



Dear SchoolLinks fan,

The Belgian school year has once more come to an end. The right time for a last news letter full of inspiration to enter the holidays and make plans for the upcoming school year.

We bring a testimonial of a school link internship in the DR Congo and a visit from South Africa. We also have some inspirational and supporting materials for you and we bring a story about equity in education in North and South.

Enjoy reading!

The VVOB – SchoolLinks team

SPOTTED

Working together in the vegetable garden

Primary school **Vijverbeek** in **Zellik** received a visit of its partner school **Thobile** from **Durban, South Africa**. Due to a number of circumstances the trip had been postponed several times but on March 9th, the visit finally took place. The students and pupils of Vijverbeek festively received their visitors at Brussels airport. **Gloob**, the class puppet that already traveled back and forth several times with a suitcase full of stories and photos, was present as well.

The teachers were introduced to the operations of the school in Zellik and got actively involved in **musical education**. At Vijverbeek, the students also maintain an **ecological vegetable garden**, an idea which was much appreciated by the South African visitors.

→ Also the **press** was present. Watch the video here: www.ringtv.be/video/zuid-afrikaanse-interesse-ecologische-moestuין-asse (In Dutch and English)



TESTIMONIAL

An internship in a school link

Trui Buyse (Postgraduate North-South, VIVES university college) did her internship in Nouveaux-Horizons, the Congolese partner school of Unesco school Koekelberg. She testifies about her experience and reflects on the added value of such an internship for a school link.

"To assist in activities of the action plan in order to point out the strong elements and to remediate where needed". This was in a few words the main objective of my internship in the Nouveaux-Horizons school in Kikwit. It needs perseverance to shake off the label of "white controller". Sitting down together to ask critical questions and to look for feasible solutions is therefore not evident. Fortunately I had sufficient time to clarify the purpose of my internship in a transparent way.

Repeating a lot and launching proposals. Exercising a lot of patience and looking for moments to exchange points of view. Entering into dialogue not only with the hierarchical superior but also with every teacher. Using this method, I have reached great results.

We created a folder with sufficient information and documentation about the expenses made within the VVOB budget and corrections of identified problems. We also composed a core group of teachers with each their own responsibilities. Drafting minutes of meetings and storing them so that they can be used in evaluation and planning: my Congolese colleagues have learned good examples which they will definitely continue to use.

In the meeting room a wall was dedicated to visualise the school link between Koekelberg and Kikwit through photographs and drawings. This way the school link can radiate towards all interested parties: parents, authorities, foreign visitors. For the link between the schools has to be fruitful for the whole school, including pupils and teachers. It cannot be limited to a mere friendship between the focal persons in both schools.

For two schools with totally different cultural backgrounds to cooperate in this way, is a formidable enrichment for each of them. I as well have learned a lot, with thanks to VVOB for this nice internship.



SUPPORT

New deadlines for submission action plan



Watch out: the deadlines for submitting a new action plan have been changed. From now on, you can submit on:

- **November, 15th** (instead of December 31th)
- **May, 15th** (instead of April 15th)

Equity in education

VVOB strives to **improve the quality of education in Belgium and 9 partner countries**. In our partner countries we do this through cooperation with **teacher trainings** and **ministries**. When we look at the challenges there in the field of education, we notice that these are almost the same as those in Flanders. How to give multilingualism a place in the class room? How to deal with poverty and how to work best on parental involvement?

For this reason, since 2014 VVOB is also in **Flanders** actively cooperating with **teacher training colleges** and **pedagogical teacher resource centres**. On the subject of **equity in education**, we introduce examples from the South and induce teacher trainers and pedagogical counselors towards a critical reflection on Flemish educational challenges. We do this for example for **multilingualism**. In Flanders, we expect children to speak Dutch fluently, from nursery school onwards. We only attach limited value to languages as Turkish or Arabic, whilst English and Chinese are considered more valuable. In many countries in the South children are taught in their mother tongue during the first years of their life. Only later on they learn a nationally shared language, step by step. Research indicates that such a transition model leads to better learning outcomes.

Another challenge is dealing with **poverty**. Today in Flanders fifteen percent of children still do not receive equal opportunities at school, consequently lack of opportunities persists. These children live in poverty and the gap between their life at home and school is too big. Poor children, whether with an immigration background or not, face the biggest difficulties at school. The gap with the middle class teacher appears too big. When a child subsequently shows behavioral problems, it is all too often being punished with no consideration for the cause. We have to learn to have an eye for the talents and capabilities of children, and not their problems. We need to have a greater understanding for the personal background of the pupils. After all, the child is not responsible for having to grow up in this difficult home situation. Without understanding, the motivation of the child will decline. Moreover, we try to mold them, to emancipate them and educate them to make them fit into our system, but this system belongs to the middle class. We have to reflect on how we can organise our education in order for all children to feel at home in it and accepted.

In order to learn this, we can **be inspired by other countries** where for example the separation between leisure time and school is less clear and where the relationship between teachers and pupils is more personal. Maybe in Flanders we can also visit the children more often at home, and not wait for the parents but tear down the walls ourselves? Why not also inspire each other in a school link with actions that address questions such as 'How do you deal with big class groups?', 'How do children with specific education needs find their place in regular education?' and 'How to deal with school drop outs?'

→ About which subject with a link to equity in education would you like to exchange with your partner school?
Post your ideas on Facebook!

Facebook page Scholenbanden / SchoolLinks

VVOB SchoolLinks has a Facebook page. Here, we regularly post news items which are interesting for school links. Like us through your own (school link) page and stay informed!

» [Our Facebook page](#)



INSPIRATION

Saved By the Bell Save the date!

On **Monday October 5th 2015**, we celebrate **World Teachers' Day**. Studio Globo and VIA Don Bosco will organise again the action Saved by the bell: education everywhere and for everyone.

Studio Globo is developing together with VVOB a concept for schools with a school link. Celebrate this important day together with your partner school! Educational material is available for the Flemish schools.

- ➔ Reserve this date already in your calendar: **October 5th 2015**
- ➔ **Registration** and additional info on the [website of Saved by the bell](#).



CHAT BOX

“Education gives us a profound understanding that we are tied together as citizens of the global community, and that our challenges are interconnected”

Ban Ki Moon, founder of the Global Education First Initiative, United Nations

CALENDAR

May

Zonneweelde (Lommel) receives visitors from Suriname

June

Stedelijk Lyceum Cadix (Antwerpen) receives visitors from Ghana

September

Sint Jozefinstituut receives a visit from students from South Africa

October 5th

Saved By the Bell (World Teachers' Day)

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