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20 Ways to Increase Uptake of MFLs in your school

Promotion Ideas for Teachers in the MFL Classroom



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20 Ways to Increase Uptake of MFLs in your school

Introduction

This resource offers 20 tried-and-tested strategies to raise the profile of Modern Foreign Languages in post-primary schools. From whole-school events to everyday classroom activities, these suggestions are designed to inspire student interest and increase uptake of languages. Whether you're looking to strengthen languages as a subject choice or foster a more visible language presence in your school community, this guide offers flexible approaches to suit a variety of teaching contexts.

Open Day and/or Subject Information Day

1



Schedule an open night or a subject information day during the first term to engage new students and parents early in the academic year. Languages Connect has an [Open Night Toolkit](#), which is designed to encourage incoming students to choose a language when choosing their subjects. Included in this toolkit are a selection of ideas and resources for activities and games related to learning languages. It also includes brochures for parents/guardians, with information on the potential benefits of learning languages. These resources can be used when organising an open day.

Subject Choice

2

Hold a subject choice information session in the second term before students make their choices for the next academic year. In TY, at the end of each module/rotating course, include a mechanism for students to express interest in your subject for Fifth Year and provide a reminder when it is closer to the date. Ahead of subject choice deadlines, organise informational sessions and distribute materials which highlight the value of choosing the subject. Focus on career opportunities, cultural enrichment, and the practical benefits of bilingualism or multilingualism. Emphasise the short-term benefits and scope for future studies. Encourage students to consider long-term benefits when selecting subjects. You can find resources to support you here: [Guidance Resources - Languages Connect](#).

Actions Specific to Certain Months:

3

Offer Sampler Modules

Provide these opportunities at the beginning of the school year and during subject sampling periods/taster courses. Implement taster courses for 1st Years and TYs. This helps gauge interest in a low-pressure environment, encouraging more students to take up the language formally.

4

Events

Schedule these events during key decision-making periods for students, such as subject selection or third level application times. During guidance events, specifically address how language skills complement various career paths. Provide resources and share examples of professionals who use language skills in their jobs. Highlight the role of languages in global mobility and career flexibility.

Click here [Working with Languages Videos - Languages](#) to see and hear some real-world case studies where Irish people have reaped the benefits of language skills in their professional lives.

5

European Day of Languages / Europe Day

September 26th represents [European Day of Languages](#) and May 9th represents [European Day](#). Celebrate these days with activities that highlight linguistic and cultural diversity in Ireland and in Europe. Organise language workshops, cultural presentations, games, quizzes, and food tastings. Encourage students and staff to participate by sharing their own linguistic heritage.

6

#ThinkLanguages

Coordinate with the official date. Plan an event or series of activities around [#ThinkLanguages](#) to promote multilingualism and cultural awareness. This could include workshops, guest speakers, and language games. Engage students with interactive and fun learning experiences that celebrate linguistic diversity and the advantages of language learning.

7

Relevant Competition/Celebration of the Target Language and Culture

Relevant Competition/Celebration of the Target Language and Culture Plan around significant cultural dates related to the language that is being promoted. Identify and participate in competitions or celebrations related to the target language and culture. These could include poetry contests, cultural festivals, or language proficiency competitions. Preparing for these events gives students a goal to work towards and a platform to showcase their skills. Check [News & Articles - PPLI](#) to keep up to date with details of competitions and events organised by PPLI.

8

Parent-Teacher Meeting

Use parent-teacher meetings to discuss the progress and benefits of language learning directly with parents. Prepare materials on how language skills can enhance academic and career opportunities. Offer insights into how parents can support their child's language learning journey at home.

Check [Languages at Senior Cycle - Languages Connect](#) information on studying languages at Leaving Certificate level.

9

End-of-Year Celebration

Celebrate the end of the academic year with a vibrant multilingual and multicultural event that involves parents and showcases the progress students have made in their language studies. Consider implementing a language/cultural passport concept, where students earn stamps for participation in language-focused activities throughout the year. This could culminate in an awards ceremony, recognising students for their cultural engagement and linguistic achievements, while fostering a sense of accomplishment and community among students and their families.

Ongoing Actions:

Communication and Language Media Projects

10

Keep the school community engaged with regular updates through newsletters and social media, featuring language learning highlights, student achievements, and upcoming events. Extend this engagement by collaborating with students to create a language podcast or magazine series. This project could explore various cultural holidays and celebrations, providing an authentic audience for student work and enhancing their language skills. Publishing these on school platforms or streaming services broadens the reach and impact of your language programme.

Visual Language and Cultural Promotion

11

Maintain a dynamic and educational language environment with year-round displays of signs, posters, and announcements in both the target language and English/Irish. Regularly update cultural displays to reflect current events, celebrations, and the rich diversity of languages spoken by the school community. This visual strategy not only reinforces language learning but also fosters a deep appreciation for cultural diversity and promotes inclusivity and pride among students.

Include Your Language in the School Awards

12

Integrate the language in question into annual awards ceremonies. Recognise and celebrate language learning achievements during school awards. This acknowledges the hard work of language learners and elevates the status of language learning within the school community.

Create a "Language Wall of Fame"

13

Update this wall as students achieve noteworthy accomplishments. Develop a dedicated space to showcase student achievements in language learning. Include projects, essays, and community involvement related to the target language. This recognises students' efforts and inspires others to engage with language learning.

Maintain a Language-Focused Section in the School Library

14

Dedicate a section of the school library to languages and continually enrich it with a diverse array of resources in various languages, including books, films, and digital materials. Highlight this section in school communications. You will not only facilitate language learning outside the classroom but also foster a culture of curiosity and global awareness among students.

Set Up a Designated Language Corner

15

Create a designated language corner in a high-traffic area within the school, ensuring it is always vibrant and inviting with new materials. This space should be a hub of linguistic and cultural exploration, stocked with resources such as bilingual books, cultural artefacts, posters, and multimedia materials relevant to the languages taught at the school. Regular updates and the addition of seasonal or thematic materials can keep the space fresh and engaging. The language corner serves as both a constant visual prompt for students to engage with new languages and a resource hub for informal learning and cultural exchange.

Invite Native Speakers or Language Experts

16

Organise throughout the year to maintain interest and engagement. Invite native speakers or language experts to give presentations or workshops. These interactions will provide authentic language exposure and insights into the culture, enriching the learning experience.

17

Student Language Ambassadors

Continuous engagement through various school events and activities. Recruit enthusiastic students as Language Ambassadors to lead language-related events and activities. Provide them with training and resources to organise language games, workshops, and cultural presentations. Their peer-to-peer influence can significantly boost interest and participation among students.

18

Language "Buddy System"/Lunchtime Language Get-Togethers

Initiate this at the start of the year and continue throughout. Establish a buddy system or organise regular lunchtime language meetups to foster informal language practice and cultural exchange among students. This peer interaction enhances language learning in a relaxed setting.

19

Establish Virtual Pen Pal Programmes

Maintain throughout the academic year to allow for meaningful exchanges. Set up virtual exchanges with schools in countries where the target language is spoken. This provides students with real-life communication practice and cultural exchange, enhancing their language skills and global awareness. See here a [Guide on How to set up a Virtual Exchange – Languages Connect](#) and here [Virtual Exchanges - PPLI](#) how one school's experience.

20

TY Community Integration and Outreach

Offer TY students meaningful volunteering opportunities in the local community, such as language tutoring, translating, or serving as school ambassadors. This initiative strengthens their language skills, while providing valuable support to members of their communities. Additionally, invite primary school students to participate in taster courses which are organised and taught by TY students, encouraging early interest in language learning and allowing TY students to apply their knowledge in real-world settings. Click here [Work Experience Resources - Languages Connect](#) for resource booklets that provide guidance and activities related to work experience for TY, LCA & LCVP students.

Tips:

- **Planning and Timing:** For actions tied to specific months, align them with the school calendar and relevant external events. For ongoing actions, establish a regular schedule and stick to it to maintain momentum and interest.
- **Engagement and Promotion:** Utilise social media, school newsletters, and parent meetings to promote events and achievements. Engaging content that showcases student involvement and success can boost participation and interest.
- **Collaboration and Community Involvement:** Partner with local libraries, cultural centres and embassies to enrich your programme with authentic experiences and resources. Involving parents and the local community can also provide additional support and resources.
- **Resource Allocation:** Ensure that materials, whether for display or for the language corner, are updated and relevant. Involve students in creating these materials to give them a sense of ownership and involvement.
- **Feedback and Adaptation:** Regularly gather feedback from students, parents, and colleagues to refine and improve your activities. This can help you adjust to changing interests and needs within the school community.
- **Regular Updates to Parents:** Keep a consistent schedule, e.g. monthly or after major events. Keep parents informed about their child's progress, language learning activities, and the benefits of multilingualism through regular updates. This fosters parental support of and engagement with their child's language education.

For more teaching and learning resources, visit ppli.ie.

For more awareness-raising resources for students and parents, visit languagesconnect.ie.

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