1+1 equals more than 2
Community School in Brussels
VLAAMSE GEMEENSCHAAPSCOOL MISSIE
Preface

Children and youngsters are growing up in an environment that is becoming more complex by the day. In Brussels, social challenges such as multilingualism, diversity, social inequality and poverty also come into play. This metropolitan reality makes that children and youngsters need a fair amount of competences to help shape their lives and environment.

To give them the competences they need, an integrated and coordinated collaboration between education, welfare, youth, sports, culture, care ... is needed. More and more schools, organisations and local authorities have, like you, become convinced of the power a Community School can have when it comes to giving children and youngsters a chance to reach their full potential.

All policy areas within the Brussels policy are at one about the fact that the local Community Schools in Brussels must be given a qualitative start and that their development must be guaranteed. Via its Brussels Community School Platform (Platform Brede School Brussel), the Brussels Education Centre (Onderwijscentrum Brussel - OCB), run by the Flemish Community Commission (Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie - VGC), provides the intrinsic support needed.

The selection of examples and photographs in this brochure only partly illustrate the concept ‘Community School’. They are used to clarify a certain theoretical aspect but do not depict the Community School as a whole. To gain a proper insight into the complexity of the Community School, please refer the more elaborate example on p 10 of this brochure which paints the ‘broader’ picture.

Translation of the Dutch edition: “Brede School Brussel 1+1 is meer dan 2”
The OCB has published this brochure to shed some light on the Community School concept and to build on the VGC’s Community School vision statement (VGC-visietekst ‘Brede School’). Both the vision statement and this brochure are based on the framework of reference ‘What is a Community School?’ developed by the Centre for Diversity and Learning (Steunpunt Diversiteit en Leren) but they elaborate a number of elements and accents that are specific to the Brussels situation.

Aside from answering general questions such as: ‘What criteria should a Community School meet?’ or ‘What is the added value of a Community School?’, this brochure also homes in on the added value of the Community School in Brussels. After all, various organisations in Brussels are faced with social issues they cannot resolve on their own. Via this brochure, we offer you the handles and tools you need to set up a Community School on the basis of the needs and opportunities you come across in the course of your daily activities. How do you gain insight into children’s and youngsters’ needs? When do you talk to partners? How do you instigate involvement and create a basis for the Community School?

How do you go about organising multidisciplinary collaboration? Who steers the process and what are the tasks of the local coordinator?

This brochure has been devised as a guide for new Community Schools in Brussels and for Community Schools that have been running for a while already. Through a mix of fascinating insights and inspiring practical examples we want to familiarize you with the Community School concept and give you a hand implementing the Community School process. We hope that this brochure will provide answers, raise questions and stimulate reflection.

www.onderwijscentrumbrussel.be
1. Community School, so much MORE than just an idea

2. Discover the added value

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4. Research, MORE than necessary

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Community School, so much MORE than just an idea

The Community School wishes to give ALL children and youngsters maximum development OPPORTUNITIES by working on a broad LEARNING AND LIVING ENVIRONMENT within a NETWORK of organisations.

Describing the Community School in all its facets and richness is not an easy matter for its format and content are very much dictated by the local context. The definition wants to leave enough room to allow for a tailored interpretation of the concept but also establishes three sub-aspects that distinguish the Community School from a casual collaboration:

• Maximum development opportunities
• A broad learning and living environment
• A wide network

Maximum development opportunities

The Community School approaches children and youngsters in their totality. After all, their development is not a compartmentalised process but one that encompasses various areas that are closely interlinked. As a result, every objective, collaboration and action within the Community School must be considered on its merits, in light of the overall development of children and youngsters.
Because the concept ‘maximum development opportunities’ does not always give us enough to go on in terms of offering purposive activities it is crystallised into five aspects: health, safety, talent development and fun, preparing for the future and social participation.

**A broad learning and living environment**

implies that children and youngsters develop themselves through interaction with their environment. The quality of that environment and the relationship between the school and out-of-school context therefore have an important part to play.

The Community School caters for this in three ways:

1. **Broad learning**, where the learning of competences is interlinked with and achieved within a concrete social context, during leisure time and school hours alike.

2. **Broadening** their learning and living environment by providing a more diverse, accessible or new offer

3. **Reinforcing their learning and living environment** by removing obstacles, supporting people and making them more competent or by optimising their physical environment.

**A wide network**

a broad learning and living environment is created when a network of organisations work together purposively and constructively. Various sectors form an alliance with one or several schools with a view to offering children and youngsters maximum development opportunities. How many and which partners actually do come on board will depend on the needs you as a Community School wish to address and on the partners that can be found locally. More partners does not by definition equate to a higher standard of quality.

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2 These aspects are further clarified on pp. 14 and 15.
Discover the added value

Growing up in Brussels calls for a fair number of competences on the part of children and youngsters. If everyone recognises and acknowledges his role and assumes his responsibility in this respect, not only children and youngsters stand to gain but society as a whole: parents, people living in the neighbourhood and all the participating organisations from the various sectors will too. We list 14 reasons why starting a Community School makes sense.

**Added value for children and youngsters**

- **More Opportunities** to discover, develop and display talent
- **More Opportunities** to sample a diverse offer
- **A More Tailored Approach** because the child and its learning and living environment are keynote
- **More Learning Benefits** thanks to a true-to-life curriculum
Added value for parents, local residents and the environment

MORE OPTIONS
thanks to the enhanced cooperation between the parties

MORE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION
through intensified involvement

MORE CONTACT
with people living in the area

MORE ACCESS
to low-threshold initiatives

Added value for partners

DEVELOPING MORE QUALITY
thanks to the enhanced link between in and out-of-school learning

MORE VISION
by considering the target audience from various angles

MORE EXPERTISE
as a result of partners who reinforce one another

OFFERING MORE
by broadening the offer

MORE VISIBILITY
for your organisation in the area

MORE successful achievement(s)
of the target group and the objectives
Brussels, greater than the sum of its parts

Brussels is both grey and colourful at the same time. In Brussels, people find themselves at the edge but also right in the centre of the world. Brussels is a little piece of Belgium, home to 163 different nationalities. Brussels is awash with old dwellings and 22% of its population is younger than 18 years of age. Brussels is teeming with activity though 17.4% of people are unemployed. Brussels numbers 1,137,000 inhabitants who all live in an area of 161 km².

Brussels is one huge jigsaw of moving pieces. Sometimes you can’t make head or tail of it, yet everything fits.


In this colourful Brussels, children and youngsters are trying to find their niche…

Children and youngsters are all individuals who meet one another through language, culture, religion, ethnicity and socio-economic background. The Community School has an eye both for the opportunities and the challenges this diversity entails. The main objective is to ensure that every child and youngster is given maximum development opportunities. The Community School does this by using their living and learning environment as keynote.

Parents have a unique place in this learning and living environment. The Community School recognises their role and wishes to assume responsibility for the education of their children and youngsters together with them. Open communication between parents and other educational actors makes for greater
harmony between their upbringing at home and the education they receive elsewhere. Knowledge, insights and experiences can be exchanged. Research has shown that this has a significantly positive effect on children’s functioning: they feel safer, are more relaxed, perform better and manage to connect better with other people. In that sense, parents boost the effectiveness of the Community School while the Community School, in turn, supports the parents.

A Brussels Community School is invariably a language tale, a multi-language tale. Many children and youngsters grow up in a family where Dutch is not the (only) mother tongue. For many, Dutch happens to be their second, third or even fourth language which they mainly use at school. The continuity between in school and out-of-school learning within the Community School offers extra opportunities to deal with this linguistic diversity in a positive manner and to use Dutch in a functional fashion. Children’s and youngsters’ linguistic development is a leitmotif that runs throughout their development. Improving their language skills can and may therefore not be seen as a separate issue. In other words, the integrated activities the Community School offers is also the perfect environment to work on their language skills.
In practice

Starting situation

We’re on a site where both an elementary and a secondary school, offering technical secondary education (technisch secundair onderwijs - TSO) and vocational secondary education (beroepssecundair onderwijs - BSO), are located. The school has a high percentage of non-Dutch-speaking pupils. The secondary school teachers find that their pupils’ motivation to learn Dutch is poor. Most of these youngsters will not need to speak a word of Dutch once they head home after school. Youngsters often see Dutch as a non-functional school language. The school is already working in partnership with an initiative for out-of-school childcare (initiatief voor buitenschoolse kinderopvang - IBO), the local library and with various sports and youth organisations.

Context analysis

To address this problem, the issue has been discussed by the pupil council, the parent council and at staff meetings. Together with a number of already existing partners, the school is investigating the opportunities in the neighbourhood. The proposals to give Dutch a more active place in and around the school were put to the pupils via a survey. Via this questionnaire, pupils could also suggest new ideas and formulate their needs and interests ... Together they came up with the following general and specific objectives:

General objective

Giving Dutch a more active place in and around school so that youngsters can experience Dutch as a functional language. In first instance, this Community School is mainly working on the following key aspects: ‘preparing for the future’ and ‘talent development and fun’.
Specific objectives

Children and youngsters:
• have more contact with the Dutch language
• get a taste of various leisure activities where Dutch plays a functional role
• actively use Dutch during the activities
• are given the opportunity to discover, develop and display their talents
• learn to communicate with others in different ways and in various contexts

Parents:
• recognise and acknowledge the importance of Dutch in our society
• know how they can support their children’s linguistic development at home (homework support, the use of shopping lists, helping children to look up information on the Internet ...)

These objectives are crystallised in the network and activities described below.

Network

Permanent partners:
The IBO, FM Brussels, the JES Rock Factory (Rockfabriek from JES), the toy library, the library, various local sports associations, various youth work initiatives ...

Casual partners:
MOS, Studio GLOBO, ABC ... (in function of the report content)

Activities

Several sustainable initiatives were launched, integrated into the (in and out of) school activities. Thanks to the partners, a varied and qualitative offer could be put together. Also the parents were informed about the importance of these initiatives aimed at boosting their children’s chances of educational and social success. To meet the diversity of youngsters’ interests, this Community School chose to organise a broad range of activities its pupils could choose from. The youngsters ‘need’ Dutch for every single one of these activities.
Because youngsters in this secondary school do not necessarily live within the vicinity of the school, the offer was integrated into the school hours or organised contiguous thereto.

Radio project
Youngsters interested in radio are sent to the Flagey building and given a short course by FM Brussels during which they get tips and learn some of the tricks of the radio-making trade. Via a subsidy application, the school can install a small studio from where pupils can broadcast on campus two afternoons a week. Pupils are also involved in the technical support and the realisation of the project. Via the school’s website, the broadcasts can be listened to again and pupils can vote for their favourite music on the school radio. Pupils who play music are guided towards workshops organised by de Rockfabriek van JES and are given the opportunity to record some of their work which is subsequently broadcast via the school radio. Teachers and pupils jointly produce reports within the framework of their classes. Outside of school hours, the school collaborates with MOS, Studio GLOBO, ABC and other partners to produce short reports on topics that appeal to youngsters. These reports are broadcast via the school radio.

Entertainment project
Small groups of pupils teach primary school pupils outdoor games which they then play together during playtime. The youngsters are given guidance via the toy library and by a number of IBO leaders while preparing for this assignment. Infants need a rich vocabulary. A number of youngsters join the infants’ lunchtime queue and chat away to them. To give them the necessary skills, they were first given a short introduction on stimulating young children’s linguistic skills by the nursery school teachers. Together with the secretariat, youngsters translate the information and messages, which would normally be disseminated by letter, into a lively and attractive wall poster. Via a story-telling workshop organised in collaboration with the library, one group of youngsters is learning how to read to children. Once they’ve followed the workshop, they can put their new skills into practice by reading cartoons to small groups of children at the IBO. Youngsters can not only follow an entertainment course at school but work-placement arrangements are being made with various youth-work initiatives.

Leisure-time project
Various local sports clubs are being approached with the request to introduce youngsters to some of the
less familiar sports during lunchtime. As these sports are completely new to them, instruction, and hence language, play a central role. Together with a dance teacher, youngsters are given the opportunity to produce a dance show. To organise this performance, they also have to call on their peers to take care of advertising, the practical and technical preparations ... Parents and local residents are invited to the performance.

**Practical organisation**

To ensure the continuation of the Community School, a steering group, seating a representative of every partner organisation, meets every two months. This steering group looks at what is successful and what is less so and at what needs to be changed. New opportunities are discussed in function of the specific objectives to be attained. Aside from this steering group, there are also a number of thematic groups who work out the practical details. The local coordinator is in charge of the practical organisation and coordination but also makes sure that the pre-set objectives are attained.

**Reflection**

At first glance, the various initiatives may seem like unrelated projects, yet they all have one goal in common: allowing youngsters to experience and use the Dutch language in their daily activities, with due regard for their various interests. In other words, the initiatives of this Community School are purposive (promoting the functional use of the Dutch language) and sustainable (integrated into the school activities). They further the development of youngsters’ broad competences (diverse offer, appealing to their talents, creating new opportunities ...). The joint ventures are diverse in nature: with the elementary school, the IBO, youth work, the sports sector, media partners ...
Research, MORE than necessary

You won’t find the Community School on a map or by keying it into your GPS. It is a school of thought on how children and youngsters can grow under optimal circumstances. The Community School transcends the school building as a learning environment. Children and youngsters move and learn through a succession of contexts. Their living and learning environment offers a multitude of experiences and encounters, in which they feel at ease, have fun, discover and experiment, get to know different people ... It is a rich and safe practice ground where they can prepare themselves for our complex society where they will, slowly but surely, have to find their own place. The Community School avails of the leaning potential of the learning environment to tackle the local needs of children and youngsters.

Children and youngsters take centre stage

A qualitative Community School aims to enhance children’s and youngsters’ development in five areas. We clarify these by means of the following examples.

1 Health

“I am Miss Evy and teach sixth class. Like every year, we once again have a great melting pot of youthful exuberance. Lunches are equally colourful: pastries, organic sandwiches, filled rolls, no lunch ... To ensure that everyone has a healthy dose of energy to embark on an afternoon’s work, we have started our own soup bar. On Tuesdays and Fridays, a little group of four children and two mums go to the local shop or market to buy the ingredients. Then, they head into the kitchen for a spot of cooking. In exchange for a fine bowl of soup, the baker gives us a great big loaf of brown bread.”
Safety

Together with the school, the youth movement bought a number of bicycles, for many children don’t have their own bike. Now, the youngest children can learn how to cycle on the playground. Older pupils go to the traffic park under the supervision of the police so that, come sixth class, they know how to safely deal with actual traffic. And during weekends, we mount our metal horse again to go for a cycle with the youth movement. Aside from teaching pupils cycling skills and giving them the joy of cycling, this project aims to turn the neighbourhood into a safe and child-friendly area. During a learning walk in the area, pupils pointed out the spots they consider dangerous, where they often play or pass by to go to school or the youth movement. Via an official letter, they informed the municipal council of their findings.

Talent development and fun

My name is Tine; I am the after-school childcare coordinator. The energy and fantasy of kids at play never ceases to amaze me. If you think that, at home, those very same children often sit in front of the television or computer for hours on end ... So, our team put its thinking cap on. Many of our children live in an apartment and parents don’t often realise how essential play is to the development of their child or how they should accommodate that. For that reason, we now organise a play afternoon on Fridays between 2 and 5 p.m. in conjunction with the toy library. Children discover new games, get to know each other in a different way and are introduced to educational material.
Social participation

Not all that long ago, the messing on and around the basketball field during evening time wasn’t even funny anymore. Sometimes, there were more blue uniforms than basketball shirts to be seen. One year later, the field is used for dribbling, cheering and scoring! The eldest chaps train the younger guys twice a week and, on the other days, we play matches. What brought about that change? The Police, community work, equipment sponsors, including all those who simply used to hang around the field taller or smaller than two metres, put their heads together. The youngsters themselves came up with quite a few issues as to why the field had become so ill-reputed. In consultation with the other parties, ways and means to deal with the problem were examined. The result: a vibrant spot where youngsters look after each other and the neighbourhood.

Preparing for the future

One in three youngsters living in Brussels is unemployed: what do we do about that? Come the second stage, we get our youngsters to look into the possible causes and solutions. This has resulted in several working groups, led by them. There is a group that focuses on applying for jobs, a group that organises a jobs day, others collect figures and analyse them, another group of pupils ensures that all the information is published in the school paper ... All the working groups have an expert from the field of action as godmother or godfather. He or she supports the pupils throughout the entire process.
Analysis of the starting situation

The first step in creating a Community School is to stop and think a minute about the children and youngsters living near you. What do they need now and what will they need in the future? What opportunities are they missing out on? Which of their interests could be pursued further? What aspect of their lives could be enriched or reinforced?

For this analysis, you are welcome to use work instrument 1 (p 34). You can tick the points of particular interest and elaborate on them if you wish.

To perform this analysis, you can base yourself on the subjective experience of various actors: people working within your own or other organisation(s), local residents, parents, children and youngsters. Their experience of children and youngsters are necessary if the opportunities and needs as they are perceived in the field are to be charted. You can survey them face-to-face or in writing. Objective figures can also produce valuable information in terms of completing the screening process. Possible sources of information: the school’s registration cards, an environmental analysis performed by a cultural policy coordinator, an analysis within the framework of equal educational opportunities, data from the Brussels-Capital Health and Social Observatory3 or Neighbourhood Monitoring Brussels4.

No single organisation in Brussels has all the in-house expertise to optimally meet the aforementioned needs of children and youngsters. Collaboration is therefore a must. During the next step of the context analysis, we help you find valuable partners.

3 www.observatbru.be
4 www.wijkmonitoring.irisnet.be
Making use of the local potential

Examine the collaboration opportunities, based on the needs of children and youngsters. In an initial exploratory phase, you will need to approach and get to know as many organisations as possible. Here, you can be as diverse as time allows. The objective of this first meeting is to exchange information about how the organisation operates (vision, target group, projects, challenges, current joint ventures, relationship with the neighbourhood) and about the Community School concept. To make sure that no potential partners are excluded, a comprehensive list of all the organisations and bodies in Brussels will come in handy.

**Work instrument 2** (p 35) offers you this type of overview. On the basis of this work instrument, you can decide which organisation(s) you will approach first. Needless to say, you will make your decision based on the earlier identified needs of the children and youngsters living in your area (cf. work instrument 1). The organisations you become acquainted with can be entered in the second column of the document.

Not everything within a Community School has to be new. As an organisation or body, you undoubtedly already have a whole host of contacts. You will meet the same people at regular intervals. Or perhaps you are already collaborating with other organisations? Taking a look at existing contacts and analysing them in function of the newly detected needs can be a worthwhile exercise (cf. work instrument 1). Perhaps existing activities could be further explored or interlinked even. You can mark the organisations you are already working with in the third column of work instrument 2, and specify what that collaboration currently involves.
Finally, in the fourth column of the work instrument, you can specify which partners - existing and new - you can see collaboration opportunities with. You can clarify this by indicating your shared concerns, possible connections and common goals.

The choice of organisations you will actually end up working with will not merely depend on shared concerns or common goals. Making a commitment to a Community School project will also hinge on other factors such as time, resources, staff, the extent of the commitment etc. Sometimes potential partners are not prepared to take that step. They fear that their investment may prove to be too great or fail to see the point. In that case, you would be well advised to keep the door ajar so that you don’t spoil your chances of a future collaboration; make an effort to stay in touch, keep them posted on how matters are progressing and occasionally invite them to one of your activities.

Even though the question ‘will we team up with other partners?’ is no longer up for debate, the issue ‘how will we make it to the other side together?’ remains.

A sound joint venture is based on trust, a common vision, attention to and concern for one another. It’s about treating each other with respect, about recognising one another’s competences and expertise. Partners have an open, flexible attitude towards each another; they know how to make the most of the other’s expertise and are at one about the division of roles. They work together on a continuous development line. The organisations involved attune their modus operandi and offer to one another and pass on the necessary information. Regardless of who coordinates all this, all the partner organisations are equal and have a balanced vote when it comes to elaborating the vision, objectives and actions of the Community School.

A proper context analysis of potential partners, on the one hand, and the needs of children and youngster, on the other hand, will help you launch actions that are socially relevant. Attention to the context may however not be restricted to the early stages of the Community School process as local needs may shift, organisations do withdraw and new partners take their place. The activities of a Community School must dynamically capitalise on that. In other words, analysing the context to shape a Community School is a continuous process.
A concerted approach, MORE impact

A Community School cannot be developed overnight. Running a Community School is a circular, searching process that calls for a phased and coordinated, tailored approach. Some Community Schools grow spontaneously. Others are instigated from ‘the outside’. Irrespective of the situation, the process invariably encompasses several phases. Depending on the context, more attention will be paid to a particular phase or the different phases are run through in a different order. To end up with a qualitative Community School however, it is essential to go through the various phases. The individual Community School phases:

- **Exploration**: the starting situation is charted
- **Planning**: based on the starting situation, priorities are set, objectives and actions planned
- **Implementation**: the action is suited to the word
- **Evaluation**: a check is performed to establish whether the actions were implemented and the objectives attained.
To keep the entire process running, there needs to be a puller who assumes a supporting role throughout the entire process. Research by the Centre Diversity and Learning has brought to light that a local coordinator is therefore indispensable for the proper functioning of a Community School. The local coordinator will be the driving force throughout the various segments of the process circle. He or she inspires colleagues, informs them, brings partners together and supports them throughout the entire process. This role can be assumed by a new person but also by a member of staff of the organisation or the school who, in that case, is (partially) relieved of his or her duties to fulfil that function.

1 Seeing how the land lies

At the start of the Community School process it is important to explore the context. In section four, we already offered a number of work instruments to help you chart both the needs of children and youngsters and those of potential partners. Once this information has been gathered, the various data are linked up and a summary of the context analysis needs to be made which can be used as a basis for the next steps.

The ways in which partners are involved in the exploratory process can be very different. Some start from within their own organisation and involve others on the basis of the angle chosen. Others enquire with various partners so as to come up with a shared interest. Not all the partners do therefore need to be fully at one about a vision before embarking on an analysis of the starting situation. Looking for common ground and developing a vision when a multitude of partners are involved is no mean feat. Every organisation has its own culture and customs. A shared and solemn vision tends to be the result of years of collaboration and thought.
At that, the analysis of the starting situation may prove to be the perfect occasion to exchange ideas and go through the points once again.

During this exploratory phase, the local coordinator will inform colleagues about the objective of the context analysis, will help gather data and help summarise these data.

2 Planning

The summary then forms the basis on which the planning of objectives and actions can commence. Both short and longer-term objectives are defined. Next, the actions that will help realise these objectives are selected.

When defining objectives it is important to set priorities. No one can tackle everything at once. If too many objectives are put forward, you moreover run the risk of no longer seeing the wood for the trees. The feeling that you are no longer working in a targeted fashion eventually leads to innovation fatigue. So as to attain several objectives, it would be wiser to opt for a phased approach and go through the process circle several times.

It is up to the local coordinator to coordinate the action plan and to watch over the general objective and gain for every partner. That way, everyone will remain motivated to work together.

3 Time for action

The plan will be nothing more than a dead duck if it does not lead to concrete action. Hereafter, a number of tips to help you implement your plan efficiently:

- Divide the tasks and make practical arrangements
- Ensure that all the partners are properly informed and are also kept up to date of its progress during the implementation phase
- Be realistic about time and innovation: do not hurry anything and take small steps at a time
- Use the oil-spill strategy: allow pioneers to inspire and motivate others. Give others a little more time to find their place and allow them to come on board gradually.
• Work with a steering group and, if possible, with a local coordinator to keep the fire burning. In that case, the local coordinator will act as chairman and the driving force behind the steering group
• Continue to confer intensively in several ways (informally, formally, verbally, in writing...)
• Emphasise and discuss the successes as this will even make the sceptics come around
• Never lose sight of the original objectives during the implementation process, give regular feedback
• Continuously assess your actions and fine-tune where necessary

The local coordinator will ensure that the aforementioned success factors are guaranteed and, by doing so, will encourage the partners to intensify and make the joint ventures more profound.

4 Evaluation

Throughout the implementation of these actions, it is important to perform regular (interim) evaluations. This can be done at three levels. On the one hand, you can check whether the activities were actually carried out. Ticking the activities that were carried out is easy but will not give you a whole lot of information for future reference. It would be far more worthwhile to check whether the activities helped attain the objectives. You can do this on the basis of the SMART objectives.

SMART stands for: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound.

Process assessment is another worthwhile exercise. How are the actions being perceived? Anticipating questions, emotions and reactions during the implementation process is essential to keep the engine running.

During this phase, the local coordinator encourages (informal) consultation, collects evaluation data and ensures that these comments are taken on board.
Over the past few years, the number of Community Schools in Belgium has increased significantly. They spring up in all shapes and sizes, tailored to the local needs and requirements. The ideal infrastructure of a Community School supports its vision with regard to content, offers a stimulating learning and living environment and can be used in a flexible fashion. To put these principles into effect, often a new, multifunctional building tends to be favoured. Yet, a Community School does not need new premises from day one.

A qualitative pedagogical environment can also be provided in existing buildings. What does matter however is to, based on the intrinsic vision, look for a suitable infrastructure, new or otherwise, under one roof or not.

The keynote of the Community School is a renewed vision of education. In this respect, learning and living transcend learning in a ‘traditional’ school context. Here, children and youngsters learn both formally and informally, steered and spontaneously. They are seen as active explorers who ultimately shape their own development. Their personality will not develop fully until their environment encourages them to push out the borders. The actual challenge of the Community School is to create and enrich their experience opportunities by boosting the interaction between the various learning and living areas. This presupposes that the Community School partners attune their activities to one another and take joint action. This renewed vision calls for a different infrastructure. A traditional school, where dark class rooms give out onto an empty corridor, no longer fits current developments. Other activities also mean that the available space should be designed differently.
New pedagogical ideas such as working independently, cooperative learning, working with open classes, can be translated into areas with a variety of work stations. Computers are no longer banned from the classroom, empty corridors become meeting places, classrooms are interconnected and in and out-of school learning are literally interlinked by means of tall sliding windows.

Ideally, this vision is also used as keynote of any construction work. It is important to, from the very beginning of the building process - whether you’re talking a newly built, renovation works or minor refurbishments - properly and clearly formulate the vision of your Community School. When doing so, express your motives in words and do not slip back into giving examples of existing buildings. Not an easy exercise: listing wishes and requirements for classrooms does not usually constitute a problem but describing what you want done when it comes to ‘non-specific’ rooms may prove to be a different matter. And yet, these circulation areas are every bit as important as the classrooms. In these areas, parents can have a chat, children can play in the block corner, teenagers can read a book, pupils can work in groups or on their own.

In that sense, a Community School is so much more than a collection of classrooms. Aside from being a centre where knowledge is transferred, it is also a living environment. Areas for communal activities, to meet parents and the people living in the area, are the heart and soul of the building.

Depending on the intrinsic angles and on the physical and financial situation, a Community School can be set up in three different types of premises - multifunctional accommodation, campus and a stand-alone facility - (Handboek Brede School (Community School Manual), Oberon). Each one of these models offers unique opportunities but also comes with its own risks. Below, we give you a few tips to avoid the possible pitfalls.
Multifunctional accommodation (MFA) houses several organisations under one roof; the rooms in these premises can have different functions. The strength of this formula is obvious: joint investment can result in facilities individual organisations can only dream of. This type of building moreover lends itself to meetings and cooperation. The fact that the partners are nearby can provide a further impetus to intrinsic cooperation. On the other hand, the success of MFA will also hinge on this cooperation.

**TIPS & TRICKS:**

- MFA must be more than a building that accommodates different types of activities. Start from a **shared vision** and **ask the partners for input as of the design stage**. This will give the collaboration every possible chance.
- Because all the indispensable facilities are located in one complex, there is always a risk that the organisation will become ‘introverted’. If that’s the case, MFA will become some sort of safe haven surrounded by a huge fence.

Safeguard the relationship with the **neighbourhood**: keep local residents informed right from the very beginning and regularly involve them in the programming and organisation of activities.

- Managing a large-scale infrastructure of this nature does call for particular attention. Draw up a **management plan** containing arrangements about the sharing of rooms, maintenance, insurance, etc. Also make arrangements about the outdoor areas in your management plan as safety and accessibility are equally important there.
- The multitude of users and the generous opening times make it difficult to properly keep track of things. A **caretaker** can check and monitor the use of the (multifunctional) areas by the various groups. He/she will do small necessary jobs and ensure that everyone sticks to the arrangements. A **key plan**, where users only have access to certain parts of the building at certain times, can help you keep tabs on all the comings and goings.
• In conclusion: living together under one roof will be a new experience for many professionals and one they will need to become accustomed to. Give every partner the time to get used to the new situation. The local coordinator or caretaker can help ensure that the cooperation arrangements are respected.

2 Campus

On a campus, the different buildings are located within walking distance of one another (possibly around a communal outdoor area). Even though the organisations are housed relatively close to one another, every partner can retain his own identity and autonomy. As this is a small-scale set-up, construction and management will be relatively straightforward. At the same time, this small-scale arrangement will limit the multifunctional use of the areas with the result that, to a certain extent, also the synergy is lost.

TIPS & TRICKS:
• The fact that the organisations are spread across campus calls for a proper reception policy.

A communal reception area and clear signposting will enhance the accessibility of the organisations located on campus.
• Don’t simply presume that the various partners on campus know what the other occupants are doing. Misunderstandings about each other’s function, target group and approach are far from uncommon. Make it your business to introduce the parties to one another. That way, every member of staff will know exactly what is going on on campus and will also be able to point a visitor who got lost in the right direction.
• On account of the fact that the various organisations are operating from different buildings on the campus, it is not all that easy to keep the cooperation alive. Make sure that you share a common vision on what you wish to achieve with the target group from the very start and present a united front.
• A spread-out infrastructure of this nature needs to be properly run. Users need a designated person whom they can contact about any organisational issues. In this model, the strength of the organisation will be dictated by its administration.
In this accommodation arrangement, a division of responsibilities seems an obvious choice as it would make users more responsible for the section they are occupying. However, this will reduce their involvement in the ‘general’ parts of the building, which can lead to neglect. So, tread carefully when choosing a management model and lay down any mutual arrangements in a management plan.

3 Stand alone

A third and last arrangement is stand-alone accommodation. In this particular set-up, the partner organisations are operating from various locations across the neighbourhood. The advantage of this formula is that the existing housing in the area can be availed of and that no major intervention is required. As this form of accommodation is very much interwoven with the neighbourhood, it becomes easier to involve other institutions in the area in a certain theme or intrinsic project. However, it also comes with its own disadvantages in terms of the organisations’ accessibility and the Community School’s visibility.

TIPS & TRICKS:

- The physical distance between the various partner organisations may form an impediment. For that reason, extra investment in communication is needed. Plan regular consultations or meetings and make sure that you communicate in between meetings.
- Also the collaboration between partners will call for extra investment in a stand-alone arrangement.
In this set-up, more so than in any of the other two, the local coordinator will have an important role to play. He will bring partners together, organise meetings and will be the first port of call when problems arise. He will be the glue between the organisations.

- As the partners are operating from different premises in the area, they will not all know what the others are doing. Take the time to get to know one another and each other’s organisation. An introduction evening may be worthwhile but a neighbourhood walk would be far more enriching in this type of accommodation arrangement as members of staff will not only get to know one another but can also familiarise themselves with the context every organisation is operating in.

- The local coordinator will more than likely be employed by one of the organisations. This raises the threshold for members of staff from the other organisations in terms of interacting with the local coordinator. As coordinator, safeguard the balance between the partners and make sure that you remain approachable.

On the basis of the above descriptions, you can check which type of Community School you belong or would like to belong to. These formulas are not cast in stone. No single organisation fits one hundred per cent into one of these models. At that, the afore-described formats are also equivalent. In any case, there is no such thing as the perfect sequence. Every situation is marked by its own challenges and therefore has its own reasons for its choice of partners, programme, target group and housing. As long as children and youngsters reap the benefits!
MORE than just a conclusion

‘Scholè’ is the ancient Greek word for ‘time for interests and study’. The Community School goes back to the original meaning of the word ‘school’. School means study but also - and firstly so - time for interests, for hobbies. The Community School wants to highlight this wider meaning of the word ‘school’ by adding the term ‘broad’ to it. The Community School does not only start from the school as a learning environment, but from a broad learning and living environment around the school.

It comes down to realising that children’s and youngsters’ living environment creates umpteen opportunities to make learning more true to life and to develop a multitude of competences. Considering children’s and youngsters’ learning in that light takes time. The realisation and concept of Community School should not be left to the powers that be to worry about but should filter through to the people who work with children every day such as childcare centre assistants or after-school childcare providers, educational guidance counsellors, sports coaches, teachers, playground supervisors, etc. because, only then the Community School will have a chance of success.

The development of a Community School is therefore a priori a slow growth process. The Community School should be given the time to grow of its own volition and from the roots up. Collaboration initiatives that carry the Community School embryo within them can therefore bank on the necessary support so that, in time, they can grow into a sustainable network of concerted action. This is where Community Schools differ from project-specific collaborations.
Sustainability and the other quality criteria combined constitute the ingredients of a successful Community School. There is no fixed recipe. Every Community School chooses its own vision and objectives. At that, the recipe can change from year to year, depending on the new opportunities that arise from the local context, which is what makes every Community School so refreshingly unique.

Quality criteria

The Community School:
1. sees the child or youngster as the keynote of its activities
2. is a structural joint venture between one or several schools and one or several organisations active in other sectors
3. systematically involves parents based on a joint responsibility for the child’s education
4. develops locally, tailored to the needs and opportunities
5. develops a joint vision and defines common objectives
6. generates added value for all the parties involved
7. ensures that every partner can retain his own identity
8. strives for equality and a balanced voice for all partner
9. operates systematically, both in the short and in the longer term (structurally and sustainably)
10. pursues diversity in its offer
11. capitalises on the Brussels metropolitan and multilingual context
12. has a contact person, a puller or a coordinator
13. makes proper arrangements about its offer and the management of shared infrastructure
14. evaluates on a regular basis and fine-tunes where necessary
Further information

Publications by the Centre for Diversity and Learning:


Agion (2012) In ruimte naar de Brede School can be downloaded via:
www.agion.be
www.onderwijscentrumbrussel.be
www.onderwijsinbrussel.be
www.steunpuntdiversiteitenleren.be
www.vlaanderen.be/bredeschool
www.bredeschool.nl
www.nji.nl
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core aspects</th>
<th>In respect of which of the following aspects can you identify needs / shortages for the children and youngsters in your area? Tick</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Physical health</td>
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<td>Healthy lifestyle</td>
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<td>Mental health</td>
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<td>Education continuity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Care continuity</td>
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<td>Safety</td>
<td>Security, love, respect, attention, knowing their borders</td>
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<td>Safety at home</td>
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<td>Safety out of home</td>
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<td>Social participation</td>
<td>Taking responsibility in the area by thinking along</td>
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<td>Taking responsibility in the area through participation</td>
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<td>Showing respect for the environment through good behaviour</td>
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<td>Talent development and fun</td>
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<td>Freedom to play</td>
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<td>Access to sports, culture and leisure activities</td>
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<td>Preparing for the future</td>
<td>Obtaining a diploma</td>
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<td>Finding work</td>
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<td>Being self-sufficient, being independent</td>
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<td>Organisation</td>
<td>We have been introduced</td>
<td>We have already collaborated with them</td>
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<td>Elementary education</td>
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<td>University College / University</td>
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<td>Part-time artistic education</td>
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<td>Disabled persons</td>
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<td>Children and Families</td>
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<td>Government services</td>
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The Brussels Education Centre (OCB) wants to lend Brussels Dutch-speaking education an extra hand to create a powerful learning environment. So as to attain the final objectives, it wants to make the most of the social, cultural and linguistic diversity of all children in a school environment that puts much store by well-being and involvement. In this way, the OCB wants to increase the chances of every child.

This extra support may range from developing a language policy, implementing language-skills education (and ICT), learning to deal with diversity to boosting parent and resident involvement. On the basis of changing needs or new choices the Brussels Education Centre can also support other contents.

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