providing more ML training for teachers
- 3 Employing more EAL specialists
- 4 Providing home language instruction for all students
- 5 Encouraging more collaboration between EAL specialists and content-area teachers
- 6 Changing assessment practices to better support MLs

Pause for reflection

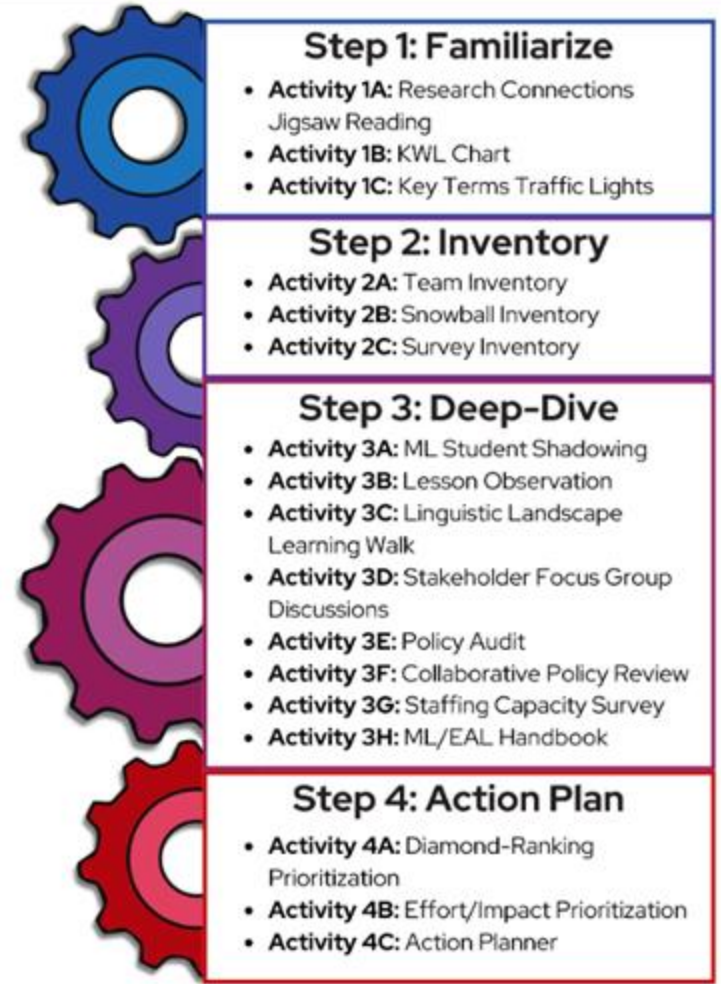
**Any questions or comments
about Step 4: Action plan?**

Powerful Tools for Reflection, Inquiry, and Improvement

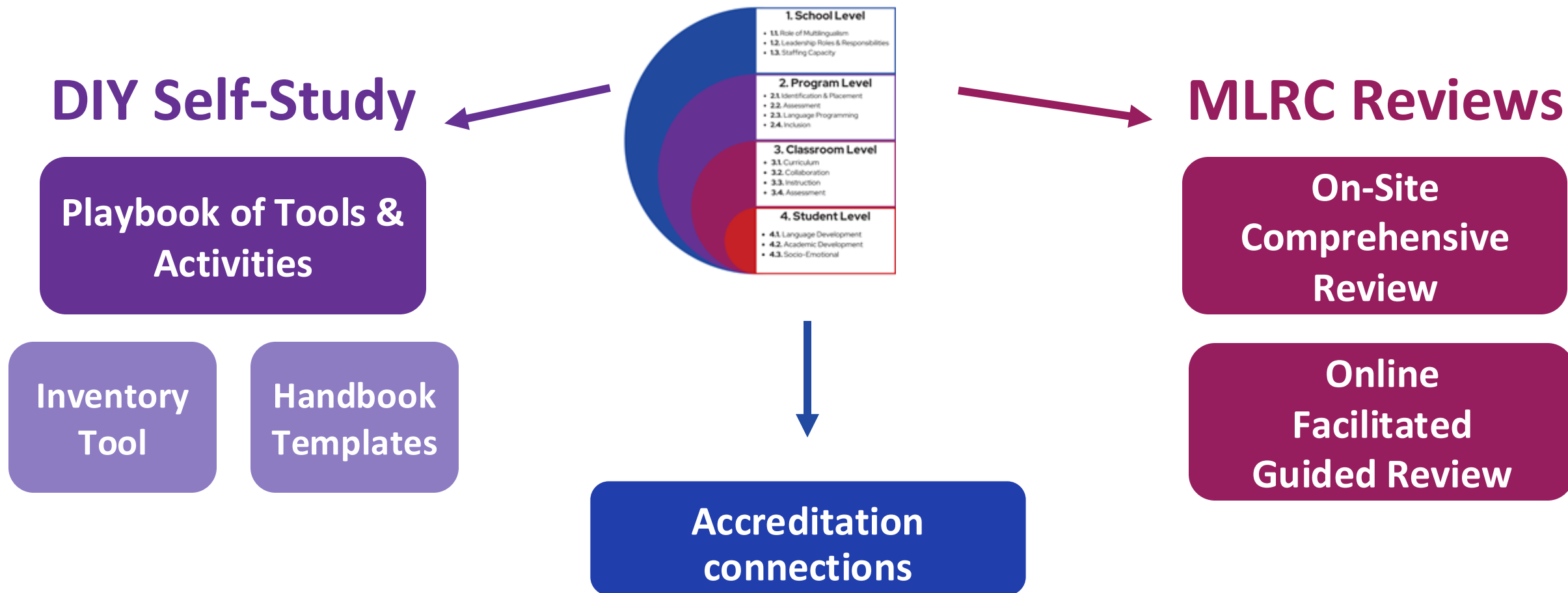
The MLRC School Improvement Framework is a collection of tools, activities and protocols that schools can use independently for **reflection, evaluation and improvement**. We have designed this tool to help schools:

- Catalyze inquiry about multilingual learners
- Discuss strengths & areas for growth
- Focus on a single division or particular program or whole school
- Build capacity for team/ leaders to connect research to practice

As a research-practice partnership, we encourage our member schools to use, adapt and remix these activities to meet the needs of their local context as they build connections between research and practice. We also encourage schools to invent their own protocols and activities for utilizing the MLRC School Improvement Framework, and welcome schools to share these activities with the MLRC for inclusion in future versions of the Playbook.



MLRC School Improvement Framework



The MLRC School Network

Access

Research-based tools for professional learning *to build knowledge and skills in teaching MLs*

Improvement

Collaborative inquiry *to identify assets, provide feedback and set school goals for serving MLs*

Action

School-based action research, implementation and dissemination *to build collective efficacy*

Insights

Shared investigation across schools *to create new knowledge about teaching MLs*

If you are a current member...

- Explore the **MLRC School Network Hub** & share with your colleagues
- Partner with us for **School Improvement**
- Send a team to a **Research Symposium**
- **Write or present** with us!

If you are not yet a member...

- **Become a member!** (5-minute application + annual fee)
- Member benefits include:
 - Access to **Hub Resources**
 - Asynchronous **courses**
 - **Language Policy** Working Group
 - A **global community!**



mlrc

Multilingual Learning
Research Center

Questions?

MLRC@wcer.wisc.edu

