



Dear SchoolLinks fan,

Yes, we are early birds, because we already bring you a brand-new newsletter with interesting tidbits, useful information and practical tips for the upcoming school year.

Firstly, we would like to **welcome the new schools** that have recently joined the VVOB SchoolLinks programme. We wish them well in the sometimes challenging, yet promising long-term school partnership. For some schools, this will be the first SchoolLinks newsletter, for others, it might be quite known already.

This digital newsletter is the **main communication medium from VVOB Belgium to the schools in the partner countries**, so please be sure to go through it thoroughly. Next to that, it also updates and involves a broader audience in international school partnerships. Therefore, it is always nice to have **personal input and testimonies** to make this newsletter more attractive. But it is an opportunity for you as well to put your school and the SchoolLinks activities in the spotlight!



In this edition we start with updated news on the financial and substantive reporting of the first operating year, then we jump to the introduction of a renewed action plan, after that, we fast-forward to a presentation of the new schools, and finally arrive at a pleasant school testimony. This and much more can be found in this first newsletter of the 2010-2011 school year... **Happy reading!**

## Substantial and financial report

Although most schools have already submitted (their part of) the joint report, some are still expected, whether from the side of the Southern school, or from the Flemish side. The Flemish school needs to send the entire report to VVOB, ultimately by **September 8th**, in a digital and paper version.

VVOB will then briefly give your school link advice on the budget, the possible remaining amounts and the quality of reporting. We already let you know that:

- We are looking forward to find out just how creative the schools were and what activities were actually carried out this first year...
- Subject to the continuation of the school link, the **remaining amount** may be deducted from the requested budget in the coming year and can thus stay in school.
- The partnership should gradually grow to **become sustainable and independent**. Although this is a long term process, we will look at the school's vision and commitment, the interaction between the schools, the equal input, and the quality of their - individual and joint - activities.
- The joint substantial and financial report is a sort of **self-evaluation** by which we can assess how we can possibly support you better or more next year.



## And... Action!

VVOB is excited to launch a new SchoolLinks year, with fresh ideas and appealing activities, which we will definitely introduce to you in upcoming newsletters.



Speaking of activities and the planning process, there will be a (small) **change to the joint action plan**. We have decided to give the template a new look. The remodeled template should facilitate the planning of activities and budget estimates and enhance the possibility to consult and print it. Therefore the new, more user-friendly action plan template is made available on the well-known SchoolLinks website <http://www.scholenbanden.be/?q=en/>, under 'Downloads'. It will also be sent to you by your partner to start planning the SchoolLinks activities.

We learned from the first operating year that making a joint action plan asks a lot of time and efforts. Therefore, the communication between the schools should start up as soon as possible. Schools that already have a year of experience know how challenging the initial startup process is. Ideally they start implementing their activities sooner than last year. We would like them to submit the joint action plan by **October 15th, 2010**. The new schools should ideally submit it by **October 29th**.



## Some tips:

- Consider the **different holiday periods** in your country and in Belgium when planning your activities, especially when you desire an input from your partner.
- Set **realistic** goals.
- Try to make very **concrete agreements** with the partner school.
- Schools do not have to involve their partner for each activity; you can also **independently** organise things within your school, and vice versa. It would be good, however, to inform your partner afterwards by means of a small report, an e-mail,... or by sending photographs.
- The action plan does not need to be definite, planning months in advance is not easy, opportunities or situations change and new ideas arise... So make a **rough estimate of the activities that could be interesting and feasible**. Building on a successful activity from last year, or doing a first exploratory exercise,... As long as both partners act together, the activity is already well on its way!
- **Scheduling or changing new activities** can be done quite simply by sending an e-mail to the local VVOB office.
- Get **inspiration** for your activities: see below!



## Saved by the Bell!

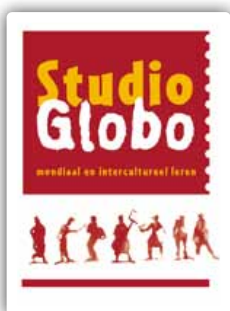
**World Teachers' Day on October 5th** represents a significant token of the awareness, understanding and appreciation for the vital contribution that teachers make to education and development.

"Saved by the Bell" is an initiative that symbolizes World Teacher's day by a massive ringing of school bells in Flemish schools. Because everywhere in the world **children want to learn and teachers give the best of themselves**.

However, more than 100 million children in the world can not go to school... Global leaders committed themselves to the United Nations **Millenium Development Goals**. These 8 goals should ensure a better world for children and their families by 2015. Basic education for all is one of them. Through this small-scale action in school, students and teachers want to **remind global leaders of their commitment!**

Saved by the Bell has been running in Flanders for several years, but a perspective and input from the South was still missing... And because SchoolLinks connects schools in the North and in the South, it seems a good idea to **integrate** this action. Naturally, schools are free to fill in their action plan however they like. This may be, however, an interesting, cheap, **small and valuable initiative** within the school link.

This action should not imply extra work for the schools, as students can think of a fun way to pay tribute to their teachers. Next to that, let them, for example, describe in one sentence why going to school is important. These opinions or thoughts can then be exchanged and compared with the partner school. Who knows, maybe there are surprising similarities or differences between the students!





Although the submission of the joint action plan is not due until after the World Teachers' day, we strongly recommend you to go ahead and implement this wonderful action! Kindly inform VVOB when you plan this event (and put it in your action plan afterwards), so that we can ensure it is highlighted in the following newsletter!

For more information on the UNESCO World Teacher's Day, have a look at <http://www.ei-ie.org/worldteachersday2009/>.

## Thinking of linking...

14 existing schools links in the first year, was already a very good start... Now we will expand the programme with another **12 schools links!**

This time we made a call in Flanders and by now the new Flemish schools have already been selected. They have the opportunity to build a longterm partnership with a school in one of the VVOB partner countries.

The group of new arrivals is - yet again - **a good mix** of primary and secondary schools that provide general, special and/or technical education. We will introduce them briefly to you, with their partner, when already identified:

- VTI, Waregem
- Scharrel, Hoogstraten
- De Belhamel, Schellebelle
- Sint Maria Instituut, Antwerpen
- Koninklijk Atheneum, Geel
- GBS Stokkel, Sint-Pieters-Woluwe
- Freinetschool Het Wijdeland, Sint-Truiden
- Kleuterschool De Ark, Heverlee
- De Ham, Mechelen
- 't Schoolhuis, Opwijk
- Scholengroep Maasmechelen
- Scholengroep Bierbeek ('t Klavertje)
- Buyantanshi School, Zambia
- Kabwe High School, Zambia
- Openbare School Domburg, Surinam
- Mavambo Trust, Zimbabwe
- School group Tshwane, South Africa
- School group Oña, Ecuador



We wish them **good luck** in building their international school partnership!

## Testimony from the schools: Guatemala workshop in our nursery

*One Monday morning we were all sitting in a circle, talking about the previous weekend, when suddenly there was a knock on the door. Who could that be?*

*It was the **postman**, with a large envelope in his hand. On it was written in big letters: FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE 2nd KINDERGARTEN YEAR. It was meant for us!*

*Curiously, we opened the envelope. We could hardly believe what the letter said: we had won a **plane trip** and we were leaving that same day!*

*But where to? The letter did not mention anything... But our smart little rascals had already realised that there was something else in the envelope.*





When they discovered **this** they shouted out: 'It is the flag of the country we are travelling to!' But nobody could guess which country the flag belonged to... Was it Belgium? No! Or Spain? No. Italy maybe? No! France? No! What country then?



**GUATEMALA** off course! What a strange and difficult name to remember. But after some practice the children succeeded quite well. We looked for Guatemala on our world map and then we started to make our own Guatemalan flag.

At 10:30 the plane was already waiting for us. Everyone got on board and the pilot flew us safely to this beautiful, mysterious and unknown land. A **Spanish-speaking lady** was already waiting for us and taught us more about Guatemala. We drove down bumpy, muddy roads, through the jungle, past small villages, markets, ...



We stopped at a school where the children taught us some Spanish words: *Hola* => hello, *Buenas Dias* => good day, *adios* => goodbye, *si* => yes and *no* => no. In the house of a Guatemalan family, we experienced how people live, sleep, wash, eat, ...

After an exciting and somewhat exhausting trip, we returned to our country. There we found a **giant suitcase**. When we opened it, we discovered things from Guatemala: clothing, photographs, toys, food, utensils,...

Our class was nicely decorated, we learned a Spanish song, a Guatemalan dance, we made our own colorful clothes and prepared tortillas and popcorn, made from the main food in Guatemala: corn. Mmmmm...! It was a very **fascinating journey**, and we will definitely go there again.



**De Kriebel, Olen - Guatemala**



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## Contact

For more information, contact the regional VVOB office. Details can be found on the SchoolLinks website:

[www.scholenbanden.be/english](http://www.scholenbanden.be/english)

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