



Dear SchoolLinks-fan,

First of all, we would like to wish you a fantastic 2015! Together with a new year comes of course also a new edition of the SchoolLinks Letter.

The deadline for school links to submit a plan of action was December 31st. This call for new plans of action brought no less than four new school links! Some existing school links submitted a final report together with a new plan of action. We will inform you about our new call, deadline the 15th of April.

This newsletter also wants to inspire. We have a beautiful video on student participation in a school link and a real-life example of how a school link can infiltrate in a school play.

Have fun reading!

The VVOB – SchoolLinks team

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Schoollink between KAM in Flanders and Saint Mary's High School in Rwanda

In this newsletter, we put the school link between Koninklijk Atheneum Mariakerke and Saint Mary's High School in Rwanda in the spotlight. Last school year, they organised some remarkable activities that deserve some extra attention. Hopefully this inspires other school links!

→ Immersion trip with students to Rwanda

In August, the Flemish school travelled with two teachers and two students to their partner school in Kiruhura in Rwanda. The students attended some classes and had an unforgettable experience. Also, there was sufficient attention for exchange between the teachers. Gladys, biology teacher and physical education (PE) teacher, taught about cell division and introduced the frisbee in the PE classes. Arno, a history teacher, educated the students about their colonial past. Not only did they exchange teaching experiences, the Belgian teachers learned a lot



themselves from their Rwandese colleagues, who explained about their efforts to have a sustainable school (eg. the use of biogas, the set-up of a vegetable garden). Elisa Van Elderen, teacher human sciences, got to know more about the organisation and approach of the counseling of students. She learned more about the psychological problems of Rwandan youth and how to deal with it in the school. Moreover, the Atheneum collected money to install a beamer in their partner school. The whole experience was incredibly fascinating and it did not end when they had to come back! Both schools are now very active in exchanging experiences and information on Facebook about water investigation, more PE teaching ideas, the use of the beamer, etc.



You can watch their travel experiences in this great video!

» [Long version](#)

» [Shorter version](#)

→ **School play**

During the weekends of the 10th and the 17th of January, around 40 students of the K.A. Mariakerke performed a school play on stage. The play called 'GAAR' was dedicated to **sustainability**. To give a strong signal to the organisers of school meals, a working group on a sustainable school was launched. This group has already started the construction of its own kitchen garden.



Some students who took part in the play were also members of the schoollink team, which made an exchange of ideas possible. The immersion trip to Rwanda delivered a lot of educating and useful material that suited perfectly the idea of a sustainable school. The students in Rwanda are boarding students who take care of their own vegetable gardens, they create their own clothes at school, they use biogas - made of manure of cows and students - to cook, and their leftovers get eaten by pigs and chickens.

In the future, they will be sharing their inspiration about the functioning of the biogas installation and the way one creates vegetable gardens in Rwanda.

Nice to know: some famous and less famous Flemish people, made "a [selfie](#)" for this school play.

SPOTTED

South Day: 'Work for Change' @ VVOB

Thursday the 16th of October 2014, another edition of [South Day](#) took place. Since 9 years, on South Day, students from all over Flanders and Brussels skip school for one day to get to work somewhere. Their remuneration goes to a youth project in Palestine/Israel.

Also VVOB participated in 'Work for Change'. We opened our office for four secondary school students.

Two students did a Skype interview with some of our VVOB interns in South-Africa. Afterwards, they wrote an [article \(Dutch\)](#) about it on our website. The other students went to one of the SchoolLink schools in Flanders and made a [video about student participation in a SchoolLink school \(Dutch\)](#).



School Links - Book of Inspiration

In 2014, VVOB visited quite some schools to do interviews and to collect videos and images. At the same time, our colleagues in the VVOB partner countries visited the partner schools of our school links and interviewed their school link teams. This all happened to compose a 'School Links - Book of Inspiration', where we compiled all our and your experiences of five year SchoolLinks.

- » You can [read the book online](#) (only in Dutch). Soon we will make fragments available in English.



PILLARS OF A SCHOOL LINK

Evaluating your school link

When you execute an evaluation, you go over the objectives you premised and see whether you achieved them or not. If you did not or only partly achieve your goals, you will look for the causes during your evaluation. This will deliver useful information for the future.

The **plan of action** is a useful tool to formulate your goals, to follow-up and to evaluate them. You write your evaluation in the **final report** and you take your findings from this report with you in your next plan of action. A lot of these things you will do automatically, but it is of course good to give this a moment's thought.

You can formulate objectives on different levels. In a plan of action, you write them **based on the level of activities** you are planning to do: for every activity, you describe the intended goal of that activity. Hint: try to combine these intended goals to curriculum goals. For example: the students write a letter in English, they learn to think critically about news facts, etc.

However, it is also useful to formulate **a global objective** for every plan of action. This is what you wish to achieve with your school link in that particular year. For example: 'this school year, we try to diversify the communication with the partner school'. Or: 'we try to motivate the students of the 3rd grade for the project'.

Moreover, evaluating your project is **not something you only do at the end**, but **along the implementation of your plan of action**. Is it for example still realistic to get the necessary input for activity X? Since the students weren't so enthusiastic about activity C, maybe it would be better to adjust the plan we had in mind for activity D? These are questions that (should) occur to you as a teacher frequently. It is recommended you build in some specific moments of evaluation on a regular basis, especially when writing your final report of the plan of action you implemented.

Remember: You don't just evaluate by yourself, but **together with your partner school**. When visiting each other, this is the perfect time to evaluate your partnership and to actually write together a draft for a new plan of action.

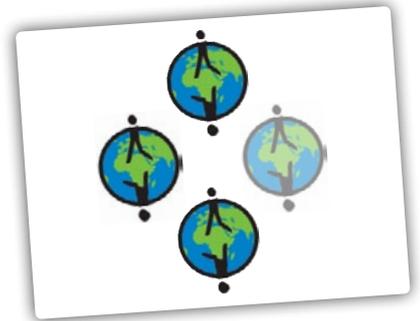


Deadline submission plan of action: 15th of April 2015

On December 31st 2014, several schools submitted a new plan of action to receive (financial) support. We also welcomed four new SchoolLinks. **Sint-Angela** in **Ternat** has already a partnership for years with a school in Idiofa, Congo. The **Atheneum of Etterbeek** has found her partnership in Kinshasa, Congo. Elementary school **De Sleutelbloem** in **Brecht**, continues its school link with Peru, which originates from an Art-Eco project of Djapo. Finally, the **Atheneum of Dendermonde** started a partnership with a school in Morocco.

The next deadline for **all Flemish schools with a partner in the South** to submit a plan of action is **April 15th 2015**.

- For both the plan of action and for the final report, **specific templates** are available. Also, you can download the **guidelines** for completing the plan of action and for final support [here](#).
- On our website, you can find plans of action from other schools that could **inspire** you when completing your own. You will also find our **policy** here and more information about the **evolution** we expect to see in every school link and the different levels of quality we distinguish.
- When you have questions or when something is not clear, feel free to contact our SchoolLinks department (contact data below).



CHAT BOX

“By means of this contact with education in Belgium, we have got to know many aspects of their way of teaching. This year, we are trying to use more didactical materials and to create our own materials without waiting for parents to give it or buy it for us. We have learned to use our imagination.”

Monica Vaca, school link coordinator
Juan Pestalozzi school in Otavalo, Ecuador

CALENDAR

10 January

Stedelijk Lyceum Cadix (Antwerp) travelled to Ghana

6 February

Immaculata Instituut (Oostmalle) goes to Kenia with 14 students

8 March

Sint-Angela Ternat visits its partner school in DR Congo

9 March

Vijverbeek (Zellik) welcomes its South-African partner school in Belgium

15 April

Deadline of submission of the final report and a new plan of action

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