

# Managing CLIL Programming

This article summarises some of the key factors, including challenges, to be considered during the establishment of CLIL programmes in primary or secondary schools. The article is organised under the following main headings, and addresses, among others, the issues listed below:

## PRE-LAUNCH ESSENTIALS

- gaining stakeholder support
- planning considerations

### STUDENTS

- recruitment /enrolment
- maintaining numbers

### SCHOOLS

- maintaining unity
- using space

### TEACHERS

- hiring and preventing turnover
- adapting methodology

## Introduction

For the committed and convinced, CLIL can seem like an educational oasis. It is about big dreams and major steps that will lead to big results.

For the uninformed, disinterested, or fearful, CLIL can be something to be resisted, undermined or ignored. If poorly managed, it can lead to people feeling threatened, disempowered, or simply tired of change.

The following, among others, can all help make or break a CLIL programme: politicians, local government officials, inspectors, pro-CLIL parents, anti-CLIL parents, journalists, school principals, vice-principals, members of the school steering committee, CLIL-teachers, non-CLIL teachers, librarians, boys, girls, university professors and university researchers.

Although CLIL classes have been established by one enthusiastic teacher with the support of an administrator, setting up and developing a sustainable CLIL programme is a complex undertaking. Moreover, this complex task cannot be undertaken in a vacuum. Any newly established CLIL programme will impact in many ways on existing programmes and their staff within a school, a school district, and perhaps even nationally.

### Developing a well-functioning CLIL programme ideally involves:

- building stakeholder networks (internal and external to the school) that are focused on learning;
- thorough planning that engages key stakeholders in the decision that leads to establishing quality programming;
- understanding and agreeing on CLIL methodology and good pedagogy in general;
- understanding best practice in management, including the management of educational change;
- recognising and using a school's existing knowledge base;

- accessing training/mentorship programmes and materials for teachers, administrators, inspectors, parents, and government officials among others;
- accessing and developing teaching and learning materials for students;
- funding independent research on student achievement and programme management;
- managing public relations including producing materials that address key stakeholder concerns;
- having a government agency that is mandated to coordinate and support CLIL programme development.

This article will focus on pre-launch essentials, as well as working with students and teachers, and analysing how CLIL can impact on the entire school. A host of other factors such as stakeholder relations, working with parents, supporting language learning, and learning materials development will not be addressed separately due to space limitations.

### Pre-launch essentials

For a head teacher or school principal, initiating a CLIL programme is the start of a multi-year change process. As students move from year to year through the programme, this will impact on staffing, professional development needs, purchasing of learning materials for classrooms and the school library, and on the whole school culture that will be feeling the ever-increasing presence of CLIL.

To be prepared for this process, head teachers and their staff are well advised to read about CLIL programme development, and to meet with people who have managed a CLIL programme. Moreover, in order to plan for and manage programme start-up, it is important to have an understanding of CLIL methodology, and to be aware of research on the achievements of CLIL students. Parents and other stakeholders will be looking for assurances and answers to questions. Answers are generally considered more credible, if they are based on the experience of other schools and on independent research.

#### **The key concerns of parents and many education officials tend to be:**

1. Will the CLIL student's mother tongue suffer?
2. Will learning of the CLIL language impede content learning and adversely affect grades?
3. Is the programme only suitable for the gifted students?

Research shows that the mother tongue of CLIL students does not suffer. In fact, considerable research demonstrates that students in CLIL programmes either achieve equal or superior results with students studying in their first language.

Research suggests that after several years in the programme, student achievement in a host of subjects from maths to science is on par with that of students studying in their mother tongue.

Moreover, it has been proposed that well-managed CLIL programmes are suitable for most average or even below average students.

Being knowledgeable about CLIL programme methodology, planning implications and research on student achievement are often essential in gaining the support of local government officials or education authorities. The same is the case at the school level. At the school level, a critical mass of people in the school management team, the school steering committee or council and a sizable number of teachers need to support programming. Teachers are most likely concerned about job security. Thus, when existing staff assume responsibility for teaching in the CLIL programme, opposition rooted in the fear of job losses is reduced.

Further, prior to establishing a programme it is wise to assess if:

- there are **enough students** to allow for a two-track system (CLIL and a standard programme) so that parents/students have a choice. *Having all parents/students opt for CLIL is unlikely, and many parents would not accept sending their children to a school further afield;*
- there is **enough space** in the school to allow for increased enrolment. *CLIL schools can become magnets drawing students from outside of the school's immediate area. However, if a programme expands rapidly drawing many high-performing students from other schools, opposition to it will grow. Moreover, this can lead to the weakening of other schools which would not be in the community's interest;*
- **classrooms are large enough** to allow for group and pair work;
- there are **enough qualified teachers** that understand CLIL methodology;
- there is a **pool of qualified potential CLIL teachers** to meet future needs.

Moreover, a school establishing CLIL needs to be prepared for the following:

- **receiving many visitors.** *Educational innovations such as CLIL draw interest from the media, university researchers, university students wishing to research programme implementation, and parents of potential students, among others;*
- **sharing your expertise.** *Other schools establishing similar programmes will seek advice, so will researchers, administrators and teacher trainers;*
- being prepared to find ways of **releasing teachers for professional development** and planning. *Initially teachers will need time for visiting other schools offering CLIL, for training and for planning the integration of subjects - a key feature of the CLIL method;*
- **helping parents and students to develop realistic expectations** and an understanding of the typical learning process for CLIL students. *For example, in intensive CLIL programmes that begin in Year one, student L1 spelling and writing skills may initially fall behind those students studying in their L1. Parents need to know that their children will catch up with students in the standard programme soon after they begin studying*

*some subjects in the school's L1;*

- **ensuring that strategies are in place to support students in difficulty** and to prevent attrition. *Normally, students enter a CLIL programme at the start of programming. New students are usually not accepted mid-stream unless they have the required level of language which is rarely achieved without having been in a CLIL programme. Thus, when students drop out of the programme, they are usually not replaced. This means that if considerable attrition takes place, it can become very expensive to maintain programming;*
- **purchasing new learning materials.** *CLIL language materials will need to be purchased for the classroom and the school library.*

Finally, CLIL programmes impact on so many stakeholders that it is difficult to perceive how the programme can be effectively managed in an authoritarian manner. A democratic approach implies that leadership is shared with others.

CLIL produces change and all change produces some form of tension and conflict that need to be managed. Head teachers in CLIL, who work co-operatively and still encourage open, frank and assertive dialogue, who share power and responsibility with others, who understand the implications of establishing a CLIL programme, and who understand how to manage change are well placed to begin the long-term process of instituting CLIL programming.

## Students

Four methods are commonly used for admitting students to a CLIL programme: first come, first served; a lottery; choosing students with the highest grades; and testing. First come, first served is the most frequently chosen option. Lotteries are used in areas where demand far outstrips availability. Testing and choosing students with the highest grades are seen as the least desirable options, as they have the potential of creating elitist programmes for high-achieving students. Elitist programmes are far more likely to suffer funding cuts, create jealousy and distort the make-up of the regular programme. Moreover, such programmes exclude large segments of the student population that have much to gain from CLIL. Some schools hold interviews and/or meetings with parents and/or students to ensure that the implications of learning through CLIL are understood.

To raise awareness about the CLIL option, parents and students (post-primary) are invited to a meeting that includes information from the head teacher, the deputy head, the CLIL teacher(s) and non-CLIL teachers. Parents of current CLIL students are usually listened to with particular interest. In the case of older students, students who have experienced CLIL are invited. A standard agenda for such a meeting includes:

- a short overview of programme goals and plans, as well as CLIL research;
- parents, and in the case of post-primary programmes, students are informed of the long-term commitment needed for sustainable results, and are helped to understand the typical CLIL learning process and cycle;
- each of the aforementioned people share their perspective on the programme;

- the majority of time is given to questions from parents (and students, in particular, in the case of post-primary CLIL). Attendees are encouraged to express their fears and concerns so that they can be addressed;
- admission criteria are clearly stated and provided in writing with application forms.

Often more girls than boys apply to the programme. In particular, this is a case with post-primary CLIL programmes that target students who are in middle or secondary school. It is helpful to have a strategy for ensuring a gender balance upon programme intake. Part of this strategy might include:

- openly stating that 50% of the intake will consist of girls and 50% boys;
- considering boys and girls as separate stakeholder groups ensuring that programme advertising/information takes into account each group's interests, learning styles and other academic needs;
- exploring one's own attitudes, language and behaviour to make certain that the message reaching parents and students is free of gender bias.

Once students are enrolled, it is important to manage expectations. Parents and older students will want to know how quickly they will make progress in the L2, how much homework will be required, and what sort of support they can expect if they face difficulties.

Moreover, it is helpful to think through how students will be supported during programming. Options include: surveying students to find out their interests, concerns and needs; funding extra office hours so teachers are available for students requiring additional support; running a homework club; teaching learning skills; establishing a buddy system where students support each other; and ensuring that content and language learning are scaffolded in each lesson.

## The School as a whole

One of the dangers of CLIL is the two-schools-in-one phenomenon, where CLIL and non-CLIL teachers form two separate groups. As a CLIL programme is established in a school, it is important to involve the entire school, and to integrate CLIL into school procedures and plans.

In successful CLIL schools, the institution's **strategic plan**:

- has integrated CLIL. *The school's vision and mission reflect a link with CLIL or language learning.*
- has been developed involving the entire staff. *This helps to ensure that the school's internal stakeholders' interests and needs are taken into account, and that the implementation of the plan is supported.*
- is a living document. *The mission, vision and strategic plan (and CLIL) are returned to at planning meetings, and used as a point of reference at school assemblies and other events.*

Dividing a school **budget** among many deserving programmes is always a potential source of tension. Sharing budgetary resources in a just way between the CLIL and regular programme will build support for the new CLIL initiative. A school team representing a cross-section of staff can be drawn into developing the budget. However, since the CLIL programme requires new learning resources for both classrooms and the school library, it is helpful if CLIL receives some start-up capital.

Parents are likely to feel more comfortable about the CLIL programme, if CLIL and non-CLIL parents are represented equally on the **school council** so that the interests of both programmes are respected.

A head teacher can further **build support** for the programme by:

- giving both the standard and the CLIL programme equal attention;
- taking guests to see both the regular and CLIL programme students. *Many school visitors only wish to visit the CLIL programme. Attention given by visitors to CLIL students can feed a sense of inferiority in regular programme students;*
- using the CLIL language, at least on occasion, when speaking with students so they can see that multilingualism is valued.

Moreover, head teachers can **facilitate CLIL programming** by:

- ensuring that CLIL and non-CLIL teachers have designated times to plan together and integrate programming;
- supporting all teaching staff in developing an understanding of CLIL methodology;
- agreeing with staff on values and goals, and returning to these regularly;
- supporting the librarian in developing proficiency in the CLIL language;
- organising professional development in the essentials of teamwork (productive and unproductive roles/behaviour, phases in group development, co-operation skills);
- planning entire-school activities that include both the regular and CLIL programme students such as Independence Day, a special event to celebrate co-operation, or a combined science and history fair;
- creating workshops where teachers from the CLIL and the standard programme can share experiences, teaching materials and strategies;
- ensuring that other school managers have training in change and project management theory and practice;

- having a public relations strategy to inform the community about the CLIL programme;
- ensuring that CLIL classrooms allow for group and pair work. *It should be possible to move desks simply and safely;*
- allowing walls, windows, hallways and even ceilings to be used to exhibit vocabulary and subject content, as well as student work. *Subject teachers would benefit from having their own classroom as it is too much work to develop surface areas in several classrooms.*

## Teachers

Teachers have been referred to as the ‘salt of the earth’, ‘the midwives of society’ and those who ‘teach all other professions’. As CLIL is based on general good practice in education, the role of the teacher remains, with some exceptions, the same in CLIL as it does in standard programming. The exception is that CLIL teachers require an extra set of qualifications, traits and skills. This extra set includes:

- having a good command of the CLIL language. *Head teachers who do not speak the CLIL language are advised to seek help in assessing teachers’ language skills;*
- having subject area qualifications. *Teachers qualified to teach several subjects will provide for greater flexibility in planning;*
- being knowledgeable about CLIL methodology or being willing to learn;
- being flexible, hard-working, and a team player. *For optimal results CLIL requires co-operation among teachers;*
- having sufficient knowledge of the language spoken by most parents;
- being willing to and adept at working in a cross-cultural environment;

To find CLIL teachers schools have used some of the following strategies:

- co-operating with other schools. *Teachers can often be ‘shared’. At a time of declining enrolment, teachers at other schools may become surplus;*
- having student-teachers do their practice teaching at your school;
- working to ensure that student-teachers feel at home, valued and useful;
- having teachers encourage friends, acquaintances and colleagues to apply;
- inviting qualified teachers to spend a day at your school. *It is important to identify fears and prejudices that they may have vis-à-vis your school, and to address them;*
- advertising in newspapers;

- asking local government officials. *They know about school closings and possible surplus staff;*
- supporting teachers who speak the CLIL language in obtaining the required qualifications;

New CLIL teachers will often benefit from guidance or support in:

- **being student-centred.** *In general, CLIL students speak more than the teacher;*
- **creating a psychologically safe environment** where students are not afraid to make mistakes or communicate, where they work in groups and pairs, participating equally;
- **avoiding excessive translation** by using paraphrasing, gestures, pictures, having students develop habits such as inferring meaning and using dictionaries, etc;
- **setting language and content outcomes** among teachers and together with the students;
- **maintaining a dual focus** on content and language;
- encouraging students to **reflect upon and evaluate progress** in meeting outcomes;
- **developing critical thinking** in students;
- taking into account **individual student needs** and interests;
- creating opportunities for students to meet **speakers of the CLIL language.**

To help ensure that CLIL staff remain motivated and continue to teach in the programme in the long-term, the following are worthy of consideration:

- supporting all staff in preparing themselves for changes associated with the introduction of the CLIL programme. *Some regular programme teachers may be threatened by the CLIL programme and try to undermine it and/or to “freeze-out” new staff. It is helpful to raise this typical reaction to CLIL and discuss this at a staff meeting;*
- having the school management team state its expectations vis-à-vis the integration of new teachers so that new teachers will be made to feel welcome. *It is helpful, if this issue is reinforced during performance reviews;*
- having entry plans for new staff. *This will give them basic information about the school, introduce staff, provide them with a mentor, help integrate them into a network, etc;*
- publicly recognising and rewarding staff who have been particularly supportive of new teachers and programming;



- having school managers find time to listen to staff concerns and suggestions, and acting thereon;
- not overloading teachers. *CLIL teachers need to invest significant amounts of time into planning their classes including into the integration of various subjects;*
- from time to time, ensuring that teachers have a few periods off so that they can plan for the integration of subject matter. *For example, either the head teacher or the physical education teacher could take three classes of students at once and show them a film or organise another joint activity, so teachers could use the time to plan;*
- having someone support teachers in running planning sessions for subject or skills integration;
- developing a school rewards and recognition policy that includes CLIL;
- having a school timetable that encourages co-operation;
- agreeing on how classroom visitations and lesson observations will be prepared, take place and be debriefed, so that they are a positive experience for all concerned and that they support professional development of all those involved;
- training deputy heads and/or master teachers in how to support teacher professional development;
- using staff satisfaction surveys and discussing the results and planning needed action;
- using teacher portfolios as a basis for professional dialogue;
- planning staffing requirements five years in advance. *This will help the school and staff to plan for the future. Uncertainty is the biggest enemy;*

## Conclusion

CLIL is everyone's business. It is not simply the domain of teachers and students. All those that can affect the programme or feel that the programme has an impact on them are all part of CLIL, and can be considered programme stakeholders. Moreover, a multitude of factors from materials development, teacher training, interschool co-operation, and public relations will influence programming, as well as learning in the CLIL classroom. The more aware stakeholders are of these factors, the greater the likelihood that CLIL programming will receive the support it needs to create optimal learning opportunities for students.