



# LITERACY AND MULTILINGUAL APPROACHES

**When reading and writing in one's mother tongue helps one to learn the language of the host country.**

Reading skills play a pivotal role in the educational success of all students. For students with immigrant backgrounds, developing these skills is one more factor among all the other determinants that will affect their integration and perseverance at school.

It is thus crucial to encourage allophone students to read and write in French, and multilingual approaches to literacy have proved effective in this regard.

## MOTHER TONGUE IS AN IMPORTANT ASSET for learning a new language and developing literacy.

Students who are allowed to use their mother tongue(s) can build on their knowledge to learn another language:

- A student can rely on their existing knowledge to learn new notions.
- A student's competency level in their mother tongue when they start learning the new language is an indicator of the competency level they will reach in the new language.
- When the student has gained enough knowledge of the new language, they can transfer reading strategies from their mother tongue to the new language.



**1 Montreal student in 4 is born abroad<sup>1</sup>**

While many students with immigrant backgrounds speak French when they arrive, some must learn it at school.



**Taking a student's linguistic and cultural background into account**



**Implementing multilingual approaches**



- Facilitates learning
- Fosters engagement and motivation toward the written word

# MULTILINGUAL LITERACY *in action*

There are many multilingual literacy activities that will help students from immigrant backgrounds integrate and achieve success at school while creating a climate of openness to language diversity.



Preschool



Elementary



High School



## Using bilingual or multilingual books

Use books that have been translated into two or more languages, or books that integrate words from another language in the story.



## Multilingual theatre workshops

Provide students with a safe place to express themselves that takes their experiences and mother tongue(s) into consideration and supports the development of their language skills.



## Writing bilingual and multilingual personal accounts

Give students an opportunity to engage in creative writing based on their experiences or family history in which they can write in French and any other language they know.



## Language awareness activities

Introduce students to different languages (oral and written forms) to raise awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and encourage the development of metalinguistic skills (the ability to notice similarities and differences between languages).



## Use books that talk about difference and rejection

Encourage reflection and awareness through youth literature that deals with issues such as languages, other cultures, differences, otherness, diversity, migration, and racism (e.g., the *Coup de poing* collection).



## Multilingual gestures

Make room for students' languages by learning a few words, encouraging them to explain how their language works to their classmates, or inviting a parent to read a story in their mother tongue.



You'll find more multilingual activities and resources at the **Élodil** website.

This infographic is based on a presentation by Françoise Armand (Université de Montréal) given as part of a day of workshops on young readers of the 21st century organized by Réseau réussite Montréal.

For more information about reading and persevering at school,  
**SEE OUR KEY TOPIC WEBPAGE:**

(French only)

[www.reseautreussitemontreal.ca/dossiers-thematiques/lecture-et-perseverance-scolaire/](http://www.reseautreussitemontreal.ca/dossiers-thematiques/lecture-et-perseverance-scolaire/)