



Assessment as Dialogue

Twenty Inspiring Practices from Classrooms and Schools Across Europe



Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union



EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR STEINER WALDORF EDUCATION

Learning for Well-being Foundation



MAGYAR WALDORF SZÖVETSEG

An Erasmus+ project of the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education, Learning for Well-being Foundation and the Hungarian Waldorf Federation

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In memoriam Dr Richard Landl, dear colleague, project partner and friend

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Published in: 2021, the Netherlands

Cover picture: Courtesy of the Rudolf Steiner School Berlin, Dahlem

Design: Jessica Wieberdink [focusboekontwerp.nl]

All chapters are available digitally on the website of the project:

personalisedassessment.ecswe.eu



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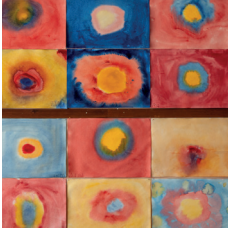
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The Minister for Exams

When I was a child I sat an exam.

This test was so simple

There was no way I could fail.

Question 1. Describe the taste of the Moon.

It tastes like Creation I wrote,

it has the flavour of starlight.

Question 2. What colour is Love?

Love is the colour of the water a man

lost in the desert finds, I wrote.

Question 3. Why do snowflakes melt?

I wrote, they melt because they fall

on to the warm tongue of God.

There were other questions.

They were as simple.

I described the grief of Adam when he was expelled from Eden.

I wrote down the exact weight of an elephant's dream

Yet today, many years later,

For my living I sweep the streets

or clean out the toilets of the fat hotels.

Why? Because constantly I failed my exams.

Why? Well, let me set a test.

Question 1. How large is a child's imagination?

Question 2. How shallow is the soul of the Minister for exams?

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Behind the Twenty Stories - A Larger Story of Hope

The strong message of hope communicated in this book - around the difficult issues associated with the assessment of pupils in schools - is that change is not only possible but it has already happened in the classrooms and schools depicted in the twenty narratives that follow, from twelve diverse European countries, as well as in many other stories that are waiting to be told. These narratives describe how children experience formal learning as building naturally on their innate desire and ability to learn. Teachers and school leaders face many challenges, challenges that ask positive energy from them instead of having to deal with the negative fallout from fear of failure, whether among pupils or parents or among the teachers and school leaders themselves. Instead, teachers can focus on how to strengthen learning in the classroom, for each pupil and for themselves as well as in the wider learning community of the school. Some of our examples even demonstrate that national systems can respond positively to transformative initiatives, such as the following:

- An innovative primary school in the Netherlands is allowed to use national standardised tests as formatively and sensitively as possible, by demonstrating that the Inspectorate's requirements are met in the process (Chapter 4).
- 142 primary schools across Romania, under the umbrella of a civil society organisation, are accredited to the national curriculum by using written comments and not grades in numbers, because they have demonstrated an equivalence with such grades through Evaluation Notebooks (Chapter 1).
- Danish law recognises an extensive personalised written report at the end of secondary school - instead of numerical grades - for entrance to university (Chapter 18).
- The New Zealand Certificate of Steiner Education allows a route into tertiary education without formal exams, within the United Kingdom (Chapter 19).
- A secondary school in Hungary responds to and successfully retains pupils who would otherwise have joined the ranks of early school leavers (Chapter 20).

The narratives in this book offer support to some key arguments within current debates on assessment in schools, as demonstrated in publications over the last year by civil society organisations, researchers and European policy makers. Some notable examples are:

- The Lifelong Learning Platform has adopted as its annual theme for 2021: The changing nature of evaluation in education and its impact on learners' well-being - Rethinking learning outcomes: from assessment to well-being. The related concept note highlights the pressures on learners' mental health, citing Council of Europe documents: "About 60% of school students report getting very tense when they study, just over 60% of girls and 40% of boys say they feel very anxious about doing tests at school, even when they are well prepared, and over 70% of parents say they would choose to send their children to a school with below-average exam results if students were happy there."
- *Beyond the Tyranny of Testing: Relational Evaluation in Education*, a book written by Kenneth J. Gergen and Scherto R. Gill and published by Oxford University Press in 2020, argues cogently that schools should focus on the quality of relationships around learning rather than on examinations and grades, and provides a powerful critique of assessment through standardised testing.
- From the Publications Office of the European Union, the *Prospective Report of the Future of Assessment in Primary and Secondary Education (2020)* presents the results of a trend impact-and-drivers analysis as well as a strategic foresight exercise. Recommendations for the way forward resonate with themes within the present book, such as "shifting the perspective", "developing learners' capacity to engage in self- and peer-assessment", and "linking policies with practice".

This book contributes to these debates with freshly collected narratives of practice from varied national contexts and from all levels of school education, from the first step into primary school to the final step out of secondary school. Together the narratives demonstrate that the years in between these two steps can provide each pupil with a personal learning journey that accompanies the similar learning journeys of fellow pupils where attentive assessment offers both individual and shared compasses with which to navigate the journey, also at points of transition.

Across diverse national contexts and school levels, the twenty stories illuminate how environments which favour the emergence of good practice require a combination of many factors that enable teachers and schools to innovate. Funding is of course useful, but many of our examples did not require extraordinary funding. A school's capacity to create an environment that responds to pupils, parents and teachers is part of a complex story, and if more good practices are to emerge, ways must be found to support teachers and school leaders to take up experimentation. Assessment that encourages each pupil to learn happily and well is less about specific methods or tools and more about the intention and frame of mind behind assessment methods, as embedded in supportive relationships.

The distinctive contribution of this book

The stimulus for this collection came from the then Director General of Education and Culture at the European Commission, during an open exchange with civil society organisations in the European Parliament that was convened by the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group in July 2016. The Director General invited the organisations present to share with policy makers "inspiring stories of change" that would complement the research studies and policy documents usually perused by them.

The invitation was extended in the general context of new pedagogical approaches, and two of the organisations present - together with an initial advisory group of others who had attended the event as well as wider associates - decided to take it up in the contested area of assessment in schools. The two organisations were the European Council of Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE) and the Learning for Well-being Foundation (L4WB-F), who saw their collaboration as one to which they brought complementary strengths. Subsequently the Hungarian Waldorf Federation (HWF) joined the partnership and took on the major task of applying for funds from the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, a critical step towards the emergence of the present book.

These organisations agreed on two essential features for a collection of inspiring stories of change around assessment in schools:

- 1 The stories should be gathered directly from classrooms and schools, the living spaces within everyday life where teachers engage with pupils, and where some creative and courageous teachers devise assessment practices that sensitively support learning processes among pupils - in the face of prevailing trends of standardised assessment. These creative assessment practices represent green shoots of pedagogy that can spring up in suitably hospitable learning environments.
- 2 In order to fully understand these sensitive and creative assessment practices, the green shoots that the stories represented should not be erratically assembled from random classrooms and schools. Instead an awareness of the pedagogical eco-systems that had enabled these green shoots to generate was required, so that policy makers and others could gain an impression of conducive pedagogical settings.

Steiner Waldorf schools as a pedagogical eco-system

ECSWE and HWF offered a pedagogical eco-system within which a search could be made for green shoots of sensitive assessment practices devised by teachers and school leaders. As an umbrella organisation spanning national associations of Steiner Waldorf education that between them connect 775 schools across 28 European countries, ECSWE could offer ample space and different contexts within which to identify promising assessment practices created by teachers. This is illustrated by the thirteen stories in this book from Steiner schools located in nine countries that stretch from the north and west of Europe through the centre to the east of the continent.

In addition to the sweep of variation just described, HWF could provide depth of coverage in a particular national setting with 47 Steiner Waldorf schools and 52 kindergartens, leading to the inclusion in this book of several narratives of good practice from Hungary.

Besides broad coverage and numbers, ECSWE and HWF felt that they provided fertile ground because of their distinctive pedagogical approach to learning and assessment, as recently summed up by Martyn Rawson¹:

In keeping with its overall philosophy Steiner/Waldorf schools have a set of generative principles relating to assessment:

- Assessment for learning is a vital support for pupils' learning and development.
- The learning being assessed takes the whole person into account, and includes assessment of socialization, qualification and appreciation of the development of the person.
- Assessment evaluates the things that Waldorf education values and is comprehensive.
- Waldorf practice uses formative, ipsative and summative assessment for different purposes. [Please see this book's glossary for definitions.]
- Testing is not used to select children or students to enter the next level (e.g.: entry to grade 1, transition to high school) and all students have the right to 12 years of education.
- Grades are not given until high school and usually in connection with external exams. Instead, formative assessment is used, mainly through narrative texts (annual written reports that characterize the person and her achievements and written feedback on students' work) and formal and informal conversations. Students never have to repeat a year or course if their performance is not adequate.
- Since learning should be experiential and social, performance assessments are necessary (e.g., naturally occurring evidence).
- Cooperation and mutual appreciation rather than competition are encouraged and students are motivated through ipsative-referenced assessment (i.e., in relation to their own previous levels of attainment).
- Assessment gives teachers important feedback on their teaching as part of their planning and reviewing process.
- Individual case studies by teachers are practiced to gain insight and understanding of the child's biographical development in order to form an open picture of what is emerging.
- Assessment should be effective, unobtrusive, embedded in classroom practice, unbureaucratic, yet also well-documented.

1 Rawson, M. (2021). A glossary of terms relating to assessment. Retrieved from Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. Resources website: www.steinerwaldorf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/A-glossary-of-terms-relating-to-assessment-Martyn-Rawson-2.pdf

Also see Bransby, K., & Rawson, M. (2020). Waldorf Education for the Future: A framework for curriculum practice. Retrieved from www.steinerwaldorf.org/steiner-resources/

Within a broad common framework, these principles play out varying in different Steiner Waldorf schools depending on national educational policies as well as on the local dynamics through which particular schools have emerged. The present book can therefore provide food for thought and debate within Steiner educational circles in Europe and beyond.

The vision of assessment embodied in the principles listed have been summarised by Martyn Rawson (same source, the Glossary) as: “trying to understand individual students, taking the whole person bodily, emotionally, socially and spiritually, and then offering them support in their learning and development. Assessment... is never just focused on academic activity...”

This vision resonates with the twenty stories in this book, varying dynamically between the stories and validated within them. Blending in the principles of Learning for Well-being, as explained below, will allow us to define at the end of this Introduction what we describe as “Assessment as Dialogue”.

The principles and core capacities of Learning for Well-being

The exercise of collecting inspiring stories of change around assessment in schools would be further extended and enriched if narratives could be added from fertile pedagogical soil beyond the Steiner Waldorf educational system. HWF therefore found, outside its own network, a remarkable school in Hungary designed to retain potential early school leavers and ECSWE identified a school in Switzerland that exemplified innovative assessment in the study of mathematics. In addition, to broaden the range of pedagogical richness, ECSWE looked to the Learning for Well-being Foundation (L4WB-F) which brought different strengths and networks to the partnership.

The organisations shared orientations and values that had led ESCWE to participate in the Learning for Well-being Community convened by L4WB-F. Two other organisations from within the Learning for Well-being Community helped identify the additional inspiring stories of change selected. One was the International Step by Step Association (ISSA) that focuses on high quality inclusive early childhood education and care, as featured in the opening narrative in this collection. The other was Nivoz, a reputed

think-tank in the Netherlands oriented towards progressive and sensitive pedagogy in schools. Nivoz and L4WB-F had co-organised the Unfolding Symposium in 2017 that featured exemplary practice from classrooms and schools around the Netherlands, and certain schools and professionals highlighted there have contributed four contemporary narratives to this book. The cluster of stories from the Netherlands also provides some depth within a national context, in the same way that Hungary does, as explained earlier.

A striking feature in the exchange between L4WB-F and Nivoz on the one hand, and ISSA on the other, was that the search for suitable schools was not defined as the identification of good assessment practices but as the recognition of good pedagogy. All three organisations - as with ECSWE and HWF -- held that creative and sensitive approaches to learning intrinsically include creative and sensitive assessment, given that assessment should be embedded in learning rather than treated as an add-on. This perspective is well substantiated in the literature, notably in P. Black and D. William's article 'Classroom assessment and pedagogy,' published in the journal *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 25(6), 551-575, in 2018.

Such a viewpoint of assessment as essential to holistic learning illuminates an application of L4WB-F's principle of **wholeness**, one of seven key principles in the Learning for Well-being approach. The other six principles are equally relevant to assessment. The journey from entering primary school to leaving secondary school is not primarily one of qualifying through tests for university education and then for employment but more deeply of enabling each child's **unique potential** to develop, with sensitive assessment of how to nurture this. Learning and assessment must respond to the **inner diversity** within every child. The importance of **relationships and processes** vital to learning and assessment should be recognised, rather than an overriding emphasis on the desired outcomes of tests. Assessment must not epitomise the judgement of a pupil by teachers and by school systems but should instead draw on the **engaged participation** of pupils, teachers and parents acting together. Learning and the related assessment must be embedded in schools, homes and communities as **nested systems** and should not treat the classroom as the only arena. Feedback to pupils (and to teachers and school leaders and educational policy makers) must **measure what matters**, with the emphasis on 'what matters' rather than narrowly on 'measuring.'

These seven principles clearly resonate with Steiner Waldorf pedagogy around learning and assessment as summarised by Martyn Rawson and cited earlier. Learning for Well-being offers a generative approach that can be applied to a wide range of human organisations ranging from hospitals to families in addition to schools. To illustrate how the seven generative principles just described can play out in the daily lives of schools, some of the narratives in this book include 'boxes' that depict exactly this coming to life in a particular context. At the end of this Introduction, essential elements of 'Assessment as Dialogue' are identified that blend some of the Steiner Waldorf principles of assessment with the Learning for Well-being principles.

Also resonant with Steiner Waldorf views on learning and assessment are the nine core capacities identified by Learning for Well-being. These are innate capacities that enhance human development and can in turn be cultivated and expanded. Learning and assessment are best embarked on through the core capacity for *relaxing*, that in turn enables *observing, listening, inquiring, embedding, reflecting, sensing, empathizing* and *discerning patterns*. How these core capacities enliven learning and assessment can be seen in the vibrant examples that are presented within 'boxes' in some of the narratives.

L4WB-F's emphasis on principles and core capacities is integral to its overall strategy, which is:

- to expand current understandings of children's well-being beyond preoccupation with cognitive and physical development, to extend to emotional and spiritual connections;
- to move the organisation of children's lives -- as in schools -- from standardised systems to sensitive response to them as individuals; and
- to change perceptions of children as only objects of adult care, to recognition that they can be competent partners and co-constructors with adults.

Here too the worldview of Learning for Well-being meshes with that of Steiner Waldorf education at many points.

Harvesting narratives of good practice in assessment

This shared approach to assessment in schools - as contextualised, individualised and participatory - has led to collaboration around a collection of 'inspiring stories of change' in the practice of assessment.

ECSWE took the first steps by addressing the universe of almost eight hundred schools within its membership. A survey was carefully developed, in consultation with an advisory group from relevant organisations, and was sent to teachers across Steiner schools in Europe. The survey was also shared with schools outside Steiner circles where the advisory group had contacts. Such extensive outreach generated several promising responses. It was at this point that the related Erasmus+ project was launched in October 2019 with the partnership between ECSWE, HWF and L4WB-F now a formal one - a crucial moment in bringing together the twenty stories in this book.

The survey that had already been undertaken provided the basis for one-to-one discussions with teachers and school leaders who had developed good practices related to assessment. It was agreed that since these good practices were to exemplify contextualised, individualised and participatory approaches to assessment, they should be recorded in ways that would mirror this by capturing context and individuality through more participatory exchanges than surveys usually allow. L4WB-F supported the partnership by carrying out a face-to-face meeting with a teacher from vocational education in the Netherlands to generate an initial narrative (that is included in this book as Chapter 10) and on this basis to formulate an interview guide - rooted in the template for the earlier survey - designed to steer the conversations through which the stories would be amassed.

ECSWE began the main process of interviews and narratives. The designated collector of practices reports:

"I ran the first interviews following the interview guide very meticulously and attempting to cover as many of the topics as possible. After the first few, however, I discovered that what I really needed to write the narrative in a fruitful way was to connect the story of each teacher regarding the assessment practice, with the elements that generated passion and enthusiasm. From then on I used the interview guide very differently, followed the natural flow of the conversation and used the teacher's enthusiasm and

passion as indicators to decide what aspects to dive deeper into. Each narrative was then completed afterwards with the help of further resources and written exchange with the teachers. Each narrative is unique in its content but they are structured in a similar way to be able to put them all into perspective and create an overall coherence.”

While piecing together the early narratives using her notes from these semi-structured interviews, she developed the format of the identity card for each story of good practice that summarised the key features of the practice. L4WB-F’s designated collector of good practices then found that keeping the outline of the identity card in mind when conducting interviews helped ensure that essential knowledge about a practice was garnered. The device of the identity card has been retained for each narrative in the book. ECSWE collected half of the twenty narratives and included one from Switzerland outside the Steiner network of schools, HWF gathered four narratives from within the country again spanning one beyond the Steiner circle. L4WB-F accrued six narratives mainly from within the Netherlands, exploring different pedagogical approaches there, as well as covering an innovative early childhood programme in Romania and a Steiner school in Germany. In this way the collection sought to span multiple pedagogical visions around learning and assessment.

The stories as they took shape were presented and discussed at periodic project meetings where the insights of all colleagues could be drawn on, in addition to regular conference calls between the three designated collectors of practices. Amassing the stories, however, took much longer than originally expected since the COVID-19 pandemic exploded six months after the launch of the project and most interviews and all project meetings then took place online. Eventually the twenty narratives were in hand one and a half years after the project was launched, curated with care and depth.

When integrating the narratives into this book, various ways of grouping them were envisaged but the favoured choice was to order them in the sequence whereby children enter school and then traverse the primary and secondary levels before emerging from the school system. Rather than as a factory production line, the organisations behind the book hold that this is a personal and collective journey whereby each child - addressed as a whole person - should be able to realise their unique potential in terms of valued inner diversity.

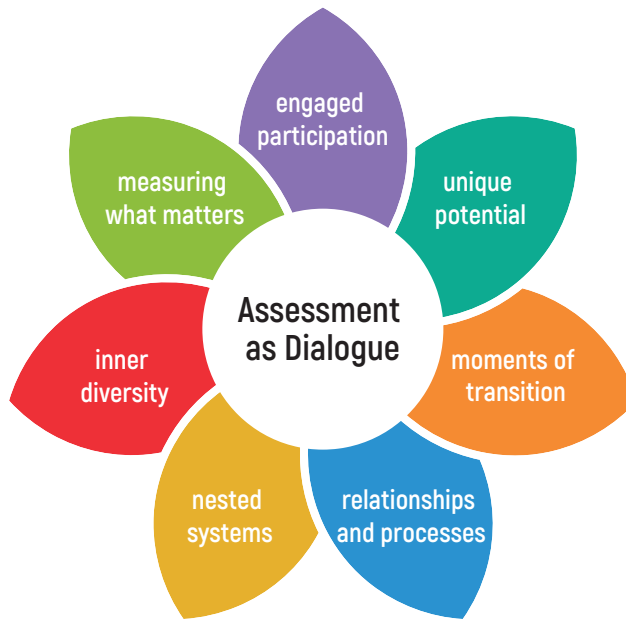
Assessment as dialogue

The twenty narratives in this book have emerged through a many-sided dialogue - dialogue amongst civil society organisations concerned about trends towards standardised assessment, dialogue between such organisations and an influential policy maker who extended an invitation to collect and share inspiring stories about more sensitive pedagogies, dialogue in response to this invitation that led to the present project and - crucially - dialogue with teachers and school leaders who had courageously reshaped daily realities in the classroom through assessment practices that support and enrich learning and are not limited to measuring standard outcomes. The voices of pupils and parents are also heard to some extent, although the parameters of the project inevitably limited this.

The book now enters into dialogue with work by other civil society organisations, researchers and policy makers.

Our meta-narrative is one of hope. We conclude with the hope that processes and practices of assessment in schools will evolve into ongoing dialogue in which pupils are central participants, and no longer the objects of care over whose heads various adults debate a pupil's 'performance.' The twenty narratives that follow illustrate and illuminate ways forward to realising this hope.

We offer readers what we call some essential elements of Assessment as Dialogue that they will recognise within the various narratives, and that resonate with the depictions earlier in this Introduction of the approaches to assessment in Steiner Waldorf pedagogy and in Learning for Well-being's worldview. Some of the narratives will demonstrate that these elements are explicitly or implicitly embedded in other progressive pedagogical perspectives as well.



Elements of Assessment as Dialogue - Towards Wholeness

1. Assessment for learning through the **engaged participation** of each pupil is vital to learning and development.
2. The learning being assessed takes the pupil's **unique potential** into account and includes appreciation of the development of the whole person.
3. Pupils are supported at **moments of transition** -- into primary school and secondary school, and beyond -- rather than 'selected' through tests. All pupils' rights to a full school education are affirmed.
4. **Relationships and processes** of cooperation and mutual appreciation are encouraged and students are motivated in terms of their own previous levels of attainment.
5. **Nested systems** of assessment include planning and review that provide teachers with important feedback.
6. Individual case reports by teachers are used to gain insight and understanding of the child's biographical development and **inner diversity**, to form a picture of what is emerging.
7. Assessment should be effective in terms of the previous six elements, unobtrusive, embedded in classroom practice, unbureaucratic yet also well documented, thereby **measuring what matters**.

PART ONE: ENTERING SCHOOL

1. Step-by-Step: Starting Assessment Early to Support Learning (Romania)

When are the key moments in a child's education for assessment in order to enhance learning processes - and not only to measure expected outcomes? Among diverse pupils, how can this be related to the unfolding of each child's unique potential? The assessment practices described here strongly support the view that learning goes hand in hand with assessment that underpins learning and that therefore the two should begin together. Pedagogy that is friendly to young children's unfolding capacities does not seek to impose the strait-jacket of a grading system.



2. Kindergarten to School: A Holistic-Diagnostic Assessment (Croatia)

The holistic diagnostic assessment carried out at the Osnovna Waldorfska škola Rijeka is an example of how to transform the evaluation of a child's progress at one point in time into an opportunity to understand how the child learns and how best to support them in the crucial first years of school. The way the exercises are presented and carried out make it a constructive confidence building exercise and the knowledge that comes out of it is helpful for both teachers and parents. The greatest value of this method is the combination of the assessment itself with a thorough conversation with the parents and a personalised follow-up to increase the quality of understanding among carers and teachers for the child's developmental and learning needs.



PART TWO: PRIMARY SCHOOL

3. Hand in Hand: Cooperation Between Teacher and Parents in Assessment (Hungary)

Collaboration with parents on assessment recognises that parents are the primary caretakers and co-educators of the child, and that they can be the teacher's most trustful allies and partners. By sharing their observations and the experiences and feelings of the child, parents can offer meaningful insights for the teacher and together they can work effectively for the highest good of the child. Elements here include a classroom observation by the parents and a parent-teacher conference.



4. Laterna Magica: The Magic of Interweaving Standardised and Formative Assessment (The Netherlands)

An innovative school in the Netherlands creatively tries to align ongoing personalised assessment - to guide the learning path of each pupil - with the periodic standardised testing required by the national Inspectorate of Education. The school has achieved significant success with this. Rich processes of assessment apply to academic subjects as well as to experiential learning through gardening, animal care, cooking and other activities. A portfolio is maintained by every pupil supported by a personal coach, and other school staff and parents have relatively easy access to the portfolio.



5. Learning to Learn: E-portfolios in Primary Schools (The Netherlands)

The e-portfolios endeavour to capture the learning process across the school, responding to every pupil and every teacher while following carefully devised guidelines for learning. Children are encouraged to value learning as they experience it personally, with an e-portfolio for each child. Parallel to the feedback that children receive within their e-portfolios, each teacher maintains an e-portfolio within which experiences of effective teaching practices can be shared, to draw on other teachers' insights. Parents also review and contribute to their child's e-portfolio.



PART THREE: BRIDGING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL

6. A Point in Time: An Integral Assessment Framework (United Kingdom)

The Point in Time Assessment Framework got its name from being based on the regular collection of snapshot data across subjects, that then serve as a basis for conversations between teachers and senior and specialised colleagues about the progress of the pupils and how to best support them in their learning process. Three key questions are addressed in these pupil progress meetings: is the child making good progress? What does the child need from me next? And, do I have the resources to allow this child to make this progress? Continuing teacher development is a condition for success and a direct consequence of the peer-support and progress-review meeting structure. School development is also made possible within this method, as it offers the opportunity to show evidence of planning, implementation and impact to external bodies including the inspection services.



7. Dialogue Reports: Parents, Pupils and Teachers Together (Germany)

This assessment practice is based on the art of conversation and of cultivating interpersonal relationships. Rather than relying solely on the teacher's judgement, all parties that play a role in the pupil's development take part in an open dialogue covering different aspects of the pupil's life. This dialogue enables a common language to be established between teacher, teaching assistants, parents and pupils, to facilitate better collaboration around a shared educational responsibility. Qualitative observations and exchange of different perspectives are followed by agreements on how to jointly support the pupil's development and enliven their learning process.



8. Opening Mathematics: Dialogical Learning (Switzerland)

Dialogic learning is a teaching and formative assessment method that enlivens the way that understanding arises. Pupils engage deeply and methodically with the subject and are given space to write down their thoughts and feelings, describing their engagement and how they specifically approached the task they were given. It generally includes a cycle of three: 1. an open task given to the pupils by the teacher, 2. individual and collective feedback on what the pupils produced and 3. planning of the next step taken by the teacher, mainly based on the concrete feedback obtained from the pupils and where the class needs to make progress. Applied to mathematics, it approaches concepts through the language of understanding before the language of the understood is developed together, giving room for all pupils to engage in the process in a way particular to each one of them and possibly involving their daily lives. Formal concepts are thus not introduced at the beginning but arise as results of a joint undertaking that builds on awakening self-evidence.



9. Meeting Day: A Smooth Transition Between Primary and Secondary School (Hungary)

Shifting from primary to middle school can be challenging for the children involved, and also for the teachers, as they have the responsibility of deciding about the new class. It is not about picking the best pupils or bringing together children with similar interests or capabilities, but rather about building an inclusive heterogeneous learning community. The Meeting Day provides time and space where pupils from the last year of the primary school meet both secondary school teachers and pupils coming from other schools who wish to join them. It helps the teachers assess where a set of pupils are, whether this particular school and class are the best for a given student to reach their full potential, and it also ensures a smooth transition from primary to secondary school.



PART FOUR: SECONDARY SCHOOL

10. Innovation within Vocational Education: Creating a Card Game (The Netherlands)

Assessment - as with learning and education more generally - resonates closely with the emotions, as highlighted in this example of a good practice. The emotions here relate to the acknowledgement of presence and a sense of belonging, that is especially important for pupils from immigrant homes in low-income areas. These emotions were addressed in the example below by a deeply sensitive teacher (whose father was an immigrant), who used the exercise of creating a card game together to encourage social coherence through shared pleasure in learning. The context is that of vocational education, a 'stream' to which immigrant pupils often find themselves assigned. Issues around assessment and supportive relationships have of course far wider relevance.



11. The Game of Ginter: History and Assessment (Austria)

The Game of Ginter is the name that pupils gave to the game of human history that Niko Ginter has created and practiced for 12 years at the Waldorf Klagenfurt school, Austria. The core idea of the game is to involve pupils in a simulation of the development process of a society and in the ability to make decisions that influence future events. The game is collaborative and has no winner or loser but serves as an enjoyable and powerful learning process and includes an assessment method, through observation of the game leader and the realisation of individual tasks. Learning through play, sparking natural curiosity and giving space to experience mistakes are some of the methodologies behind this practice. Niko Ginter has practiced this game with over 16 classes and 300 pupils and is now writing a book about his experience as a Steiner Waldorf teacher that includes a chapter on the game. He hopes to spread his practice and to create versions of it that can be adapted for other learning contexts.



12. Five Roles and a Unique Me: Evaluating Open End Assignments in a Creative Way (Belgium)

Sam Versweyveld combined the best of two worlds by introducing a framework developed in the context of part time artistic education into the four senior years of the Steiner Waldorf secondary school de Zonnewijzer. This framework serves as a basis for the guidance, formative and summative assessment of open-ended personal assignments that pupils carry out throughout the year. Rather than giving a grade on the overall performance, supervisors evaluate how their pupils have embodied five roles that are key to the development of a project: researcher, teamplayer, artist, craftsman and performer, as well as the 6th very important role that concerns the expression of their uniqueness within their work.



13. Continuous Assessment: A Framework of Practices that Underpin Learning (Germany)

Assessment is for learning and must therefore accompany learning closely and continuously - this is the essence of and the strong message from the practice of assessment that is described here. It is therefore not a practice as such but a framework of practices that endeavours to be seamlessly integrated in order to follow and support fully the collective journey of learning in a classroom and within this the personal learning path of every pupil. The context in which this is embedded is both the Steiner Waldorf principle that education should enable each pupil to become what they are, and the specific methodology of Waldorf schools that takes the form, for example, of main lesson blocks.

The wider context is state regulation of schooling, in this case the German situation of requiring grades to be given to pupils in senior classes, working towards the Abitur or end of secondary school exams. Pupils are enabled to go through the final state exams with the strength that can be drawn from a school curriculum which has helped build pupils' abilities over years of assessment for learning rather than learning for assessment.



14. The Physics Menu: Using Gamification in Assessment (Hungary)

Learning journeys can be as different and individual as children are. Although the learning outcome is set in the curriculum, a school where individual paths and autonomous choices are valued and children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning can be a perfect environment for a practice that builds exactly on these values. The practice also includes a gamification assessment element that helps the children follow their progress, gives the teacher instant and continuous feedback about the effectiveness of the teaching, provides the opportunity to adapt or correct both the teaching and the learning process during the course, and helps to provide personalised and formative assessment.



15. Creative Thinking Skills: A Philosophy of Integrated Education (Republic of Ireland)

The Crossfields Institute Level 2 Integrated Education Diploma is more than a qualification, it is a philosophy of integrated education and it can serve as a base to structure a school-wide assessment policy that acknowledges creative thinking skills and the importance of enabling pupils to connect to their unique potential and capacity to learn independently. The three mandatory modules, the *Independent Project*, *Creative Thinking Skills* and *Personal and Social Learning Skills*, support pupils to: follow their passion and explore an interest or career aspiration in depth, use a range of creative thinking skills to make connections and use different perspectives to communicate ideas and concepts and develop pupil's responsibility for their own learning. The Raheen Waldorf school is a small secondary school in Ireland, and implementing this progressive and recognised qualification is supporting the pupils', the teachers' and the school's development all at once.



16. Assessing the Arts: Nurturing Creativity (The Netherlands)

Change requires courage, and changing a system of assessment arguably requires a special courage, more so when the assessment system includes national tests at the end of secondary school. In the story that follows, a secondary school - set up sixteen years ago to embody innovation, notably around arts education - struggles with traditional assessment that contradicts its original innovative and creative impulse. The school's new director attempts to lead a process of change in pedagogy to precede changes in assessment that pupils, staff and parents speak out for. This process is primarily one of dialogue and discussion, in preparation for the reorganisation that is required to align pedagogy and assessment with innovation that nurtures creativity.



17. A Personal Portfolio: Socratic Dialogue in a Secondary School (Finland)

The essence of this practice is to enable pupils to become an active part of the teaching and assessment process. For thirteen years, Eeva taught Finnish language and literature to class 9, 10, 11 and 12 pupils, without textbooks and tests. Her lesson structure is based on a Socratic dialogic teaching method, and has space for personalised feedback and individual work in every class. Pupils are given the opportunity to engage with all subjects, through the dialogue and then through an assignment that she provides personalised comments on, to support each pupil in their individual evolution. With the help of a course guide, the pupils can plan their journey and select the assignments they would like to include, and discover how they can best show their capabilities in line with the instructions. At the end of the main lesson block, pupils bring all of their work together in a portfolio, make the necessary adjustments, and hand it in to receive a summative evaluation, consisting of an overall grade and a written comment.



PART FIVE: LEAVING SCHOOL

18. The Art of Writing Good Reports: An Alternative to Grades (Denmark)

The art of writing good reports is part of the assessment DNA of the Steiner Waldorf school in Odense. Continuous formative assignments and dialogue leading to a better understanding of who the pupils are, as well as how they learn and interact with different subjects and people, give teachers the information they need to write extensive individualised reports. The one at the end of class 12 is remarkable as it aims to give a clear, honest and positive picture of the pupil to higher education admission officers or employers. What is more, this alternative way of finishing school is recognised by Danish law.



19. The New Zealand Certificate of Steiner Education: A Route to Tertiary Education (United Kingdom)



The New-Zealand Certificate of Steiner Education enables the St Michael Steiner School to offer a secondary education leaving certificate whilst keeping the essence of their curriculum and limiting the impact of summative assessment on their teaching methods. Especially in the social sciences, the assessment criteria within the NZCSE, e.g. *to examine perspectives and demonstrate empathy for people in a specified context*, can be adapted to nearly any content, and in the subjects where that is not the case, teachers are encouraged to submit revisions. Instead of formal examinations, pupils hand in a series of assignments throughout the year, with the personalised feedback, support and challenges that they need. The assessment method supports the learning process, develops autonomy of pupils and favours collaboration between teachers.

20. Assessment for Life: A Second Chance for Early School Leavers (Hungary)



When traditional education and assessment do not work for a given student, this usually results in a self-compromising process of trying to fit in, or in school failure with the students disconnecting from their peers and from education itself, or in a lengthy process of finding a new school that is more inclusive and fitting for them. But what happens to those who have already gone through all this and have dropped out of the system altogether? Those on whom not just education has given up but who have also given up on themselves. Is there a way to support them in getting back on track for employment through gaining a good education, and most importantly to prepare to face life with all its current challenges as resilient adults with relevant life skills and values? This is exactly what a small school in the heart of Budapest is committed to do.



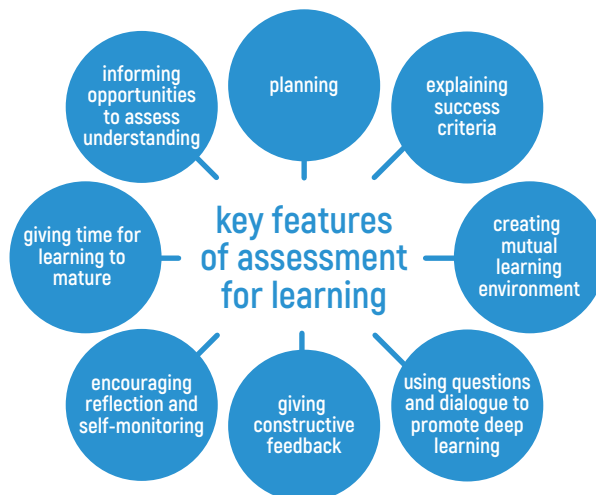
Assessment

Source: Rawson, M. (2021). A glossary of terms relating to assessment. Retrieved from Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. Resources website: scan QR.



Assessment for learning

Assessment for learning means the focus is on noticing, recognising, responding to, recording and revisiting pupils' learning. The aim is to offer the learner feedback they can use. Assessments are recorded in the form of short narratives rather than grades. This approach seeks to interpret evidence of learning so that teachers can decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there, for the benefit of the learners. It means sharing learning goals with pupils, involving them in self-assessment and providing them with feedback, which helps them to recognise the next step. It assumes that every pupil can improve and often involves a holistic approach that sees learning not just as cognitive achievement but as overall development of the person.



Source: The key features of assessment for learning (after UK National Foundation for Educational Research brushing-up-on-assessment series)

Diagnostic assessment

This can be used to identify whether individual pupils need support and as a basis for a judgement of what kind of help is necessary and available. Diagnostic assessment is sometimes associated with a focus on problems and deficits.

Formative assessment

Formative assessment is process-orientated. It includes the monitoring of the ongoing learning process of individuals and groups and it is used to make adjustments to the learning process. It is concerned with how learning occurs and is either informally or formally noted by the teacher or is used to provide feedback to pupils. Knowing how pupils are learning, what difficulties they may have, what they can do well enables teachers to offer the right kind of support at the right time and provides the teacher essential information about the effects of their teaching. Therefore, formative modes of assessment are used to accompany learning processes and give individual pupils ongoing and concrete feedback. It is important that pupils understand in age-sensitive and language-appropriate ways what the learning aims are and what criteria will be applied to assess a particular assignment of blocks (what Americans call rubrics), how to achieve them and how they are currently doing. This can be done verbally at the start of a block or for older pupils it can also be provided in writing so they can refer to it. Teachers use informal and formal formative assessment in their ongoing lesson reviewing and planning processes.

Ipsative-referenced assessment

Ipsa is Latin for self, therefore ipsative means self-referenced. That means a pupil's performance is assessed against their own prior performance. This means assessment is relative to the person. The same summative achievement might mean a great improvement and effort for one person or the result of little effort and no improvement for another. Ipsative assessment is a way of individualising feedback to the person, taking that person's whole situation into account. It means the pupil is not competing against others but with themselves. The pupil asks, "can I do better than last time?"

Can I improve on what I have achieved so far?" Ipsative assessment gives the individual an answer to this question.

Ipsative methods are used in one-to-one pedagogical conversations, both informal and formal, in which the learner is helped to recognise their own progress measured against their own previous achievements and levels of participation. Thus the pupil has the feeling that they are not competing with others or external standards but trying to do better, or maintaining their own standards. Children and young people undergo all manner of developmental crises prompted from outside or through changes in themselves and this often impacts on school learning. They need to be helped to see what these causes and symptoms are, recognise the effect they are having on them, rather than having the feeling "I am too stupid" or "it's the teacher's fault that I don't get it". Then they can find ways of moving on with the help of the teachers.

Summative assessment

Summative assessment makes judgements about whether outcomes have been achieved. This kind of assessment can be used to establish if a pupil has completed a task successfully and has learned what was required. It usually occurs at the end of a period or block of learning before a new stage or phase starts. It is often formalised by paper and pen tests with clear criteria for achievement, though it can be verbal. It requires a judgement based on evidence as to whether a pupil has achieved what they set out to achieve. This assumes that there is a baseline of criteria defining what pupils are supposed to achieve. In many schools, summative assessment is most commonly used for purposes of accountability to external bodies, e.g. by highlighting how many pupils pass exams at certain levels. This often affects the status of the school. Summative assessment can also be based on the outcomes of a series of episodes of learning collected in a portfolio.

Terms used from Steiner Waldorf pedagogy

Various sources

Child Study

Source: Book Review: Solving the Riddle of the Child: the Art of the Child Study by Christof Wiechert, January 25 2016, retrieved from the Waldorf publications website: scan QR.



A child study is a technique unique to Waldorf schools that has the child become the focus of observation on the part of the whole faculty. A faculty meeting then devotes itself to lining up observations about the child's physical organization and appearance, the child's behavior in class, and with other children, and as a learner, and also how the child is in his or her own world – likes and dislikes, social ease, imaginative abilities, willingness to learn and to work. Then the faculty lives with the questions that the child prompts out of these observations. If it is possible, some ideas of what can be done to help and harmonize the child's experience in school and in the world come forward as a plan on the child's behalf.

Class teacher

Source: Lighthouse – International Kindergarten: scan QR.



In Waldorf schools a class teacher follows their class from the first until the last class of primary school before starting a new cycle.

“Waldorf elementary (or “class”) teachers integrate storytelling, drama, rhythmic movement, visual arts, and music into their daily work, weaving a tapestry of experience that brings each subject to life in the child's thinking, feeling, and willing. Entrusted with the essential task of accompanying their pupils on a several-year journey, Waldorf grades 1-8 teachers have a role analogous to that of an effective parent, guiding the children's formal academic learning while awakening their moral development and increasing their awareness of their place in the world.”

College of teachers

Source: formulated for the purpose of this book

The “College of Teachers” is the name given to the circles of teachers in Waldorf schools who work actively, collaboratively, and meditatively on finding the best approach for each child through the Waldorf curriculum.

Curative eurythmy

Source: formulated for the purpose of this book

Eurythmy means harmonious movement and is based on the recognition that certain archetypal movements and rhythms correspond with the sounds of language. It is employed therapeutically to instil a bodily sense for vowels and consonants, form and rhythm and to support and enhance well-being and the whole development of the young person, including emotional and spiritual aspects.

End-of-year report

Source: Gerd Kellermann and Martyn Rawson, Individualised reports instead of grades, retrieved from the Waldorf Freunde website: scan QR.



The end-of-year report refers to the written report pupils receive at the end of the school year in Waldorf schools. This is the teacher’s personal, individual description of what the child has done and achieved throughout the school year. The report describes the child’s achievement in terms of their development.

In the first years of school teachers give an individual description and characterise the child to the best of their ability. A class teacher works with their class day by day and week by week on a number of different subjects. The report documents what has been done. For each pupil, there is a description of the way the subjects were worked on individually, and what developmental steps were initiated in the process. It is also concerned with the child’s social situation and involvement in the class and in the life of the school.

In addition to this written evaluation, the pupils are sometimes given a brief verse which the teacher has found with a special view to the child's situation and the challenges it presents. These words can encourage them to find specific short-term or long-term goals that will have to be tackled in the general direction that lies ahead. In this way the report also speaks directly to the child.

Teachers of subjects outside the class teacher's range - languages, eurythmy, hand-work and craft work, gardening, sports and music - add an account of the child's activity from the perspective of their special subjects. These reports complement the class teacher's account. Reports are written in layman's terms so that parents and older pupils have a clear and comprehensive picture.

Extra lesson

Source: formulated for the purpose of this book

Developed by a Steiner Waldorf teacher named Audrey McAllen, the Extra Lesson is a complex toolkit designed to assess the stages of development, remedy learning and social difficulties. A series of movement, drawing and painting exercises help develop background learning and life skills. Background learning skills are spatial orientation, sense of weight, eye-hand-speech coordination, right/left dominance, the capacity to mirror, fine and gross motor skills, and midline integration. Life skills are skills like creativity, assertiveness in problem-solving, self-awareness or interpersonal skills.

Main lesson blocks

Source: Trostli Roberto, Main lesson block teaching in the Waldorf school, questions and considerations, retrieved from the Waldorf library website: scan QR.



Teaching in main lesson blocks has become one of the most successful and distinguishing features of Steiner Waldorf education. The main lesson is a two-hour class during which a single academic subject (except for foreign languages) is taught every day for a period of three to six weeks. This structure allows teachers to cover the curriculum intensively and economically, and it provides the pupils with the fullest possi-

ble immersion in a subject. The pupils' experience of the subject is further deepened by allowing the subject to "go to sleep," before being "reawakened" later in the year or in the following year. Through this process of forgetting and remembering, pupils return to a subject with new interest and new insights. The time between the main lesson blocks in a subject allows pupils' concepts to develop gradually and to mature. Knowledge needs time to take root, blossom and bear fruit. The main lesson block ensures that pupils have sufficient time to experience a living process of learning.

Main lesson books

Source: formulated for the purpose of this book

In the Waldorf approach, main lesson books are the blank page books where pupils record their learning. They create their own book of what they learn during each 3 to 6 week main lesson block, and this book replaces a textbook and worksheets, making it more alive, personalised and possible to weave arts into learning.

Portfolio

Source: Rawson, M. (2021). A glossary of terms relating to assessment. Retrieved from Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. Resources website: scan QR.



A portfolio is a purposeful collection of samples of pupil work, pupil self-assessments and meta-level reflections. Portfolios can be used for assessment. They can contain texts (including first drafts for comparison), photographs of work, mind maps and graphic organisers, journal entries, evidence of corrections. The key principles of a portfolio are that the learner selects work they want to be representative of their achievements and perhaps justifies their choice, and the portfolio shows process as well as final outcomes. Portfolios can be judged according to a range of criteria relating to content, form, presentation, impact and uniqueness. They help pupils recognize and understand their own progress and support their self-learning, as well being a useful way to display work. Texts written about the contents tell stories about their origins and developments.



PART ONE

ENTERING

SCHOOL



1

Step-by-Step: Starting Assessment Early to Support Learning (Romania)

Many questions can structure discussions of assessment - for example, what to assess or how to assess or why assessment is required - and the narrative below responds to the major question of when: when in a child's education are key moments for assessment in order to enhance learning processes (and not only to measure expected outcomes) for diverse pupils, and how can this be related to the unfolding of each child's unique potential?

Different answers to these questions are reflected in varied educational systems and practices. The assessment practices that will be described here unequivocally support the view that learning goes hand in hand with assessment that supports learning, and that therefore the two should begin together. This practice embodies pedagogy that is friendly to young children's unfolding capacities and does not seek to impose the strait-jacket of a grading system. It is heartening that such children-friendly assessment has been adopted on a national level in Romania through a constructive engagement with the national curriculum, even though the curriculum is squarely based on assigning grades. A national non-governmental organisation for early childhood development is responsible for this achievement through a combination of nurturant pedagogy and strategic engagement with key actors associated with the national curriculum.

The Organisation

Romania's Step by Step Centre for Education and Professional Development (CEPD) featured in the news in the summer of 2020 when "early childhood education and care" was included in the National Defence Strategy of Romania, under the presidential programme Educated Romania, formulated to identify key national priorities in the

context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the related economic crisis. Such a high visibility and strong national profile - arising out of the play activities of very young children around Romania - would generate envy amongst early childhood professionals in many countries around the world.

An early childhood organisation that is now around a quarter century old, Step by Step CEPD began as an early childhood programme called Head Start at the Soros Foundation in the capital city of Bucharest. In 1994, some ten such kindergartens flourished around the country, so much so that in one town - located near the Black Sea - parents of the children in the Step by Step kindergarten asked if the approach could be extended to the initial classrooms in primary school. The kindergarten differed from traditional kindergartens that were focused on early exposure to books, and instead children developed abilities and skills through play that centred around a variety of materials. Parents found that such an environment encouraged sociability and cooperation amongst their children as well as strong wider development that included good early academic skills. They wished that these rich patterns of learning would unfold further in primary school rather than be suppressed by conventional approaches to education.

The first two primary school classrooms opened in 1995, and what they demonstrated stimulated wider demand by parents of children in the programme's kindergartens around the country. At first, funds from the Soros Foundation were available for furniture and materials oriented to learning through play - furniture very different from that in traditional kindergartens in that they were at the height where children could help themselves to materials on shelves, for example - and notably for training a second teacher (whereas conventionally only a single teacher was present). Subsequently, newly established classrooms had to sustain themselves financially, and parents, local communities, local investors and local governments rose to the challenge. For example, government funding for pre-primary education could be used and this helped to cover the costs of furniture. Today 723 primary school classrooms across 142 schools testify to the success of such concerted efforts.

IDENTITY CARD #1

Name of practice Step-by-Step: Starting Assessment Early to Support Learning (Romania)

Type of Assessment **Ipsative** assessment: each child is accompanied from the start along a personal learning experience, during which parents are included as companions by the school (thus **collaborative** assessment as well). **Self**-assessment: with very young children encouraged to reflect on their work in the company of their peers, who respond (**peer**-assessment). **Formative** assessment: provides continuing support, that is summarised through descriptions in the Evaluation Notebook which are presented as **summative** assessment.

Category Practice developed for pre-kindergarten through primary school. The underlying logic could well be extended to secondary school.

Field All subjects from early years, learning through primary school, addressed in a highly integrated way

Age group	6 through 10 years	ISCED 1
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School	142 schools across the country	The 142 schools are under the umbrella of a national non-governmental organisation, the Step by Step Centre for Education and Professional Development (CEPD)
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Country Romania

Executive Director and Programme Director	Carmen Lica, Executive Director, CEPD, and Adriana Dobritoiu, Programme Director for primary schools	Both have been closely involved in developing the practice over a quarter century, from the first two classrooms in the mid-1990s to 723 primary school classrooms today.
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Values

Contextualised: learning takes place through play with various materials and in different outdoor settings, embedded in a sense of place and belonging.

Individualised: learning and assessment are tailored to the personal development of each child.

Participatory: Children are encouraged to be active in their education and self-education, both at school and at home where their parents are kept well-informed.

Timeline and preparation

Learning and assessment are so closely integrated that they share a timeline and preparatory periods

Form of documentation	<p>Documenting learning and assessment is simultaneous and ongoing, from teachers' notes on sheets of paper with children's artwork, through teachers' notebooks and folders and regular written communication with parents</p>	<p>The insights from such ongoing documentation are distilled into the official Evaluation Notebooks.</p>
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Implementation of outcomes

Evaluation Notebooks determine whether a child goes to the next year of school, and then at the end of primary school to secondary school, and across Romania this is determined by grades under the headings listed. The Step by Step programme is distinctive in filling in a descriptive assessment under each heading.

Going beyond the financial dimension, from the earliest stages of the process just described, a senior figure in the Step by Step programme - Elena Mihai - who had no formal early childhood training was fully involved in programme activities. She developed extensive networks and related influence, and from the word go she reached out to school principals and educational officials in local governments around the country, thereby building a strong support system in traditional schools rather than generating rivalry and antagonism. This strategic and persuasive approach has continued subsequently and has taken the programme to its present strength.

Already in 1998, the early childhood programme Head Start at the Soros Foundation had evolved into an independent national non-governmental organization, what is now Step by Step CEPD, Romania. The International Step by Step Association (ISSA) unites such national organisations through the shared child-centred pedagogy outlined above as well as through an emphasis on social justice that asserts the equal



rights of all young children to education and care that can enable them to flourish in the face of any form of discrimination. The leaders of Step by Step CEPD, who will be introduced below, say very clearly that they represent one adaptation of the shared Step by Step pedagogy to a particular context, which cannot easily be compared since contexts vary so much, even between neighbouring countries.

The Executive Director and the Programme Director for Primary Schools

Carmen Lica who is the executive director and Adriana Dobritoiu, the programme director for primary schools, constitute an effective team with their complementary personalities and strengths. Both grew up in Bucharest and studied psychology at the university there, taking a special interest in child psychology, and noting the importance of the early years of life in shaping fulfilment in adulthood. While still at university, they began working in the Step by Step programme of the Soros Foundation, Carmen in 1994 and Adriana a year later, exactly when primary school classrooms were emerging out of Step by Step kindergartens with support from parents and local groups, as described above. They have thus accompanied the expansion from two to seven hundred primary school classrooms, and have shaped this through their generative roles within Step by Step CEPD. Their work resonates closely with ISSA's wider philosophy and pedagogy, encouraged by the courses that were central to their professional development: courses on child-centred learning at Georgetown University in the USA as well as many of those organised by ISSA across member organisations and countries, for example courses on early childhood and social justice held in Turkey, and the training of trainers in cooperative learning that brought ISSA members together in Ukraine.

The Practice

Considerable attention is paid to children's transition into school and even more can be learned if we address *continuity* as well - for example, how strengths in early childhood education and care can be carried forward into the first years of school, especially in the sensitive area of assessment practices. As Mihaela Ionescu, who is ISSA's programme director, muses in a personal communication: "there might be a lot to be

learned actually from the early years in what regards assessment, as much of it is based on formative assessment, documentation, reflection, leading to individual planning, a luxury that primary and secondary teachers cannot afford sometimes, but which would honour children's development and progress."

The story of CEPD Step by Step takes further such a discussion, as a relatively rare example of how formative and personalised assessment from early childhood onwards can be recognised and integrated into mainstream national educational policies and practices. A description of the assessment approach follows, embedded in an account of how the present positive situation came about in Romania.

Carmen and Adriana speak of learning and assessment together, with learning as a continuous process, and with assessment constantly accompanying learning in order to support it, rather than to judge or to test the learner. Learning is the natural business of children and especially of very young children, and assessment must be ongoing to monitor whether a child is learning in a manner that best suits that particular child's orientations and trajectory. When a child is given a grade constituted by a single number or letter, relative to differential grades among peers, this contributes little to the child's learning and to learning by peers. Instead of a grade, a descriptive assessment helpfully makes transparent what is being learned and how, with specific details that the child, peers, teachers, other professionals and parents can grasp. Such an approach can also be extended inclusively to children with special needs, rather than isolating them because they may fall outside a scale of grades. The approach has also worked well within the multiple forms of religion practiced in Romania as well as for linguistic minority groups. Such assessment processes enable parents to follow and support their child's distinctive processes of learning. Across school and home, children are encouraged to see mistakes as opportunities to learn and not as moments for disapproval or censure.

When this form of assessment emerged within the first child-centred programme in primary schools in Romania, it presented a sharp contrast to the existing system based on conventional academic approaches and a strict adherence to grades. Yet Step by Step CEPD was able to gain recognition for its pedagogy within the national curriculum, while using personalised descriptions and not grades, and is the only non-

conventional pedagogical approach to be accepted in this way. Two central reasons for this success were:

- From the inception of the Step by Step programme, as described earlier, one hand of the programme refined early childhood pedagogy within the Romanian context whilst the other hand (represented by senior staff member Elena Mihai) worked untiringly to establish grassroots contact with school principals as well as officials responsible for education in local authorities, winning over as allies people who might otherwise have confronted the emergent alternative pedagogy. This positive engagement ran all the way up to the political apex: a president of the country visited one of the first primary classrooms near the Black Sea in the mid-1990s, and the thread of support has continued, including a second, more recent presidential visit in 2019 to a Step by Step primary school.
- A major investment was made in professional development, astutely re-training existing teaching staff rather than training new recruits as teachers who would have been seen as a rival cadre to those expounding the national curriculum. The new pedagogy was introduced into state schools instead of creating parallel structures. Step by Step classrooms were led by two teachers instead of one, thereby expanding employment opportunities within the profession and benefitting the conventional teaching workforce that might otherwise have been alienated by a successful different approach to teaching. Now that teachers in Step by Step classrooms are paid by the state, Step by Step Romania provides training events that are well organised by highly competent professionals from within the country and abroad. Training is also offered to school principals and relevant local government officials.

This reaching out to the conventional system and those within it was taken further by the conversation that the Step by Step pedagogy entered into with its traditional counterpart, by creating a meeting place of overlap rather than a hostile border. Step by Step advocates for a five-year primary school programme whereas the Romanian system used four - but then Step by Step added the pre-primary year to the four years and reshaped it, following the standard pattern of twenty-five children within a classroom, beginning at age 6 and going on to secondary school aged around 10 years.



Similar creativity in building bridges and not barriers was extended to the curriculum. Step by Step's curriculum for primary schools contrasted starkly with the national curriculum that stipulated precisely what conventional academic skills should be demonstrated at each age and stage within primary school. Instead, Step by Step encouraged open learning through play that was oriented to development as a person rather than treading a demanding path of academic progress. Knowledge integrated into everyday life, learning through observation of natural phenomena, grasping concepts through applying them and not by rote learning: all this could have appeared as antithetical to the national curriculum. Instead, Step by Step persuasively presented its pedagogy as an alternative way to meet the requirements of the national curriculum and not as a threatening alternative to it.

Various points of engagement were cultivated. Mathematics for example was not taught in the traditional manner, but it could be demonstrated that many activities in Step by Step classrooms as well as on excursions outside were mathematical in

their orientation: playing with measurements, or growing acquainted with numbers by gathering specified amounts of natural objects found outdoors and then increasing or decreasing these amounts as requested. Similarly, literacy could be exemplified by communicating with pictures when listening to texts, writing for fun with a variety of implements or making shopping lists at home with parents instead of conventional homework. Subject matter could be shared when parents and other knowledgeable people spoke in the classroom about their professions and hobbies, and when in the final grade of primary school the mayor or local councillors visited to give children a vivid impression of civic roles and citizenship. Creative materials used by children in various activities were classified according to disciplines to satisfy the requirements of the national curriculum.

Most importantly, a systematic record of assessment could be demonstrated in Step by Step primary schools. Self-assessment was the most important goal there, because it was felt that children should be encouraged to understand their individual patterns of learning, and so children were invited in small groups to talk about each one's special project, with a distinctive chair for the child who was speaking and with exceptions made for children who did not feel comfortable in such a chair. This process allowed scope for peer-assessment as well. Step by Step teachers appreciate the questions posed by children in these groups and more widely, in comparison with passive attitudes found within traditional pedagogy.

If learning is continuous, assessment to support learning should also be continuous, and teachers within these primary classrooms are continuously making notes about each child - on loose pages with children's work, in notebooks and folders, sometimes providing an overview on a single page of the differential development of all the children in a classroom around a single shared activity that can be shown to other school staff. Regular written communication with parents enables them to maintain pace with what their children are busy with in school, as well as with what lies ahead.

These various forms of written assessment are ultimately crystalised to fit into the appropriate spaces within the official printed Evaluation Notebooks for each child which are provided and required by the Inspectorate of Education. Other schools fill in grades within each space but Step by Step schools are allowed to fill in a written

assessment that is carefully based on the whole process that has preceded this, as described above. Such Evaluation Notebooks determine whether a child proceeds to the next level within primary school, and finally from primary to secondary school. Children in Step by Step primary schools generally advance steadily through the five years, and then with relative smoothness make the transition to secondary school. The process is facilitated by visits from teachers in the lower grades of local secondary schools and the principals of these schools to the upper grades of Step by Step primary schools, so that some acquaintance and familiarity develop before the transition. These visits are reciprocated by pupils in the final years of Step by Step primary schools to the initial classrooms of the secondary schools that will soon constitute their new daily learning environments.

The story must then continue with pupils who have made this transition now learning to work within a school setting where grades are the norm in assessment. That this shift takes place after ten years of life and learning is less damaging - Step by Step staff maintain - than if grades had been imposed earlier already within primary school.

Learning for Well-being

ISSA has long enjoyed a close and affirmative relationship with the Learning for Well-being Foundation, one of the three partners in the project that has generated the present publication. The assessment practices described therefore resonate vibrantly with Learning for Well-being's principles and its emphasis on certain core capacities.

The principle of *wholeness* emerges in encouraging a child's full ability to learn with the hand and heart as well as with the head, in contrast to grading systems that focus narrowly on cognitive development. Rather than pigeonhole children into groups that belong at various levels of grading, the *unique potential* of each child is nurtured as with the reference above to a particular child's orientations and trajectory. A natural extension is response to *inner diversity*, ensuring that a child is learning in a manner that best suits the specific orientations and trajectory. Due respect is paid to *relationships and processes*, beyond grading procedures that zero in on narrowly defined outcomes. Assessment that keeps parents closely informed and that includes sessions where individual young children reflect

aloud with their peers upholds *engaged participation* within a widely constituted learning community. A child's learning is thereby embedded in that wider community of class, school and home as *nested systems* which gradually extend even further when - in the later years of primary school - local government officials visit to introduce children informally to the further context of civic involvement. *Measuring what matters* thus begins from the start of formal learning, in all the ways just described.

Recounting Step by Step practice in learning and assessment has included the following descriptions:

Children developed abilities and skills through play that centred around a variety of materials. Parents found that such an environment encouraged sociability and cooperation amongst their children.

Open learning through play was oriented to developing as a person rather than treading a demanding path of academic progress. Knowledge integrated into everyday life, learning through observation of natural phenomena, grasping concepts through applying them and not by rote learning.


These are fertile learning environments and processes to foster the nine core capacities identified by Learning for Well-being: the capacities of relaxing, observing, listening, inquiring, embodying, empathising, reflecting, subtle sensing and discerning patterns.

Sources

Narrative by Shanti George, based on:

- *Interviews with Carmen Lica and Adriana Dobritoiu in February 2020*

Photographs courtesy of Step by Step Centre for Education and Professional Development, Romania



Kindergarten to School: A Holistic-Diagnostic Assessment (Croatia)

The holistic diagnostic assessment carried out at the Osnovna Waldorfska škola Rijeka is an example of how to transform the evaluation of a child's progress at one point in time into an opportunity to understand how the child learns and how best to support them in the crucial first years of school. The way the exercises are presented and carried out make it a constructive confidence building exercise and the knowledge that comes out of it is helpful for both teachers and parents. The greatest value of this method is the combination of the assessment itself with a thorough conversation with the parents and a personalised follow-up to increase the quality of understanding among carers and teachers for the child's developmental and learning needs.

The School

Osnovna Waldorfska škola Rijeka was founded by a group of parents and teachers in the fall of 2000. At the source of the project was the intention to offer education based on Steiner Waldorf principles and to entangle this with the needs of the local community.

The school benefited from the legalised *Croatian Waldorf school curriculum* initiated by the Waldorf school in Zagreb in 1999. This legal framework means, in practice, that Waldorf schools in Croatia are under very little if any observation by the state educational inspectorate agencies. The disadvantage that goes with it, however, is that they do not receive significant financial or institutional support from the state. The schools thus mainly depend on monthly tuition fees paid by parents. The number of pupils and

the parents' financial abilities had been unstable in the past and in some years caused important decreases in teachers' salaries and funds for project management and future planning. Today the school has 90 pupils from 6 to 15 years old, its income has gained stability, and they can invest energy into achieving public agreements with its partners on more rights for non-state non-profit schools in Croatia. The current challenge that the school is facing is to find a more suitable school building and schoolyard that would enable them to welcome more pupils and cover all secondary years.

In terms of assessment, this practice has proven effective over many years. It is not really part of a school-wide assessment policy as a lot of energy has been invested to keep the school alive, and only now, that it is more stable, are they really able to formalise aims and assessment methods.

The Teacher

Marinka's initial idea after school was to study physics and astrophysics at the University of Zagreb. Her plans changed and she decided to stay in Rijeka where the only way to study physics was to follow a teacher training course. During her studies, teaching physics at school did not attract her at all. Everything changed when she had children and discovered anthroposophy. She was in search of a different kind of school and the free schools of Rudolf Steiner corresponded with what she was looking for.

It was during the Croatian War of Independence that she felt the urge to create a Steiner Waldorf school in Rijeka. The context underlined that people can kill each other because of poor quality education, and she felt a sense of urgency. Marinka did a three year course to become a kindergarten teacher, and the kindergarten opened its doors in 1996, followed by the school four years later. Marinka was principal of the school until 2006 and is now a class teacher (class 1 to 8) and a counsellor in the school and the kindergarten. In the meantime, she also completed a masters course in Waldorf education at the Rudolf Steiner University College in Oslo. Aside from her role at the school, she is currently finishing a PhD in psychology at the University of Rijeka, and she takes part in the Waldorf Teacher Training in Zagreb as a mentor to students in observation, as a lecturer in mathematics and as a member of the organisational team.

IDENTITY CARD #2

Name of practice Kindergarten to School: A Holistic-Diagnostic Assessment

Type of Assessment **Ipsative:** looks at the child's development in relation to their biographical trajectory.
Diagnostic: the assessment provides a snapshot of the child's development at one point in time.
Formative: although not formative in the strict sense of the word, the fact that the assessment focuses so much on elements to support the learner in early years brings in a formative dimension. This assessment is part of ongoing formative assessments, including the class two diagnostic study.

Category School-wide practice for all children in the transition phase between kindergarten and primary school.

Field Sensomotoric development, sensomotoric profile, dominance and preferred learning style of the child.

Age group	Before class 1 and end of class 2, ISCED 0 and 1	Can be adapted for older children in primary education.
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School	Osnovna Waldorfska škola Rijeka	waldorf-rijeka.hr
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Country	Croatia	Rijeka
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Teacher	Marinka Špodnjak	Co-founder of the school and class teacher (class 1 to 8).
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Values **Contextualised:** children receive explanations of each exercise. Not the why but the what.
Individualised: the objective is to capture a holistic and personal picture of the child's development stage, senso-motoric profile and learning needs.
Participatory: dialogue with the parents is at the centre of this practice.

**Timeline and
preparation**

Class teachers carry out the diagnostic assessments for children in their last year of kindergarten between the Easter break and the summer holidays. Preparation for the actual assessment is no longer than any other traditional school entrance assessment but a good use of the outcomes requires more structure and continuity.

**Form of
documentation**

Oral and partly written

The assistant teacher takes notes during the assessment and the observations are discussed orally with the parents at the end.

**Implementation of
outcomes**

The observations made during the assessment serve as a guide for the class teacher to prepare the learning environment. It also serves as a confirmation that the child can join class 1 the following year. This is especially relevant for pupils who have their birthdays on the border between two school years.

The Practice

Marinka's search for a holistic diagnostic assessment for the transition from kindergarten to school was born out of the observation that many children had difficulties with movement, cognition and behaviour in the first two to three years of school. Further research on how she could help them led to the discovery of the impact of left and right dominance on attention, literacy and numeracy. This dominance question was her starting point. She discovered that a remarkable number of children have a dominant left eye for example, which implies that they intuitively do left-right mirroring of letters, numbers, words and pictures, a particularly high challenge for first graders learning mathematics, as numbers such as 15 and 51 are difficult for them to distinguish. This leads to confusion and somehow also influences the way the pupils hear and pay attention. If the teacher and parents are aware of this, however, they can adjust the teaching methods and explain to the child why they are perceiving things differently than others in the classroom. Left-eye dominance is sometimes referred to as soft dyslexia, but if adequate help is provided at the beginning, it often has no consequences in later years. Many other important features about the child's motor and sensory preferences influence children's perceptions and how they **think, feel, act** and **express** themselves, and these are crucial elements for the first months in school. As

Marinka explains, the first experiences at school can mark children for their entire schooling. At this age they are very sensitive to how "able" they feel and how they are perceived by parents and teachers. Consciousness of these technical characteristics therefore improves the learning experience and the development of self-confidence.



The current version of the assessment was introduced to teachers in the school of Rijeka in the school year 2004/2005. The method is based on a model developed in the Netherlands for second grade development observation¹, enriched with other sources in order to evaluate sensomotoric, dominance and learning style elements². The primary aim of the assessment is thus twofold: acquire knowledge about the child and evaluate whether the school is ready to welcome the pupil in the class 1 group. The focus during the assessment is not on whether the children are able or not to do the exercises, but on the opportunity they offer to better understand how to help them overcome their challenges in the early years. According to the sensomotoric profiles, the teachers can decide on how to arrange the classroom, who sits where³, organise further diagnosis if necessary and design personalised support, for example including body-speech exercises, brain gym or curative eurythmy.

Another important objective of the assessment is to connect with the parents and give them a better picture of how their child learns as well as trust in the knowledge of the school. Children take the assessment in their last kindergarten year (between five and six years), before entering class 1. Ideally, the assessment should be repeated at the end of class 2. As Marinka explains, repeating it in class 2 is beneficial to refresh the teacher's understanding of the child as well as refine and complete observations about dominance questions, which are sometimes not yet complete at the age of six or six and a half. This second round of the assessment is not yet obligatory at the school but Marinka is working on making it systematic.

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- 1 Second Grade Development Observation and Assessment: Background and Manual of the Advisory to the Waldorf Schools of Holland
 - 2 The main sources of inspiration for these additions are: Carla Hannaford: "Smart Moves: Why Learning Is Not All in Your Head" and "The Dominance Factor: How Knowing Your Dominant Eye, Ear, Brain, Hand, & Foot Can Improve Your Learning", Barbara Meister Vitale: "Unicorns Are Real: A Right-Brained Approach to Learning", Audrey E. McAllen: "The Extra Lesson. Movement, Drawing and Painting Exercises to Help Children with Difficulties in Writing, Reading and Arithmetic".
 - 3 For instance a child with right ear dominance is best seated on the right side of the class, children with a challenging eye dominance should be at the front for better visual focus.



“My oldest daughter Emma took the diagnostic assessment when she was six. Both my daughter and I remember it as a fun experience. The atmosphere was light, it was more like a game and Emma learned about herself. For example, Marinka explained that Emma has a visual memory, and when she is subject to stress she panics and stops thinking. I knew most of what was shared but I was not consciously aware of it all, and I can confirm six years later that all of the observations were accurate. I believe this method is definitely positive, and I even bought one of the reference books to understand more about dominance questions myself.”

— Ana, mother of 3 children (1, 4 and 12 years old)



The entire process around this diagnostic assessment includes three big stages: the assessment itself, the conversation with the parents, and the personalised follow-up that can include further diagnosis and support strategies. On the day of the assessment, the first two stages are carried out and last about one hour in total, starting with 20-30 minutes of simple and varied exercises with the child. These exercises go from imitating a shape the teacher has drawn on a piece of paper, to listening to the sound of a watch or drawing something of their own choice. Two teachers are present, one to work with the child and the other one to take notes of the observations. The guiding teacher introduces each activity to the child by inviting them to participate in a playful and relaxed way, and by connecting with the child’s life¹. Parents are invited in the room from the beginning, which often helps the child feel comfortable. As there is no right or wrong answer, children are not interrupted or “corrected” at any point. This is a key difference with traditional maturity tests carried out in state schools in Croatia, where children are regularly stopped in the middle of their exercise to redirect them towards the result expected by the teacher. At the Rijeka Waldorf school, the children are encouraged throughout the process and Marinka explains that they almost always cooperate with enthusiasm. Some families who have had bad experiences in other schools arrive nervous, but very soon become comfortable thanks to the reassuring

1 For example, if they want the child to express themselves, they might ask about what the child has done with their parents during the holidays.

context. Only highly autistic children or some with strong difficulties to concentrate show discomfort occasionally.



“I am 54 years old and still remember my own maturity test in a state school. It was a stressful experience and I have vivid memories of misunderstanding the instructions, and being told by the teacher that I had to copy the drawing on the instruction sheet and not add anything personal. My oldest son also took a state maturity test and although he received a positive “result”, he was pushed to hurry through it. Tina, my youngest daughter, did the diagnostic assessment at the Waldorf school with Marinka, and the contrast was striking. Tina enjoyed the exercises and felt ready for them. She felt competent and fulfilled and even wanted it to go on for longer. As for me, I had not received much information about it beforehand and was surprised to discover so many things about my child. It was very useful to discover that she has a dominant left ear, verbal intelligence and a need for precision. I could feel that the teachers were genuinely interested in the child and her whole being. The follow-up contacts with the teacher were also very helpful to address my daughter’s challenge to verbalise what she wants in a balanced way.”

— *Nada, mother of four children attending the Waldorf school in Rijeka*



The first part of the assessment is based on the Dutch second grade assessment for gaining a broad developmental picture of the child and their sensorimotor dominance. Of course this is a snapshot at one point in time, which is another reason not to focus on results but rather on the process. After the exercises on development and dominance, the assessment focuses on brain-half dominance. This is an addition to the original, and Marinka feels it gives the teacher valuable information on the child’s learning needs, and it allows to combine the analysis of motorics and perception (brain and other dominance). According to her, mainstream schooling is very comfortable for left hemisphere dominant pupils, but there is not enough space for recognition and adaptation to right hemisphere dominant students. In very general terms, right hemisphere dominance often translates into high intuition, perceiving elements as one, low interest in numbers and letters and being challenged by analytical tasks. These pupils

are as intelligent and as capable as others, but need to be approached by other means. Waldorf methods are designed to be suitable for all, including right hemisphere children. To illustrate the implications of different motoric and perception combinations, Marinka mentions that a combination of left brain and right leg dominance can help understand an ability to easily feel secure and make steps in life, whereas opposite leg and brain dominance can be associated with higher insecurity.

Unlike the sensorimotor profile, brain dominance is not always as easy to define. There is a lot of research on new ways of defining this, including neurological elements and connections between behaviour, perception and expression. Marinka approaches this question through questions on the child's behaviour in combination with a simple kinesiology test. It is important to mention that the objective is not to put a child in a box but to better understand them and adapt the content of classes. Moreover, flexibility and good connection between the two is essential and brain gym or curative eurythmy can sometimes dissolve the invisible axes in young children when it is still time to do so.

The next stage is to discuss the observations thoroughly with the parents. The discussion includes information and indications to help the parents understand their child's behaviour and find strategies to best support their development at home, based on the specific sensorimotor and perception combinations. The decision regarding the start of school for children whose birthdays are on the border between two school years is integrated naturally into the conversation and is often well received. This evaluation is based on whether they have sufficiently strong foundations physically, emotionally and cognitively to have a positive learning experience, on social considerations such as whether the child's circle of friends is starting school in the same year or not, and whether the group is balanced and can welcome that particular child. For parents who have children with challenges this conversation can truly be a relief as it offers explanations and concrete ways to tackle them. All adults involved are reminded that the sensorimotor profile and learning style is only one window through which the child expresses themselves. The pupil stays in the room during the conversation, with a drawing task. Some children listen, but often they are comfortable enough to concentrate on their own work. If the teachers feel the conversation could disturb the child, then one teacher stays with the child and the other talks to the parents. No written report is delivered to parents after the meeting but they are free to take notes during the conversation.



"I experienced the state maturity test with my first daughter and it was a big disappointment. The parents were not allowed inside the classroom, and my daughter was judged as disobedient because she wanted more time to finish the last exercise. This questioned me on what the teacher valued and on the space they gave to the child's will. At the Waldorf school with Marinka, my husband and I were welcome to participate in the diagnostic assessment and we learned a lot of new things. I particularly appreciated the way Marinka put my daughter's "difficult" character into perspective, by saying that although working with her is challenging it will give us more strength in life. When my son took the test I was also teaching at the school. This time there were fewer surprises as I was a parent and a teacher. As a parent this assessment changed the way I helped my children learn, and more importantly, gave me the confidence that everything would turn out fine for them, that I could trust their rhythm of development.

As a teacher I observed that sometimes the presence of parents can bring confusion if they intervene in the process or if the child looks for their help in a moment of insecurity. A good way to overcome this challenge would be to explain the meaning of the exercises to parents beforehand as well as more information on the Waldorf pedagogical principles."

— Sandra, mother of two children (12 and 9) attending the Waldorf school in Rijeka



Marinka and other teachers in the school have been practising this method since 2005. After 15 years of experience she believes that this practice is extremely valuable and has reached its objectives. Children experience it positively and benefit from more personalised help and it is very valuable for teachers and parents. It also contributes to school development, in a pedagogical sense, but also because parents often appreciate and understand more about Waldorf schools after the assessment, and in many cases it influences their decision to enroll their child. The success of the method highly depends on the readiness of teachers to learn and implement the teachings of the assessment in their classrooms. Possible limitations are linked to how it is implemented and whether the school is mature enough to organise and structure continuity. Moreover, in periods when the school is going through an existential crisis it is not always possible to keep it up.



“My first daughter Dora started school in a state school. She was an excellent student but we could feel that she was worried about all the tests she had to do and that she was pulled out of her childhood. She was developing knowledge, but there was too little space for her personality and creativity. We were very happy when we found the Waldorf school where both daughters took the diagnostic assessment before starting in their new classes (Dora was nine but the teachers still wanted to get to know her this way). Dora was reserved at the beginning as she thought she had to “score” like at her old school. Very quickly she realised she could show who she was and relaxed. Karli who had experienced the state school maturity test beforehand was wondering whether she would be graded, but also put her guard down fairly quickly and eventually came out happy. My husband Tomislav and I appreciated that Marinka explained the meaning of children’s actions in the exercises. We knew our girls well, but it was reassuring to hear someone speak about them without judging (state school teachers had labelled Dora as “shy” and “antisocial”), and taking their whole being into account. It gave us confidence to talk about our children to others and in the fact that there is nothing to “change” about them. I am so grateful for this school as I see that my children are blooming and are satisfied with their school life.”

— *Ivana, mother of two children attending the Waldorf school in Rijeka*



Sources

Narrative by Ilona de Haas, based on:

- *An interview with Marinka Špodnjak in May 2020*
- *Four short interviews with Ivana, Sandra, Nada and Ana (parents at the school) in May 2020*

As well as:

- *Osnovna waldorfska škola Rijeka. Multiple pages. waldorf-rijeka.hr.*

Photographs courtesy of Mercédesz Skoda



PART TWO

PRIMARY

SCHOOL







Hand in Hand: Cooperation Between a Teacher and Parents in Assessment (Hungary)

The idea of collaborating with parents on assessment comes from recognising the fact that parents are the primary caretakers and co-educators of the child, and they can be the teacher's most trustful allies and partners. By sharing their observations, experiences and feelings of the child they can offer meaningful insights for the teacher and together they can work effectively for the highest good of the child. This is what Krisztián Freigang has utilised in his assessment practice, the elements of which include a classroom observation by the parents and a parent-teacher conference.

The School

The Gödöllő Waldorf School is located in Gödöllő, a town near Budapest, the capital of Hungary. Today it serves about 200 pupils from 1st to 8th grade. It is one of the first Waldorf schools in the country, founded in 1990, right after the political regime's change had opened up the opportunity for alternative free education. In the 1990s the school gained popularity in the region, attracting families who were looking for different education for their children.

With the power of a community made up of ambitious and open-minded teachers and supporting parents, the school could grow and prosper, albeit through cycles of ups and downs. After finding a suitable building and transforming it from an operating factory into a proper school building with a safe yard and a blooming garden, in 1999 it started offering secondary education as well. Teaching the upper grades brought additional challenges, because, compared to traditional secondary education, it required creative, out-of-the-box methods. For example, with the introduction of a

specific main lesson (the so-called 'Experimental Lesson', reflecting the fact that initially it was introduced as an experiment) mixed-age groups of students could delve into different topics of their choice in an interdisciplinary approach, gaining more in-depth knowledge and life experience than a conventional classroom could possibly offer.

In 2013 the school had to give up the upper grades, which was a painful decision for the community, but, once again, it could recover from the situation and found new possibilities to expand and deepen Waldorf-pedagogy for the benefit of the students. The new challenge which the school had to address was that children had started coming to school more and more 'awakened', with a strong intellect, but with a weaker will and poor imagination. An increasing number of pupils were facing learning difficulties, behavioural disorders and other imbalances or impediments. This is felt to be the impact of the modern world: the hectic lifestyle, lack of activities, disconnection from nature and early exposure to technology. Over time it became apparent that the needs of these children cannot be met in a classroom: in order to rebalance them, the new direction of education should be one based on activity, including art, farming and gardening, crafts and handwork, as well as other meaningful activities, both in- and outdoors. Pedagogically it meant a shift towards curative education, which, according to Rudolf Steiner, is the deepening of Steiner Waldorf education.

The vision of the Gödöllő Waldorf School is to grow into an 'urban farm school', with a working school garden that not only offers students healthy and meaningful outdoor activities and a strong connection with nature, but also caters to the school kitchen, where the fruit of the gardeners' labour would be prepared and served to nurture the children themselves.

IDENTITY CARD #3

Name of practice	Hand in Hand: Cooperation Between a Teacher and Parents in Assessment	
Type of Assessment	<p>Formative: The teacher is monitoring the ongoing learning process of his pupils both individually and collectively, and according to his findings, makes adjustments to his teaching process and supports the child.</p> <p>Ipsative: The child's skills, attitude and achievement is assessed against their prior performance (end of the previous school year).</p> <p>Collaborative: Assessment happens with the parents who share their experiences, observations and insights, creating a more complete picture of the child.</p>	
Category	Practice suitable for lower classes	Adaptation possible for higher classes
Field	The practice covers all school subjects	Holistic assessment where attitudes, skills, learning methods, interpersonal relationships, etc. are also being assessed.
Age group	Class 3 (9-10 years) ISCED 1	This practice can be used in different age groups, possibly with adjustments in higher classes (the focus shifting from dialogues with parents towards self- and peer assessment).
School	Gödöllői Waldorf Általános Iskola és Alapfokú Művészeti Iskola	Hereinafter referred to as Gödöllő Waldorf School. waldorf-godollo.hu
Country	Hungary	
Teacher	Krisztián Freigang	Class teacher (guiding his class from 1st through 8th grade and teaching most subjects).
Values	<p>Contextualised: Assessment happens during (and after) a school day.</p> <p>Individualised: The skills, attitudes and progress of the child is assessed on an individual basis.</p> <p>Participatory: The assessment takes place with the participation of the parents.</p>	

Timeline and Preparation	Approx. 1-2 hours/child for the teacher to review his notes and the pupil's main lesson books, drawings and other works	The overall timescale is hard to estimate as assessment happens on an ongoing basis, and it involves observing, taking notes, consulting with subject teachers and discussing it with the parents.
Form of documentation	Written	Besides the notes of the teacher, the findings of the assessment get included in the end-of-year school report and serve as an interim reference point.
Implementation of outcomes	No certification given at this point, see above.	

The Teacher

It was this inspiring atmosphere, fresh approach, highly trained teachers' college and supporting parental community that attracted Krisztián to this school and made him apply to a class teacher's position when the opportunity arose.

After graduating from a nautical school, he went to university and studied information technology. He worked as an IT specialist at a multinational company for 18 years, but in the last couple of years he was searching for 'escape routes'. Through his children, he had been in touch with Waldorf pedagogy for thirteen years, as a consequence of which he immersed himself in many accompanying fields, like biodynamic farming, healing, painting, and astronomy. It was from a desire to organise this diverse knowledge that he started the Waldorf teacher training course. Although he had a public teacher's qualification, he had never thought of becoming a teacher, until fellow parents with younger children started to ask whether he would consider taking a class.

He started working as a class teacher in 2015 in the Kecskemét Waldorf School, a smaller scale school in a town in central Hungary. Much as he enjoyed working with the children there, it soon became apparent that he had to move to Gödöllő for personal reasons. Although, due to its stable teachers' college, it is quite rare for the Gödöllő Waldorf School to have an open class teacher's position, by a stroke of luck Krisztián was welcomed at the school from September 2017.

Every time he started to work with a new class, the most critical and difficult thing for him was to build a community. In his current class he also had to be very firm and decisive to establish his authority. Although rules, routines and rhythm are very important for the children, he gives them space to maintain their freedom, to have their opinion and their own ways of doing things.

For him, it is of great importance to constantly change the way of teaching and bring in new things, in order to avoid acting out of habit. He is constantly observing the children, both individually and collectively, and tries to adapt his activities and methods according to these observations. For him one of the most valuable takeaways from

curative pedagogy would be that it is important to observe the child without making any judgment, giving labels or jumping to conclusions. The role of the educator is not to search for answers to different symptoms, but simply to get to know and understand the child.

One of the first things he observed is that the children in his class had needs for movement that are hard to meet. They usually arrive at the school by car, which has an adverse effect on the way they are present in the classroom, and on how they act, interact and learn. As a result, he introduced a new routine for starting the school day: in the morning the class gathers at a meeting point outside the school (e.g. a nearby park, with the distance increasing year by year) and they walk together to the school. On the way to the school, the children have time to reconnect and socialise with each other; they have space to run, jump, let off steam; and they can connect with nature and observe its seasonal changes. As they get close to the school, Krisztián takes the opportunity to link the walk with what he finds necessary to practice: if they find a fallen tree trunk on the side of the road, they do some balancing exercises, or maybe they approach the schoolyard jumping and reciting the multiplication table (sometimes in English or German). When the children finally enter the school building, they *arrive* in the broadest sense of the word and are ready to immerse themselves in learning.

As Krisztián had shared with the colleagues how beneficial this practice proved to be on the pupils, other lower-class teachers have also introduced the walking into their morning rhythm, and also upper-class teachers often start the day outside.

Another example of the new things Krisztián introduced in this school is the mid-year assessment practice with the involvement of parents.

This practice was not invented by him, but he experienced its original version as a parent at the Kecskemét Waldorf School. As a parent he found it empowering, and later on he found that involving parents into the assessment process has many benefits for the teacher as well.



The Practice

In Steiner Waldorf schools pupils (and parents) receive a comprehensive, individualised and qualitative written report at the end of the school year. There is also a state-required mid-term report, but since it operates with preformulated texts, it does not serve the purposes of assessment that Waldorf schools are trying to achieve. Since neither the thought of a generalised report nor the lack of any feedback appealed to Krisztián, he opted for a third alternative. He decided to involve parents in the process, so that they can experience first hand what happens in the school, to make sure they are on board and to develop a strong partnership with them. Waldorf schools strongly build on parents. Since they are partners as the child's educators, teachers and parents are supposed to engage in a collaborative relationship. It is their shared interest that the children thrive in the school, and through good education reach their full potential.

This practice has two parts: a classroom observation by the parents and a parent-teacher conference. The **classroom observation** means that the parents participate in the life of the class for a full day, one set of parents per day. As Krisztián wishes to have one or two 'parent-free' days a week, with 30 students in the class the whole process takes about ten weeks. The advantage of the long span of time is that the teacher and the pupils get used to outsiders being present and to being observed, they feel relaxed and being in a safe space, where they can be themselves. This eliminates the

possible distorting effect of observation, where the people being observed behave at their best, not as they would normally do. On the other hand, the disadvantage of the length of the process is that it cannot be applied more often, although the teacher and some parents would prefer to repeat it on a quarterly basis.

The classroom observation, despite its name, begins in the park, where the class meets every morning. The parents bring their child to Krisztián, who welcomes all of them, then the parents take the observer's position in the background. The children are fully aware that now they belong to the class and act accordingly, never wanting to walk with their parents instead.

They walk together to the school and the class goes about its day. The tables in the classroom are arranged in groups to facilitate group work, collaboration and social interaction. The observers sit on chairs in the background. They join the class during outdoor classes and for lunch as well.

This practice gives parents some insights, in particular into their child's social behaviour, into their place in the community, their participation and engagement both inside and outside the classroom, and also, into their well-being. This is really valuable information for the parents, and one of the main points they mentioned when asked how this practice was helpful for them.

The school day having ended, Krisztián and the parents engage in a **teacher-parents conference**. First, they go through the child's main lesson books, exercise books, drawings, paintings, and other works or pieces of art that the child made in the last half-year. Krisztián adds his comments and remarks on them and discusses the child's progress, development, participation, behaviour and relationships with peers and teachers. As he attends all the classes, he has a broad overview of the child's progress even in subjects not taught by himself, e.g. music and languages.

It is the previous year's end-of-school report and the Extra Lesson assessment at the beginning of the school year that serve as a reference point for the assessment. In the Gödöllő Waldorf School, at the beginning of years 1-4 and 6, all pupils receive an individual Extra Lesson assessment. In the first year it focuses on movement development

and sensorimotor integration, while, from grade 2 onwards it involves math, reading, writing and learning screening as well. The results of these assessments give valuable information to the teacher, who can adapt the learning environment and class activities according to them, and, for those students who need additional support, Extra Lesson classes are offered.

During his conference with the parents Krisztián reviews how the child has progressed compared to the above-mentioned reference points and together they discuss what changes might be needed. It may be alterations in the routine of the child, or he may suggest individual educational support, e.g. art therapy, therapeutic eurythmy, or Extra Lesson classes.



The parents are free to ask questions about their child, the class, the school day they had just observed, about learning contents and methods, etc. They also have the opportunity to share whatever they think is relevant for the teacher or could affect the child's behaviour or learning. After all, the teacher and the parents together form the environment of the child, which is of key importance to the child's well-being, and to be able to unfold their unique innate capacity and potential.

The teacher-parents conference itself usually lasts about half an hour. The length of the preparation phase is difficult to estimate because Krisztián takes extensive notes on an ongoing basis. He adds a note whenever he gets some new information about a pupil, when he or the parent makes a commitment concerning the child or when he, quite unusually, asks something from the parents. He also has a notebook where he keeps a record of each child. At the end of the school year, he has a class discussion with the Extra Lesson teacher and the subject teachers where they look back on each child, and he records his colleagues' inputs about each pupil. When a child is subject to a child study, he takes notes of the observations and suggestions of the fellow teachers. These notes and the end-of-school reports, which he had written based on the previous year's notes, make up a comprehensive portfolio of each child's progress. When preparing for a teacher-parents conference, Krisztián reviews all of these.

Krisztián has been practising this assessment method for five years. It helps him to evaluate where a particular child or the class as a whole is, to find support for those who need it and to select teaching methods and plan activities that are suitable for all the pupils. Involving the parents allows him to get a more complete picture of the children, to create a sense of partnership, to share a common understanding, and to strengthen parents' trust in the school, in himself and his methods. He likes this practice because it helps him get closer to and understand the individual child. He sees that the aim is not to change the child but to remove the obstacles from their individual path.

This practice is well received by children, other teachers and parents as well. For the children, it is a beneficial experience to see their parents and teacher working together as partners. It gives them a sense of wholeness and well-being, building trust that whatever is happening to them in school is for their benefit. The College of Teachers has acknowledged the values of the practice and encourages all class teachers in



lower grades to apply this particular assessment method, although not all are ready to engage in it, the process being very time-consuming. Parents welcome the procedure, having good feelings about it and thinking it is indeed a good practice. They find that due to the classroom observation and the teacher-parents conference they learn new things about their children and it helps to understand them. It gives a sense of empowerment to be able to discuss the possible issues with the class teacher and to search for resolutions together. As one of the mothers put it: "Through this practice, I can glimpse into a process that I'm trusting to be good. I love that this discussion is all about my daughter, about her little life. Every time I feel reassured that she is in the right place."

Sources

Narrative by Cecília Skarka, based on:

- *An interview with Krisztián Freigang in March 2020*

Photographs courtesy of Mercédesz Skoda

Laterna Magica: The Magic of Interweaving Standardised and Formative Assessment (The Netherlands)

An innovative school in the Netherlands creatively tries to align ongoing personalised assessment - to guide the learning path of each pupil - with the periodic standardised testing required by the national Inspectorate of Education. The school has achieved significant success with this. Rich processes of assessment apply to academic subjects as well as to experiential learning through gardening, animal care, cooking and other activities. A portfolio is maintained by every pupil supported by a personal coach, and other school staff and parents have relatively easy access to the portfolio.

The School

This approach to assessment was described in August 2020 by Annette van Valkenoged, the director of the Laterna Magica school for its first fourteen years, which was the period when the school emerged within a new neighbourhood of Amsterdam. The name of the school derives from the 'magic lantern', an early form of image projector that was developed three centuries ago and was used for education in the nineteenth century, later to be mass produced as a toy. An old magic lantern sat on a shelf in Annette's office, to symbolise how a school should provide children with similar opportunities to gaze with wonder at the world and to explore it guided by their curiosity.

Laterna Magica is a success story, because the Inspectorate of Education has - gradually - come to recognise that the school's unconventional education is excellent, as is now officially declared. Parents had assessed the school as such from long before

the authorities did, and the school population grew rapidly, until it now numbers some nine hundred pupils from infants to age twelve. The pupils are possibly the best ambassadors of the school, not least in their lively and animated body language which contrasts with more passive pupil demeanour in many conventional schools. Pupils are able to describe the pedagogy effectively, as can be seen in the short film with which the school was presented as a case of exemplary practice around school leadership, at the Unfolding Conference held at the educational think tank Nivoz in the spring of 2017 (this film with English subtitles is on the school website, scan QR). Pupils can also comment on the difference between their school and others, and explain why their peers elsewhere should benefit from an education similar to theirs, as in another short film made by the Children's Correspondent (this film and others in Dutch are also on the school website).



The Director of the School (until recently)

Annette was closely involved in the establishment of Laterna Magica. Some thirteen years before the school began, she completed teacher training and embarked on her first job, in the city of Almere in a state primary school, where children of long-standing residents mingled uneasily with peers from increasing immigrant populations. Low motivation for study characterised most children in the school, across these different backgrounds. Annette experimented successfully with running her classroom as a restaurant in order to teach a range of skills. Later she was acting director of the school and subsequently director, at which point she literally knocked down a wall to create an open space from which to manage the school in collaboration with her colleagues and not from a hierarchical position above them. Her innovations found approval with the authorities in immediate charge, but senior local government officials were not supportive.

As a result, Annette moved to the smaller city of Zwolle, in response to a search for a suitable person to start a different kind of school. National debates on education now favoured broad rather than narrow approaches to schooling, and the new school there was to be oriented towards children as protagonists of their own education.

IDENTITY CARD #4

Name of practice	Laterna Magica: The Magic of Interweaving Standardised and Formative Assessment	
Type of assessment	<p>Ipsative: each pupil's development is keenly followed, accompanied by a coach.</p> <p>Formative: there is close support for personal development paths, from early childhood onwards to the end of primary school.</p> <p>Self-assessment is encouraged as an ongoing process, as is peer-assessment.</p> <p>Collaborative: the different perspectives of pupil, coach and parents are woven together.</p> <p>Summative: standardised tests are sensitively integrated in response to the Inspectorate's requirements.</p>	
Category	School-wide practice suitable for various subjects and age groups	
Field	All subjects	This rich process of assessment applies to academic subjects as well as to experiential learning (gardening, animal care, cooking, etc.).
Age group	All age groups from early childhood until the end of primary school, ISCED 0, 1 and 2	The essential principles of assessment are adapted to different age groups within three main categories – birth to age three, three to seven years and seven to twelve years.
School	Laterna Magica	
Country	The Netherlands	
School director	Annette van Valkengoed (until summer 2020)	Annette is an experienced and innovative director of schools, with three master's degrees in education that she studied for side-by-side with employment

Values	<p>Contextualised: ‘rubrics’ (matrices) are developed - also by pupils - to assess a range of activities. Individualised and participatory: a portfolio is compiled by the pupil, supported by a personal coach and others.</p>	
Timeline and preparation	<p>Different timelines are combined, (1) following each child’s well-being and learning on a continuous basis by the personal coach in collaboration with others, (2) six monthly reviews by relevant teachers supported by experts of a group of children’s sociability, self-awareness, knowledge and skills, (3) national standardised tests given to individual pupils at a time and level of difficulty considered suitable to that pupil.</p>	<p>The results of national tests are used by the school as orientation to the wider context, both for the entire school community and for the pupil concerned.</p>
Form of documentation	<p>A portfolio is maintained by every pupil supported by a personal coach and other school staff, and parents have relatively easy access to the portfolio</p>	<p>‘Rubrics’ or matrices that identify criteria for assessment are developed both by coaches and pupils. Periodic standardised tests are sensitively administered to individual children.</p>
Implementation of outcomes	<p>Follows the certification system through standardised testing supervised by the Inspectorate of Education, and this is well integrated with the school’s policy of formative and personalised assessment.</p>	

Many of the ideas that Annette was able to develop within Laterna Magica had been expressed earlier within the new school in Zwolle and with success. However, a senior educational official from Almere transferred to Amsterdam, where the broadened approach to school education now also allowed a similar school to be set up, and he persuaded Annette to develop a new school there as well as in Zwolle. After a while, she handed over leadership of the Zwolle school and devoted herself full-time to the new school in Amsterdam, which became Laterna Magica.

At the time of writing this in September 2020, Annette had just moved to a new position as the director of a promising secondary school in another city. Her efforts to have the regulations amended to allow Laterna Magica to include a secondary school had not been successful, disappointing her dreams of a single rich learning environment where children could study in an integrated way from infancy through adolescence. Shifting to leadership of a secondary school allows Annette that further range of experience. She has full confidence that Laterna Magica will continue to thrive and develop further with its new director.

The Practice

From the viewpoint of assessment, Laterna Magica does not wish to follow conventional practices, and is organised without classrooms or grades, grouping pupils together in units that span several years, beginning from birth to three years. Each child follows a personal development path to learning, accompanied by a coach. Considerable ingenuity and imagination have been called upon to integrate this with the requirements of the Inspectorate of Education. To understand how this was achieved, we require a wider look at the school.

The differences from conventional schools are immediately apparent to the eye. Although in a new urban environment, what green space is available is creatively used and includes farm animals - with bees kept in one of the balcony gardens. The emphasis in many innovative schools on learning through play is well-established here, including through the arts and drama, and is extended with a focus on learning through work. So, to take an example mentioned already, caring for animals is a job for which children must demonstrate interest and ability in an interview by

other children. Similarly with work on the school newspaper or radio station, or in preparing meals led by a chef with provision for parents to buy take-away meals when the children are collected. Older pupils run workshops that younger ones join according to their interests. Such a setting seeks to generate flow, energy and responsibility.

Building on children's natural processes of learning through curiosity is the explicit philosophy of the school, along with providing an inviting space for each child to realise the talents that they bring in, including children who might elsewhere be described as having disabilities. Laterna Magica sees itself as structured not around classrooms but around the values of love, responsibility, trust, integrity and autonomy. Pupils can arrive early and stay late, and are encouraged to connect what happens in school with their lives outside and with the world around, as invoked by the words "the city is our school". Teachers are seen as engaged - alongside their work with children - in continuing professional development both informally and formally, so that everyone in the school participates in a community of learners.

Inclusiveness is encouraged by the fact that the financial contribution of parents is the same as for pupils who attend a state school. The school management is adept at finding funds through what is available via state provision on various fronts, and it helps that the school combines the functions of early childhood education and care, an environment for children before and after school hours, inclusive education and primary school. This configuration allows the school access to state funds for health and welfare in addition to education. Diversity among school pupils is increased because the location is in a new urban neighbourhood and not in some affluent suburb. Such diversity is seen as further enriching the learning environment.

Laterna Magica responds to pupils' varying ages, personalities, interests and talents, and the school also takes into consideration differences in socio-economic background, parents' levels of education, family situations and the impact of life events. The response formulated to such combinations of circumstances is that each pupil is encouraged to discover and build on strengths, to follow interests and to address aspects that prove challenging.

Every unit of 100 to 120 children - within the three age groups of birth to three years, three to seven years and seven to twelve years - provides a fertile and diverse learning environment guided by coaches with different skills and interests, with various activities offered through workshops that range from maths and language to gardening and cooking. A developmental pathway is formulated with each child (and the parents), and an ongoing record is maintained in a portfolio that child, coach and parents have easy access to. In addition to every child's personal coach, external expertise is sought where it is felt that the initiatives of coaches need to be supplemented for a specific pupil. Each unit is staffed by 10 to 12 coaches, except for the starting unit for the youngest children which has some 18 coaches. Pupils and coaches are supported by a team of experts in pedagogy, orthopedagogy, physical education or simply gym, dance, music, visual arts, housekeeping, cooking, biology that includes both gardening and animal care, event management and administrative support. Each unit has a leader and the management team of nine includes these leaders. *Laterna Magica* attracts teachers in training who may be given experience in leading a unit as well, and under these and other circumstances a unit can be led by two people.

Attention to each pupil is strengthened by awareness of universal design, with related efforts to create learning environments that nurture the collectivity of pupils.

Example

An example given is of two pupils who share the same unit, Tim aged nine and Tony aged eleven. During a maths workshop, Tim is found practising binary models and designing a maze while Tony is working with clocks and money. When both read, Tim is engrossed in *Harry Potter* and Tony practises fluent reading with one page stories. During a writing session, Tim explores secret codes when Tony works on making his writing more legible. They both attend an engineering workshop, after which Tim goes to another workshop on codes and Tony joins a workshop on caring for animals. Tim, his coach and parents agree that his ability to focus is a major strength and also that he should work on his skills in cooperating with others. Tony, coach and parents are proud of his sociability and think that his efforts should go into persevering in tasks like reading and writing.

Laterna Magica's pedagogical vision is explicitly grounded in theory, citing for example the arguments of neuropsychologists at the Free University in Amsterdam. (The theoretical orientation is influenced by the three master's degrees that Annette has gained in close to twenty years, the first in special education needs, the second in educational leadership and management, and the third including her thesis on fostering educational process quality.) Gert Biesta's work on education as qualification, socialisation and subjectification provides a major conceptual framework that is translated into the perspectives of Laterna Magica:

- **Qualification** represents knowledge and competences.
- **Socialisation** involves learning to relate to others in a social and cultural environment.
- **Subjectification** connotes the ongoing development of self-awareness.

These three perspectives provide entry points into the assessment process, at three levels:

1. Each child's development is followed in both qualitative and quantitative terms, through a detailed portfolio, plans for the further learning trajectory and regular conversations with the personal coach, according to the three perspectives of knowledge and competencies gained, social abilities and self-awareness.
2. The progress of each group of children is considered, again both qualitatively and quantitatively, through a six-monthly review based on close observation of the group and a comparative analysis of the learning trajectories planned. Gains in knowledge are assessed with a critical look at methods of instruction as well as learning through club activities. A specialist joins these half-yearly reviews to observe the group and the children within it, with particular attention to their abilities to work together along with their levels of self-awareness.
3. The development of children within various units of Laterna Magica is related to what is known about their peers across the Netherlands.

The third level is where assessment processes within the school meet national standardised testing. Such standardised tests are seen as an unavoidable constraint on Laterna Magica and are incorporated as a summative complement to the otherwise personalised and formative processes of assessment. Formative assessment is described next and then how the summative element is embedded in this.

Formative assessment is intended to be seamlessly and continuously woven into a pupil's learning path, through ongoing guided compilation of the portfolio by the pupil and conversations with the personal coach that include the formulation of next steps. Pupils are encouraged to participate in their own assessment as well as that of their peers. Rubrics have been developed for this process, in the form of matrices, that track progress from being a starter to developing through advanced to expert. These four stages can be followed around various tasks, from learning to work together to learning to carry out research or baking a cake. For learning to work together, the components have been identified as active listening to each other, learning from one's own mistakes, learning from peers' mistakes, asking relevant questions and contributing to group work. For each of these components, specific behaviour is described as milestones on the route from starter to expert. Pupils are encouraged to develop these matrices for activities that they embark on, and more generally to give each other constructive feedback.



Summative assessments in the form of national standardised tests are difficult to integrate into Laterna Magica's vision but nevertheless are seen as a necessary reality. The school's response is to incorporate standardised testing in as formative a manner as possible. The guideline is "the right test at the right time for a particular child". Careful instructions are provided for this purpose and a dedicated member of staff provides support to teachers. Units that span children of consecutive ages allow more leeway than where some thirty children of around the same age are placed in a single class and the same test is administered to all of them simultaneously. All children are tested in this way every half year, but the test and the time is chosen individually.

The steps suggested are to look carefully at the portfolio and the child's wider activity before selecting the test, as well as considering the tests previously done by this child. The right test is seen as one that is neither too easy nor too difficult, with examples and guidelines given to illustrate this. The test results are then scrutinised to see whether they align with expectations of the coach and colleagues, and whether the test was influenced by stress (although efforts are made to avoid or minimise stress and to take advantage of provisions for children with learning difficulties). The results are then integrated into the portfolio and discussed with the child and parents.

Beyond engaging with standardised tests as an unavoidable challenge, Laterna Magica attempts a constructive approach whereby relating results to the wider national average can provide important context for understanding children's learning pathways and how the school supports these - as well as a new angle on how the school can support them better.

Parents often comment wryly that when they attend the birthday parties of children from other schools in the neighbourhood or within the wider family, the conversation among other parents is often about grades and marks, and parents of pupils in Laterna Magica find it hard to participate. They then have to explain the processes within Laterna Magica to puzzled or sceptical parents.

Learning for Well-being

As described, Laterna Magica is organised not around classrooms but around the values of love, responsibility, trust, integrity and autonomy. Assessing the extent to which these values are realised is best addressed through ongoing formative and personalised processes. This account is rounded off with a related discussion based on Learning for Well-being perspectives.

Laterna Magica's orientation recognisably meshes with the principles of Learning for Well-being. *Wholeness* is expressed in the emphasis on the whole child, the whole group, the whole school and out to the whole city, as *living systems nesting within each other*. The close attention to each pupil's own process of learning within a context inspired by universal design highlights *unique potential* and *inner diversity*, as celebrated by each child's distinctive portfolio. *Relationships and processes are seen as the path to positive outcomes*, rather than a narrow emphasis on outcomes (and notably on grades based on tests). *Engaged participation* is intrinsic to the flow of activities in the school, whether it is an older pupil inquiring of younger ones what they would like inside their sandwiches at lunch time, or a small group deciding with the support of a unit coach how to organise a football tournament, or Tim and Tony sitting side-by-side in a workshop on engineering with each participating from a different entry point of personal interest. The rubrics or matrices constructed as criteria *measure what matters*, ranging from pupils discussing how best to bake a cake together or coaches in a unit bringing their combined experience to bear on creating a matrix to guide them in a sensitive response to different levels of reading skill.

This story ends with a mention of Laterna Magica's portrayal of children as researchers travelling sociably on personal learning trajectories. This portrayal - combined with the emphasis on children learning naturally - engages with the core capacities that Learning for Well-being highlights. Researchers, even if they are two years old and playing in the sand in the garden area developed for the youngest pupils at Laterna Magica, exercise these core capacities joyfully and easily, together and individually, *relaxing, observing, listening, embodying, sensing* what they are creating with the sand, *empathising* with what the child nearby is

simultaneously creating even without words, *inquiring* with their fingers to express the queries in their minds, *discerning patterns* as dry sand flows and wet sand can be compacted, and *reflecting* on what they have discerned with the thought processes of one child so strongly expressed in a facial expression that the coach cannot help laughing gently and pointing out to a nearby colleague what is going on. The same core capacities are expressed in different ways according to personality and at various levels according to age, in the buzz of energised activity in the adjacent school building, whether the *inquiring* is expressed in an interview that is in progress at the school radio station, or the *discerning of patterns* that is underway in Tim's and Tony's engineering workshop.

Source

Narrative by Shanti George, based on:

- *Two interviews with Annette van Valkengoed in February and July 2020*

Photographs courtesy of Laterna Magica

Learning to Learn: E-portfolios in a Primary School (the Netherlands)

The e-portfolios developed by 'Mevolution' attempt to transform school education by taking it beyond its current limits of imparting a set curriculum over the period of a school year to a large group of pupils of approximately the same age, and periodically testing pupils in a standardised format on their absorption of this curriculum.

Instead, these e-portfolios endeavour to capture the learning process across the school, responding to each pupil and each teacher while following carefully devised guidelines for learning. Children are encouraged to value learning as they experience it personally, with an e-portfolio for each child. Parallel to the feedback that children receive within their e-portfolios, each teacher maintains an e-portfolio within which experiences of effective teaching practices can be shared, to draw on each other's insights. Parents also review and contribute to their child's e-portfolio.

The Cluster of Schools

The e-portfolios were developed as a collaboration between Mevolution (scan QR) and the Signum cluster of 22 primary schools spread over 28 buildings in the south of the Netherlands. The number of pupils in a school varies from 69 to 666, in total 6400, served by 750 staff in all. Each of the schools is visualised as playing a socially relevant role within its setting, and together to enable diverse children to develop their identities within the complex society around them. Signum is a Catholic organisation (and receives state funding for its schools, as is usual in the Netherlands) but pupils and teachers have various backgrounds. Signum describes its starting point as



'diversity'. One of the schools, Wittering.nl, is described as the pedagogical incubator for new initiatives - for example the initiative described here - that are then propagated in other schools within the cluster.

The Coach and the Pedagogical Mentor

How did Signum and Mevolution come to develop the e-portfolios together? The story begins with Tom Oosterhuis, who recently established Mevolution.

The roots of the e-portfolios can be traced to the moment when twenty years ago, Tom felt called to move from theatre and television - his work for some fifteen years prior to this - to school education, where he thought that approaches derived from the arts could help pupils flourish. The defining experience was when he worked with a class of about sixty adolescent pupils, almost each one from a different geographical and cultural background, at a school in inner city Amsterdam. His assignment with them was part of a course on culture and arts, and he asked pupils to work individually on their life stories. The result was electric. The pupils felt strongly motivated and he found that presenting their life stories erased the boundaries between what had been separate subjects of study, and stimulated them to bring together language, history, geography, religious studies, civic contribution and much else.

Tom was then asked by the Ministry of Education to develop a project that would make this experience available to other adolescent pupils. This assignment some two decades ago already made strong use of digital technology. Here lies part of the origins of the e-portfolio discussed below that similarly recognises school learning as embedded in the distinctive life circumstances of each pupil. However, Tom's ideas developed further.

The shift from theatre to education stimulated Tom to re-educate himself. He followed some formal courses but largely read voraciously about progressive education and engaged in intensive conversations with thinkers in the Netherlands who were knowledgeable and passionate about this subject, and they in turn influenced the further direction of his reading.

IDENTITY CARD #5

Name of practice	Learning to Learn: E-portfolios in a Primary School	E-portfolios to facilitate personalised and formative assessment in primary schools.
Type of assessment	<p>Formative: encouragement to develop abilities.</p> <p>Ipsative: comparisons with earlier five-week learning cycles.</p> <p>Peer- and self-assessment: children compare their work with each other.</p> <p>Collaborative: involvement of parents.</p>	
Category	School-wide practice suitable for various subjects and age groups	
Field	Open assignments structured within five-week cycles of shared learning, across themes and subject requirements	
Age group	All age groups within primary schools, ISCED 1 and 2	The underlying concept of Social Design-based Learning has been used much more widely, including in 'Learn to learn' workshops at a dance academy.
School	The Signum cluster of schools, with the school www.wittering.nl/ as the pedagogical hub	
Country	The Netherlands	
Coach and pedagogical mentor	Tom Oosterhuis Marianne Rongen	Tom Oosterhuis spent the first part of his career working in theatre and brought that energy to his work in designing educational programmes. Marianne Rongen has long been involved in pedagogical initiatives in a cluster of schools and especially the school that acts as the pedagogical incubator within the cluster.

Values	<p>Contextualised: it is closely related to children's everyday lives. Individualised: with each child's distinctive e-portfolio. Participatory: it is compiled by children themselves working with teachers and parents.</p>	
Timeline and preparation	Assessment is embedded in the learning process	It does not require elaborate preparation. Teachers have to be trained in the practice and the thinking behind it and this requires investment of time.
Form of documentation	Online	An electronic record of moments and events captured through film, photos, audio clips, drawings and written work, to which parents can also contribute.
Implementation of outcomes	Pupils receive a badge at the end of each five week learning cycle.	

As a consequence, Tom developed a programme about a decade ago that he called Social Design-based Learning (this programme was offered in the Netherlands and in Dutch, **Sociaal Ontwerpend Leren** or the SOL-model). This programme encourages children to develop meta-cognitive competencies, so that they learn about how they learn as individuals and as a group, rather than a narrower focus on learning the subject matter embodied in a curriculum. Both kinds of learning are encompassed within a five week assignment shared by the class.

Social Design-based Learning

Social Design-based Learning visualises a child learning with and through others in a social environment, at the same time that the child embarks on a very personal trajectory that addresses the following questions, even if at first unconsciously: 'Who am I and in which direction do I wish to move? What would I like to engage with in the world around me and what would I like to give to my environment?'

This process is represented by a circle with four quadrants, making it clear that movement takes place not only sequentially through the quadrants but dynamic progress can be represented both by feedback and 'feed forward.' Colours are used to distinguish the quadrants as four phases:

Blue in the first quadrant, represents an initial exploration or reconnaissance - children might like the description 'scouting.' What is this subject that we are going to learn about in the coming five weeks, what are our different and shared interests in the subject as well as the various talents that members of the group can contribute, what parameters have been indicated and how do we interpret them, and finally, how can we formulate the problem that this assignment is going to address?

The **green** second quadrant invites emergent ideas to develop, recognizing that there will be divergent views as well as convergent ones. How much information do we need and where do we seek it, and do we have to explore outside the box? Which of the various suggestions put forward will work best and how do we arrive at this decision together?

Red, for the third quadrant, stands for the stage when the assignment is carried out. This is when we make specific plans, organise ourselves and swing into action. We persevere along the lines that we have decided on and recognise opportunities and constraints as they arise, adapting as we go along.

The final **yellow** quadrant is described as the moment of harvest. We present our results and assess them, from different viewpoints - the task that was assigned to the class, the whole group and each individual - and we evaluate the process we went through to arrive at these results. It is also a moment to celebrate the experience of shared learning. A new five-week assignment follows, apart from school vacations, so that learning is experienced as cyclical rather than linear.

Social Design-based Learning was well-received within circles concerned with progressive education within the Netherlands, and Tom was invited to speak on the subject in addition to offering related courses in various settings. At a public presentation in a city in the south of the Netherlands, one member of the audience proved to be a crucial link to the Signum cluster of primary schools and the development there of the e-portfolios.

This person from the audience came up to Tom after the public discussion, introducing herself as coming from a well known innovative primary school in the south of the Netherlands that is part of the Signum cluster. She told Tom that she would like further contact, because Social Design-based Learning would help address the challenge of providing some structure to relatively open tasks carried out with children in her school.

This person was Marianne Rongen, in close collaboration with whom Tom has developed the e-portfolios in the last five years. Marianne today draws on thirty-seven years within the teaching profession, in southern Netherlands where she grew up. Her first eleven years were spent in state primary schools, where she moved fairly soon to management functions along with teaching. This combination allowed her to weave together two directions of interest: first, her continuing passion for what education can offer to each child, and second, her hands-on attention to specific approaches and practices that allow each child to thrive in a school. Professional associates testify



to her capacity to build bridges between pupils, teachers and parents in school settings. About ten years ago, Marianne strengthened her pedagogical abilities with a master's degree in Education, specialising in learning and innovation.

By the time that Marianne met Tom, she had worked from its very beginnings in the innovative school mentioned above, Wittering where she has stayed because of the conducive environment it offers, as it strives to enable children's learning processes to flow like "the natural course of a stream". The school is nationally known for demonstrating that education can be different from conventional schools and yet clearly meet high standards of quality. Numeracy and literacy (conceptualised as effective communication) are carried forward through dance, drama and other forms of creativity, attempting to prove responsive to each child in collaboration with parents. The pedagogical values that undergird such an education are explicitly identified and the school invites visitors from the management and staff of schools around the country to come and see how school can be different yet manifestly effective, an invitation that is often taken up.

It is this relative open learning environment that Marianne felt could make effective use of the structure and flow of Social Design-based Learning. For his part, Tom gained from a more intensive exposure to a primary school setting and to young children than he had experienced before. He liked Marianne's suggestion that he would observe deeply how various children responded to the learning opportunities offered, rather than immediately start introducing a new programme. He marvels at how much he learned through such observation. As he watched very young children play in an environment intended to expose them to plentiful learning opportunities, he added new dimensions to the concept of Social Design-based Learning, observing how children develop from playing to learning through play and later to playful learning as a conscious attitude in life. Tom comments on digital technology for online schooling as a result of the corona pandemic and says that while e-portfolios may be useful for such purposes, they were originally devised as part of a real life environment for play and learning, intended to facilitate teachers' interaction with pupils and to develop meta-cognitive learning among both pupils and teachers.

Marianne's current job title at the Wittering school is "inspirator, initiator en begeleider Gestaltleren/ kernconcepten" which translates as being responsible for inspiring, initiating and mentoring the development of holistic learning and core concepts. She holds a similar position at another primary school within the Signum cluster, where education was previously organised on more conventional lines, and where she is working with colleagues to transform this slowly and steadily. Marianne also contributes to pedagogical discussions across all Signum schools.

The Practice

Wittering school serves as a greenhouse for pedagogically progressive educational practices, as well as a demonstration to the other schools in the Signum cluster of how these practices work. This process has been followed with the e-portfolios as well, with five schools from the Signum-cluster introduced to working with e-portfolios after the practice was developed within Wittering school. The next stage will be training for teachers across all schools in the cluster in the use of e-portfolios. A second smaller cluster of Catholic primary schools in the region - Skobos, with five primary schools - has joined the work with e-portfolios, in the case of Skobos with an

explicit emphasis on twenty-first century competences. Combining forces in this way is intended to strengthen efficiency and effectiveness, with systematic training for almost 800 teachers across the twenty-seven schools in the two clusters. Mevolution has therefore taken form as a small enterprise, headed by Tom, to carry out such training.

This summary does not include all the details of the informal and formal negotiations with the management and governance structures within and across schools. Investing in Mevolution was not an easy decision, and slow processes of persuasion were encouraged by positive responses during the pilot experiences in the schools. The e-portfolios for teachers were the first investment, in response to the Inspectorate of Education's request for a method whereby teachers could make visible their competencies and skills. A call for tenders was issued by Signum to which there were five responses from companies, including a tender from Mevolution that was selected. Investing in e-portfolios for children was a further step and the final form of these e-portfolios has only just been developed, with the introduction into schools still work in progress. The director of Wittering school, Karin van Zutphen, has played a key role in influencing the other schools. Tom describes Wittering school as the cradle of the e-portfolios.

Tom hopes that the e-portfolios will have relevance far beyond the two clusters of schools. He sees this as an entry point for transformation across all primary schools. Otherwise, he argues, teachers from elsewhere come on visits to Wittering - and to a handful of other innovative schools in the Netherlands that demonstrate how primary education could be different - and then they return to their own schools and to business as usual. Training in the use of e-portfolios and the Social Design-based Learning model that forms the basis can bridge the gap between the few successful innovative schools and the mass of everyday primary schools in the Netherlands, and in this way provide a strategy for progressive change.

For this strategy to prove viable, the e-portfolios for children will necessarily require recognition by the Inspectorate of Education, as a strong incentive for wider primary schools to adopt the approach. Marianne reports that the Signum cluster of schools is engaged in related discussions with official authorities. It will be a difficult process, but in the meantime the Signum schools find that the e-portfolios provide a meaningful

process of learning for pupils, teachers and parents. The positive role played by the Inspectorate in adopting e-portfolios for teachers was described above.

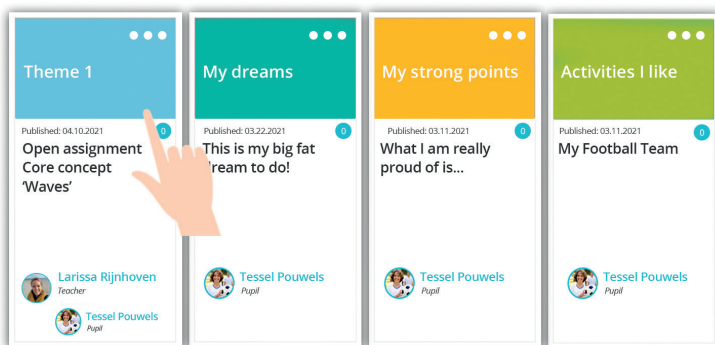
It is worth noting here that the e-portfolio approach can be applied far beyond primary schools. Tom uses them for example in his Learn to Learn workshops for first year students at the Dance Academy attached to the vocational Amsterdam University of the Arts.

The context having been provided both at the macro- and micro-level, a closer look at the e-portfolio follows, with the micro-realities of each child as the starting point. This can be illustrated by a particular child's face inserted at the centre of a circle, say a girl aged nine years, named Aisha. The theme for the class is Authority and Rules, the heading for one quadrant of the circle, and the specific emphasis is on language and numbers, the heading for another quadrant. This girl chooses to illustrate her learning of the theme and the specific emphasis using the favourite sport that she plays, football, identified in the heading of a third quadrant. Football gives plenty of scope to

Create your own e-portfolio+



Link any multimedia 'Story' to your theme.



highlight authority and rules, as well as numbers used to constitute the team and to follow scores, with language coming into play to describe various moments in exciting stories of matches played. A fourth quadrant is headed Grandma turns 80, capturing a family milestone event as it unfolds, again invoking authority and rules in a domestic context and drawing on the use of numbers and appropriate language. In this way, stories bring formal and informal learning together, and the stories are told through words, drawings, photos, video clips and short recordings that parents, wider family and neighbours are happy to help with and to review with the child. Each child's e-portfolio is completely protected in compliance with privacy laws.

The theme and specific emphasis identified above varies with each five-week assignment and exemplifies the learning guidelines or development patterns identified by an innovative school or by educational authorities in the case of state schools in general. Children receive a badge for each five-week assignment that they complete, as a form of assessment. As in the example above, the assessment is not based on right or wrong answers but on encouraging each child and the class to learn to effectively address a task that is formulated and shared online, every child in their own way. What is critical here in supporting the child is ongoing responsive feedback that enables progress along a learning trajectory that is rooted in personal identity and that strengthens this. Children take interest in the very different stories that each one brings to the shared theme. Each teacher uses a personal e-portfolio to record professional learning that takes place parallel to learning paths that every child and the group is exploring, and comparison of e-portfolios encourages shared professional development among teachers. Mevolution is embedded in what can be thought of as Wevolution, weaving together 'me' and 'we.'

Learning for Well-being

The process of learning and assessment described resonates well with the principles of Learning for Well-being. The pedagogical mentor who plays a key role has 'holistic learning' recognised within her job description, relevant to the principle of *wholeness*, and the e-portfolios endeavour to capture the entirety of children's lives and not only moments spent in school. The questions formulated as central to Social Design-based Learning - 'Who am I and in which direction

do I wish to move? What would I like to engage with in the world around me and what would I like to give to my environment?' - are recognised as active unconsciously even in very young children's explorations, addressing *unique potential* and *inner diversity*. The emphasis throughout is on *relationships and processes*, rather than narrowly on outcomes from final tests. Through compiling their e-portfolios, children *participate in an engaged way* with their education, as their teachers do when they capture professional development through their own e-portfolios. Children's learning is encompassed in the micro-system of each e-portfolio as well as within the macro-system of class interaction within which these micro-systems are nested - in turn nested within the e-portfolio of the teacher that spans learning within the collectivity of e-portfolios, with all these levels related to each other as *nested systems*. Feedback as presented through the e-portfolios is about children *measuring what matters* in daily surroundings through skills developed to record this.

The core capacities vital to Learning for Well-being are actively at play here. The four quadrants of Social Design-based Learning - from exploration through formulating and realizing to harvesting - all call upon the abilities of *observing, listening, sensing, inquiring, reflecting* and *embodying*, as well as *empathising* with what peers express during shared learning and together *discerning patterns* whilst *relaxing* in each other's company. *Observing* young children at play was critical to Tom's understanding of what education should be about.

Sources

Narrative by Shanti George, based on:

- *Interviews with Marianne Rongen and Tom Oosterhuis in February, July and August 2020*

Photographs courtesy of Mevolution



PART THREE

BRIDGING

PRIMARY

AND

SECONDARY

SCHOOL





A Point in Time: An Integral Assessment Framework (United Kingdom)

The Point in Time Assessment Framework got its name from being based on the regular collection of snapshot data across subjects, that then serve as a basis for conversations between teachers and senior and specialised colleagues about the progress of the pupils and how to best support them in their learning process. Three key questions are addressed in these pupil progress meetings: is the child making good progress? What does the child need from me next? And, do I have the resources to allow this child to make this progress? Continuing teacher development is a condition for success and a direct consequence of the peer-support and progress-review meeting structure. School development is also made possible within this method, as it offers the opportunity to show evidence of planning, implementation and impact to external bodies including the inspection services.

The School

The Greenwich Steiner School is a fee-paying school located in South East London. They describe their mission as “to provide a holistic and nurturing education that inspires children to develop a love of learning, the courage to question, the ability to express their individuality and to make a positive contribution to the world around them. To create a joyful learning experience for children of all cultural, racial, social and religious backgrounds and to strive to provide an education imbued with a fundamental respect for the individuality of each human being.”

The school was formed by a small group of founding parents in 1998. Today 200 pupils from 3 to 16 years old attend the school that provides a dynamic and progressive version of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum.

The framework described in this narrative was born in a difficult context for many of the UK Waldorf schools that led to a positive renewal of Steiner pedagogy throughout the country.

The Teacher

Adrian Dow joined the Greenwich Steiner School in 2012 after leaving mainstream education. He left because he saw many children being treated in a far from ideal way and decided to embark on a Steiner training course to join schools closer to his values. He started as a class 6 teacher in mathematics, and after three years was asked to also participate in the school management. As the school was maturing and growing, a need for more processes and focus on taking the school forward was felt, and that is when Adrian was offered the school leader position. At the time he did not really want to take on this role, but he had the competence and saw the need. Five years later, Adrian is still the head teacher, doing all he can to enable the school to offer “joyful education positive for society”, as he states in this short video about the school (scan QR).



This narrative is based on an interview with Adrian Dow, and an earlier conversation with Kath Bransby, coordinator of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship in the UK.

An English graduate, Kath had been a teacher and senior leader in mainstream education for 15 years. Through the introduction of aspects of Steiner Waldorf principles and practice, she contributed to the transformation of schools and settings, with this work being recognised very positively by colleagues, children, parents and Ofsted, the British Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills. Kath also works part-time as a lecturer and tutor in teacher education at Sheffield Hallam University.

IDENTITY CARD #6

Name of practice	A Point in Time: An Integral Assessment Framework	
Type of assessment	<p>Formative: formative assessment is embedded within the framework as one of the categories of the Purple Folder¹ and as an integral part of the data collection process that feeds into the assess-plan-teach cycle.</p> <p>Summative: one of the sections of the Purple Folder is dedicated to summative observations that aid the compiling of the end of year written report.</p> <p>Peer: peer-review and support among teachers is an essential success factor of the practice.</p>	
Category	Practiced in a cluster of schools in the UK	
Field	The framework covers all school subjects	
Age group	Class 1 to 8. ISCED 1 and 2. Ages 6 to 16	This framework can be adapted to different age levels but does not offer a recognised qualification for secondary years. The Greenwich school is currently opening their upper school and will implement the NZCSE (New Zealand Steiner Certificate of Education) for this purpose.
School	Greenwich Steiner School	www.greenwichsteinerschool.org.uk/welcome
Country	United Kingdom	South East London
Teacher	Adrian Dow	Adrian Dow used to be a class teacher and has been head teacher of the Greenwich Steiner School since 2015.

1 The Purple Folder, which can be done online or offline, refers to guidelines of what information to collect and how to organise it, assuring that data is collected regularly and facilitating the PLAN-TEACH-ASSESS cycle. There are clear guidelines for what to include to give it consistency and the main segments (that can be adapted) include curriculum documents, lesson block plans and the formative and summative observations.

Values

Contextualised: any personalised learning plan is based on the analysis of data snapshots including the numerical data, the extracts from the Purple Folder and from the main lesson books.

Individualised: identifying personalised support or challenges, that pupils need to flourish, is at the heart of the process.

Participatory: for a holistic development this method calls on the participation of several actors including the teacher, the special needs coordinator and the head teacher.

Timeline and preparation

Teachers record evidence of learning for each pupil at least every six weeks, and the structure that has been put in place to do this makes it a less time consuming process than the lengthy written reports that they were used to provide at this school. Extra time is invested in the progress review meetings but this feeds into the planning and teaching cycle in a natural and fruitful way.

Form of documentation	Written	The written formative and summative feedback is kept within the Purple Folder, and the numerical marks are entered into an online software.
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Implementation of outcomes

This framework covers all of the formative and summative assessment from class 1 to 8, and no additional evaluation is needed to evolve from one year to another.

The Practice

The Point in Time Assessment Framework that the Greenwich Steiner School has implemented is a shift in paradigm in traditional assessment. Rather than determining their quality, their exposure and their journey at school, marks become a way to discover how the team of educators can support each child to become their best. The basic assumption is that we do not know the ceiling of each child, and the objective is to keep their education as broad as possible as long as possible, and unravel who they are. In that sense, teachers have a detective job, and the marks are not just a series of numbers to be shared with the parents.

The conception and implementation of this system came from the context of the redesigning of the UK Waldorf school assessment framework across all schools in the movement. At the time, the national inspection framework focused on schools' internal data production and analysis. Each school was required to provide a list of learning outcome statements equivalent to the national curriculum for each class: a child who achieved these learning outcomes was said to be meeting age-related expectations. Schools were then expected to record the percentage of children in each class, age and demographic group, meeting or exceeding these expectations, and analyse this data to show that they were effective and adding value to children's education.

This data collection was something that Waldorf schools had never taken part in as they used to be inspected exclusively under the School Inspectorate Service that has specialised knowledge in their approach, but this inspectorate service was dissolved in 2018, and they suddenly had to leapfrog 12 years of internal data production. It turns out that the national inspection service, OFSTED, has now evolved due to research results underlining the consequences of focusing exclusively on internal data and curriculum. This focus led to twisting the focus on mathematics and English excessively, and what had been a measure became a target. This is not to say that OFSTED does not request proof that progress is being made and their definition remains more linear than the organic view of the child held in Waldorf schools. From the outset this has been a clash of paradigms, and the Waldorf movement had to do some introspection to reconcile freedom and accountability. They did not want to go down the route of

testing, but redesigning the assessment framework was necessary to develop something that suited the Steiner approach, the inspectorate, and most importantly would also bring added value to the teachers and their pupils, as opposed to just ticking a box.

The SWSF (scan QR) started working on the framework in December 2018. The first version was introduced in the Greenwich Steiner School in January 2019, and the current one in September of that same year. Today 16 out of the 22 Waldorf schools in the UK use it, but Greenwich has the most “advanced” version of it, including the development of an integral online software allowing for easy navigation and analysis of the data provided by the teachers.



In order for the assessment framework to be complete, there are three stages that follow each other in a cyclical pattern: the collection point, the conversation point and the implementation point. For the collection point, information is structured with the help of the Purple Folder and the online software containing all the marks. These two instruments then serve as a basis for a pupil-progress meeting between the teacher, a senior colleague and the special needs coordinator whose aim is to answer three key questions about each child: is the child making good progress? What does the child need from me next? And, do I have the resources to allow this child to make this progress? The implementation stage consists of all the follow-up actions to the meeting after answering the key questions and analysing the data.

The Purple Folder, which can be done online or offline, refers to guidelines of what information to collect and how to organise it, assuring that data is collected regularly and facilitating the PLAN-TEACH-ASSESS cycle. There are clear guidelines for what to include in order to give it consistency, and the main segments (that can be adapted) include curriculum documents, lesson block plans and the formative and summative observations. Six times during a school year, teachers are expected to enter a mark between 1 and 6 for each child and subject (1 and 2 being “cause for concern”, and 6 “need for further challenge”). The idea is that these data are snapshots that are not meant to represent all the learning, but helps you to reflect on whether the child is on a positive learning curve in the subject or not. Important to note is that for the

moment there is no clear definition of what each number represents, in terms of what learning outcomes should be achieved, and the right level of objectivity is still under discussion. On the one hand the marks should tie in with the content of the curriculum, and on the other hand they should not be too rigid, otherwise it risks becoming a tick list and not the reflection of an overall feeling of the child's progress.

Content of the Purple Folder

1. Curriculum documents. Long-term planning.
2. Schemes of work. This includes the main lesson block plans, class timetable and the class subject profiles (this is generated by the software and the marks entered by the teacher).
3. Short-term planning and formative assessment. The ongoing assessment is to be made visible in some written form, be it in the pupil's books or elsewhere, as long as it can be referred to.
4. Summative observations. At the end of every main lesson block, teachers are expected to write two or three sentences about each child, with focus on their attitude and the less tangible aspects of their learning development (in Waldorf terms this is a gesture towards the concept of the Child Study). This is also an aid for writing the end of year report.
5. Progress and tracking. This section refers to the information that you need to enter the data in the software, including marking books or descriptors of the categories. This information aims to help the teachers create the data and allocate the marks in a meaningful way.
6. Emergency planning. This is an emergency lesson plan in case another teacher has to step in at the last minute.

The success of this Point in Time subjective data collection by teachers rests on good moderation, leadership and professional conversations. At the end of each term, during the pupil-progress review meetings teachers bring the Purple Folder and a sample of books from different levels and genders. The school leader and the special needs coordinator then go through the samples with them, looking at some examples for each level, and asking questions about why that number was chosen, and how the teacher is challenging the pupils who are doing well and supporting the pupils who

are struggling. This meeting is minuted and kept as evidence for the inspectorate, so that they can triangulate with the teacher in the case of an inspection. This accountability aspect is important both for external and internal purposes, but it is carried out in a collaborative and supportive spirit.

After reviewing the samples, they analyse the pupils who were assigned a 1 and 2, and decide how to address the challenges they are facing. This analysis of what actions are to be taken to best support the pupils is done based on the individual marks, but also on the global classroom view and on the reality that this view might underline. Adrian gives the example of a class 1 that was a very “mixed bag”, with Point in Time evaluations varying from 1 to 6 in English. The narrative of each child was relevant to explain the marks, but there was also a clear common trend among the pupils whose first language was English and the pupils who had another language as their mother tongue. This insight made it clear that the teacher did not have the teaching tools adapted to English as second language learners, and this led to the introduction of a new programme called Sounds Write, which included a framework to deliver elements of coding and decoding language. This became a whole school action plan that delivered fantastic results visible in class 2 already. Fruitful examples like these have empowered the staff to participate actively in the process, and at the Greenwich school they now also compare data year-to-year, to observe the evolution, and to understand why certain subjects remain difficult when that is the case.

Actions to support individual pupils in the implementation phase can take numerous forms. In some cases it may be decided that one or several pupils need to receive one-on-one support with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), language support, extra resources in terms of books or other material, or making time to give more open-ended tasks to pupils who need to be challenged. In any case, a follow-up on the actions that have been decided upon also takes place in the next meeting, to evaluate whether they have been efficient or not. It is important to note that the social and emotional well-being of the children also have a space during the pupil-progress meetings. If the teacher sees that the child is suffering from low self-esteem or behavioural problems, the safeguarding team is contacted to support them for concerns that go beyond the academic. Adrian explains that sometimes these issues are the reflection that something is happening at home that needs to be addressed.

On top of the pupil-progress review meetings with the school leader, the school in Greenwich also hosts hub meetings with teachers from different grades at the end of each year in order to hand over the data from one year to the other, but also regularly during the year for peer-mentoring and support. In their experience, these meetings are vibrant and bring positive results.

In terms of the communication with parents, this new system has added ongoing clarity and transparency to the original report structure, and parents are generally very happy with it. Before this new assessment policy, parents mainly relied on the lengthy written reports (mid-year and end-of-year) to get a feeling of their child's progress, and these varied from teacher to teacher both in terms of context and of clarity. In some cases these reports were very indicative of the pupil's own development but gave little indication of learning. The end of year written report on how the child has developed over the course of the year has been kept, and has actually gained in power after being combined with the numerical reports that parents now receive every term, and the shorter written report that is shared mid-year. Moreover, the pupil-progress meetings



allow to implement some of the elements underlined in the reports, and the combination of the two types of evaluation avoids the difficulty to track progress throughout the year and receive information that lacks cohesion. Parents are of course welcome to get in touch with the class teacher after receiving the short numerical updates, and if their child does need support, the SENCO makes sure that there is a learning plan with clear objectives.

For the teachers this structure has also encouraged a better work-life balance, as the structure makes it easier for them to prepare the evaluation reports, and the shorter mid-year report provided when deemed necessary is much less time-consuming. Adrian concludes that they have found a happy balance between the two forms of reporting.

Although this framework contains marks and generates data that is necessary for the inspection services, the values it reflects are deeply rooted in the intention to assess for learning and to offer personalised support. Kath Bransby, who works with the SWSF and is at the source of the framework, explains that the system is based on:

- the respect for teachers' knowledge and understanding of what they teach, and thus more competence in assessing whether the child is meeting expectations than a test;
- the consciousness that assessment is only useful if it impacts the teacher's planning, teaching and learning - in a cyclical process;
- and the recognition that high stakes testing can deform content and lead to teaching to the test.

In terms of next steps, the current challenge relates to defining the extent to which the link between curriculum and the Point in Time Assessment needs to be strengthened, and working on how to deal with the mixture of subjects. As Adrian explains, there are many nuances in defining whether a child has reached learning objectives equivalent to 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6, and that is especially true for subjects that are inherently organic such as eurythmy or craft work. The subjectivity of the judgement and overall "feeling" of the teachers on their pupils' progress, and whether they have concerns or not can be very positive in an open door policy spirit, where teachers commit to continuous professional development, and colleagues support each other through appreciative



inquiry. Kath also explains that this process leads to coherent references within each individual school, but of course there is no end point as the process revolves around questions and further planning rather than fixed objective marks.

At the Greenwich Steiner School they have been running this system for three years, for classes 1 to 8. The upper school opened in September 2020 with class 9 and the aim is to open a class 10 in 2021. For the upper school years the school will adopt the NZSCE (New Zealand Steiner Certificate of Education, nzcse.co.uk), in the footsteps of the St Michael Steiner School.

Adrian explains that there was no unanimity in the implementation of the Point in Time Assessment framework within the movement. Steiner parents are generally speaking not looking for numerical evaluations of their children, and some traditional teachers held the view that there should be no assessment and no additional discussion of where the children are, and that a school should be a gentle, artistic, non-invasive

journey. This raises many questions regarding when to intervene in that journey or not. For example, if a child age 10 is not reading yet, should that be allowed or should something be done about it? On the other end of the spectrum, many teachers also held the view that no assessment does not serve the children, and that there is a need for evidence that progress is being made. Of course, introducing marks raised the question of how “Steiner” the system would be, and whether it would resemble mainstream education. Experience and explanation of the framework as outlined above gives many reasons as to why this stays in line with the fundamental idea that the child is a mystery, and not an empty bucket to fill. Moreover, the fact that the past three years have shown positive results on learner development, teacher development and even school development, helps to accelerate adaptation.

As far as external stakeholders are concerned, mainly the Ofsted inspection, the software and the Purple Folders provide them with evidence that they can analyse in a systematic way. In fact they are not there to dictate what schools teach but want to see evidence of the intention, the implementation and the impact. Although there are still elements that need improvement and explanation in their eyes, including the lesson block structure leading to the impossibility to have marks for every subject in each semester, or more evidence of the positive impact, the first reactions have been on the positive side and the possibilities that the online software offers play an important role in this. On top of the class and the subject view mentioned above, there is also the possibility to generate a whole-school view of the data, with upward trends of marks in different subjects indicated with green arrows. Today, already two other Waldorf schools will adopt the software developed at the Greenwich school.

To conclude, the Point in Time Assessment Framework described in this narrative is an example of how to strike a balance between learner-development oriented assessment practices and accountability of teachers and schools. Pupils are marked regularly throughout the year, but they do not have to go through high stake standardised tests. These marks are based on the learning that they demonstrated in class to their teacher in a variety of ways, and they are not used to judge the past but define personalised and class-wide strategies to better support learner development. In the Purple Folder teachers also keep track of formative assessment carried out in their classroom, and the evidence they gather is used in the pupil-progress meetings to reflect on how

Class 8 All subjects PITA numbers PITA names PITA colours

Well below Cause for concern Emerging Expected Exceeding Well above

	2020-21						2019-20						2018-19								
	Sum 2	Sum 1	Spr 2	Spr 1	Aut 2	Aut 1	Sum 2	Sum 1	Spr 2	Spr 1	Aut 2	Aut 1	Sum 2	Sum 1	Spr 2	Spr 1	Aut 2	Aut 1			
Attendance					100%	100%					98%	99%	95%	97%	100%	100%	100%	100%	97%		
Reading					5	5	5					5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4
WRAT reading											112								102		
Salford reading																					
Writing					5	5	5					5	5	6	5	5	5	5	4	4	4
WRAT spelling											114								102		
Speaking & Listening					4	5	5					4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4
Number					6	6	5					5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4
WRAT maths											110								111		
Space, shape and measure					6	5	5					5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Behaviour for learning					6	6	6					5		5	5		6		5		
Care and presentation					6	6	6					6		6	6		5		5		
Concentration and effort					6	5	5					6		6	6		5		5		
Confidence and involvement					5	5	5					5		5	5		4		5		
Strategic thinking and decision making					5	4	4					5		4	4		4		4		
Resilience and persistence					5	4	4					4		4	4		4		4		
Respect and kindness					5	4	6					5		5	5		5		4		
Geography					5	5						5	5						5		
Human Geography (US)																					
Physical Geography (US)																					
History					6	5	5														
Science							5														
Physics (US)																					
Chemistry (US)																					
Biology (US)																					
Eurythmy					6		6														
Games							5	5													
French					5		5														
German					4		5														
Latin																					
Handwork							6	6													
Woodwork																					
Art and Aesthetics																					
Ceramics																					
Creative Computing					4		5														
Art and Aesthetics																					
Gardening																					
Art							6													6	

Class view Class teacher Class X 2020-21 Autumn 2

Well below Cause for concern Emerging Expected Exceeding Well above

	Attendance	Reading	Writing	Speaking & Listening	Number	Space, shape and measure	Behaviour for learning	Care and presentation	Concentration and effort	Confidence and involvement	Strategic thinking and decision making	Resilience and persistence	Respect and kindness	
1 Anon	100%	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	
2 Anon	100%	6	5	5	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	6	5	5
3 Anon	75%	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	
4 Anon	94%	4	4	4	4	6	5	6	5	4	4	4	5	
5 Anon	95%	6	5	5	4	4	6	4	5	6	5	5	5	
6 Anon	100%	5	5	4	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	
7 Anon	88%	3	4	5	3	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	
8 Anon	98%	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	
9 Anon	100%	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	
Students on track	6 of 9 66%	6 of 9 66%	8 of 9 88%	6 of 9 66%	6 of 9 66%	8 of 9 88%	8 of 9 88%	8 of 9 88%	8 of 9 88%	8 of 9 88%	8 of 9 88%	8 of 9 88%	9 of 9 100%	

they can support their pupils further, and whether they have all the necessary tools. This framework applied to the entire school in a systematic way has also led to school development in the implementation of new teaching methods and better accountability towards the national inspection services. The needs of all the stakeholders in the complex educational process are taken into account, with room for further development and flexibility to adapt to each individual school culture.

Sources

Narrative by Ilona de Haas, based on:

- *An interview with Kath Bransby in March 2020*
- *An interview with Adrian Dow in December 2020*

As well as:

- *Greenwich Steiner School. Welcome and mission. www.greenwichsteinerschool.org.uk/welcome*

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Dialogue Reports: Parents, Pupils and Teachers Together (Germany)

This assessment practice is based on the art of conversation and of cultivating interpersonal relationships. Rather than relying solely on the teacher's judgement, all parties that play a role in the pupil's development take part in an open dialogue covering different aspects of the pupil's life. This dialogue enables a common language to be established between teacher, teaching assistants, parents and pupils, to facilitate better collaboration around a shared educational responsibility. Qualitative observations and exchange of different perspectives are followed by agreements on how to jointly support the pupil's development and enliven their learning process.

The School

The Rudolf Steiner School in Berlin, Dahlem welcomes over 600 pupils from 1 to 18, and has a beautiful campus with high quality facilities for sports, gardening, play, as well as artistic and handwork activities. It defines itself as a school open to the demands of our time, and at the same time committed to its more than seventy-year tradition.

Today dialogue reports are fully part of the school assessment policy and are also practiced at the Waldorf school in Erfurt (Freie Waldorfschule Erfurt). The idea was first developed when a group of colleagues at the Rudolf Steiner School Berlin Dahlem started to work on how to revive Rudolf Steiner's ideas for today's children. The group focused on Steiner's aim "not to give any judgement on the child" when writing reports. The concept of involving pupils and parents in the process of creating reports was inspired by Martin Buber's¹ thoughts about the importance of dialogue for relationships ("I and you") - such as the teacher-pupil relationship and the teacher-parent relationship.

The Teacher

The content of this narrative on dialogue reports is based on interviews with three teachers and an educator, as well as the observation of a real life dialogue report for a class 3 pupil with their class teacher, class assistant, mother and father. Class teachers at the Dahlem Waldorf school follow their class from class 1 to class 8 and work in teams with educators or teaching assistants, hereafter named educators. This teamwork enables the educator to follow-up on the observations made in the classroom during the after-school hours and the class teacher to be supported by someone who knows the pupils well in their social interactions. Both are present during the dialogue reports with parents and pupils, which enriches the report as they each bring in a different perspective on what happened during the school year. In some cases a subject teacher and/or the remedial teacher is also present.

Kilian Hattstein- Blumenthal has been class teacher and school director at the Berlin Dahlem school since 2006. He is one of the conceptors of the dialogic practice described below, and wrote several articles about it as well as a book about the philosophy underlying the practice, *Sympathie - Empathie - Antipathie (Freies Geistesleben, 2017)*. Kilian studied directing at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin. His first productions were at the Niedersächsisches Staatsschauspiel in Hannover. He then worked as a freelance director at various municipal and state theatres in Germany and Switzerland. In 2004 he began studies at the Seminar for Waldorf Education in Berlin and at the Institute for Waldorf Education in Witten-Annen.

Elke Pohland has been a class teacher for almost 20 years and is also part of the core team that developed the dialogue reports. Elke had been writing traditional Waldorf personalised written reports for years, and found the return in terms of feedback and enhancement of the learning process were poor with regards to the time and energy invested to write them. Today she practices the dialogue reports in all her classes and continues to support the development of the practice.

1 Early 20th century philosopher best known for his philosophy of dialogue, a form of existentialism centered on the distinction between the I-Thou relationship and the I-It relationship.

IDENTITY CARD #7

Name of practice	Dialogue Reports: Parents, Pupils and Teachers Together	"Dialogzeugnisse" is not easy to translate to English, it is something between a dialogue report and a dialogue testimony.
Type of Assessment	<p>Formative: the objective of the conversation is to revive the learning process and build a strong collaboration between the teaching team, pupil and parents to support the pupils in their development from year to year.</p> <p>Self: pupils are asked to comment on their thoughts and feelings about their work in early years, and in later years are actors of the entire dialogue, from appreciation to improvement.</p> <p>Ipsative: the process only compares the pupils to themselves and avoids any objective comparison with others or standards.</p> <p>Collaborative: parents and pupils are actively involved in the process and their views are included in the written summary of the dialogue.</p> <p>Summative: the dialogue replaces traditional summative written reports and includes summative observations on the pupil's achievements during the school year.</p>	
Category	School-wide practice for classes 1 and 2 covering all subjects. Continues up until class 8 on a voluntary basis	
Field	This assessment process is suitable for all fields	
Age group	Class 1 to 8, 6 to 16 years old. ISCED 1, 2 and partly 3	The dialogue is adapted according to the age group. In younger years parents and pupils are addressed separately, from class 6 onwards the pupil takes part.
School	Rudolf Steiner School Berlin Dahlem	dahlem.waldorf.net/ dialogzeugnisse@dahlem.waldorf.net
Country	Germany	Berlin
Teachers and educators	Kilian Hattstein-Blumenthal, Elke Pohland, Henrike Grüber and Iris Kirchbach - Sahabi	Kilian: class teacher (1 to 8) and author. Elke Pohland: class teacher (1 to 8). Henrike Grüber: class teacher (1 to 8) and Waldorf parent. Iris Kirchbach-Sahabi: educator and teaching assistant, currently in a team with Henrike.

Values

Contextualised: pupils are aware that the dialogue will take place and what the objective is. Parents are informed of the process and asked to prepare with the help of a questionnaire.

Individualised: the objective is to focus on the child's development and progress based on where they started at the beginning of the year.

Participatory: dialogue is at the center of this practice, and all parties participate actively: pupil, teacher, educator (teaching assistant), subject teacher and parents.

Timeline and preparation	The preparation phase takes around one hour per pupil, the dialogue itself is an hour, and the minutes are to be typed afterwards	The challenge for the teaching team is to fit in a dialogue with each family. This time constraint is similar to that of traditional parent-teacher meetings. At the Dahlem school the dialogues take place mostly between Easter and the Summer holidays but are most efficient when held at the beginning of the school year.
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Form of documentation	Written	Documentation consists of two elements: the summary of the dialogue as well as a document with the agreements made for the future, signed by all parties present.
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Implementation of outcomes	Documentation of the dialogue replaces the traditional Steiner Waldorf end of year written reports. No other form of final assessment is needed.	
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Henrike Grüber was a Waldorf pupil herself, and remembered that certain judgments from the written evaluations had stayed with her for a long time. This enhanced her openness towards the dialogue reports that were introduced when she was a parent at the school in Dahlem. Her first experiences, which concerned her children, were positive, although she did not pay particular attention to the process at the time. The importance of it became evident to her when she started her studies to become a Waldorf teacher. Towards the end of her course Henrike wrote a thesis about the effect of the dialogue reports on self-assessment in middle school. The thesis covers a critical analysis of the practice and other opportunities in Waldorf schools that should be built on for the development of self-assessment. One of her findings concerning upper school was that due to the introduction of grades in class 11 there is too little focus on the further development of self-assessment skills. Today Henrike is a class teacher, and works in a team with Iris Kirchbach - Sahabi, educator, with whom she undertakes the dialogue reports and whose contributions are also included in the narrative that follows.



The Practice

The story of the dialogue reports started in 2009, during a teachers' conference at the Dahlem Waldorf school. Kilian, Elke and other colleagues were discussing the problems they were facing with the traditional Waldorf written evaluations that demand a lot of work and time, for very little effect on the learning process and hardly any feedback from pupils and parents. Inspired by the philosophy of dialogue by Martin Buber, they defined the fundamental ideas for the development of a qualitative dialogue between parents, teachers and pupils whose written summary could replace the traditional report. They envisioned this new form of assessment as a more effective way to support the pupil's development by including all aspects of their life in the conversation, establishing a common language with all parties involved, and collaborating better on a shared educational responsibility. After developing the fundamentals, they entered a three year test phase to experience the process and decide whether or not to continue. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and Kilian and his colleagues concluded that it would be great if it became part of the school profile.

Kilian recounts that some teachers found it very hard to change their habits. The attachment to the traditional form was often personal, teachers enjoyed looking back at the written reports they had received when they were pupils before starting to write, and felt that they would miss a "deep dialogue" that results from the process of writing these personalised feedback reports. Kilian explains that according to him the only way to really benefit from these reports is to discuss them with the pupil at the beginning of the following year to decide on some common aims and actions to support the pupil's development. The best way to convince them, however, was not by sharing intellectual arguments with them but simply by encouraging them to experiment. Quite a few colleagues were convinced after trying it, and the dialogue reports became a mandatory form of assessment for class 1 and class 2. The remaining years teachers can continue on a voluntary basis. In the beginning the process was prescriptive, with precise indications on how to lead the dialogues in an age-appropriate way. Today teachers have the freedom to apply the assessment practice in a personal way, as long as the essential qualities and values are respected. Colleagues of the school have an annual meeting about the dialogue reports to discuss what everyone has done, and to further professional training on the art of conversation.

Pupils at the Dahlem Waldorf school do not pass any standardised tests or exams until they reach class 11 and 12. All the assessment that they go through before then is essentially formative and the dialogue reports are a part of that package. As there are no purely summative assessments, class teachers develop their own methods to form a picture of where each pupil is, and prepare for the dialogue report. Elke, for example, takes some time to look at a few assignments every morning together with the pupil and makes notes for future reference. She also relies on the diagnostic assessment that the remedial teacher organises in order to offer personalised support to those who need it. For the moment the dialogue reports take place each year after the Easter break and before the summer vacation. In class 1 there is an additional preliminary dialogue that takes place in the beginning of the school year during which a relationship of trust can be built with the incoming families. This preliminary conversation is especially relevant in class 1, but Kilian agrees that it could be better to host the dialogue in the beginning of the school year at all ages.

This dialogic assessment practice contains three main phases: the preparation phase, the dialogue itself and the reception of the written summary and follow-up agreements. During the preparation phase, teachers, educators and parents are actively involved. The preparation phase for teachers and educators include some individual preparation time to look at the pupil's work and at the notes that they have been taking throughout the school year, as well as a conversation between the two of them, and in certain years with the subject teachers too, about what each of them has perceived about the child and their development. The objective is not to come to an agreement but to be conscious of the different perspectives and help each other in the way to express this to the parents, and from class 6 onwards to the pupil too.

The practice is indeed adapted for each age group. One important difference is that from class 1 to class 5 the dialogue itself takes place with parents, and pupils are only involved in the preparation phase, whereas from class 6 onwards the main protagonist of the dialogue is the pupil, and parents are invited as "observers". The way pupils are involved in the preparation phase in the early years varies from teacher to teacher. Elke explains that she seizes the opportunity to deepen her relationship and understanding of the child in a one-to-one conversation. The child collects their work to be shown to the parents, and they have a look at it together. Elke focuses on positive feedback

and asks her pupils what they think and feel about their work. At this stage the most important thing is for the child to gain confidence and avoid pressure or comparison with others.

Another important stage of the preparation phase concerns the parents. This process is supported by a questionnaire that parents are asked to fill in and hand back to the teacher before the talk. The objective of this process is for parents to take the time to prepare for the talk and formulate how they see their child. This exercise also helps the teachers and educators in their preparation and gives them the possibility to contextualise certain observations during the dialogue. The preparatory questionnaire for parents includes the following questions:

- What themes from social life in the classroom does your child bring home?
- How do you as parents see your child's school development so far?
- How do you experience the strength of your child?
- Please formulate the questions that you would like us to discuss together. Please limit yourself to the three questions that are most important to you.

This preparatory questionnaire is sometimes perceived as an imbalanced part of the process as parents have to hand something in before the dialogue but do not receive anything from the teachers in return. Elke explains that she does not insist too much on receiving the answers from those who are not comfortable with it, as the most important is to take some time to reflect before coming, whether or not the result of this preparation is shared.

This initial preparatory phase is described by Kilian as the phase of ***understanding***, during which ***empathy*** and ***observation*** without judgement are key elements.

Working together

In the dialogue report for a pupil in starting in class 3 witnessed for the preparation of this narrative, the child had shown extreme shyness and difficulties to interact with others in class 1. In their questionnaire, the parents expressed that they had the feeling that she had overcome this in class 2 and wanted to know whether the teacher and educator had the same feeling from what they

had observed at school. The answer was yes, and the agreement that had been taken together in the previous dialogue one year earlier had probably helped greatly. Parents, teacher and educator had noticed the challenge and agreed that the father (who is very introverted too) would follow expression workshops with his daughter and support her to overcome her fears of communicating. This is a beautiful example of the strength of working together to support the child and of the importance of including parents in the solution.

The second phase of the process, the actual conversation is the phase of **appreciation** and **improvement**. This dialogue replaces the traditional parent-teacher meetings as well as the end-of-year written reports but is by no means an equivalent. These dialogue reports are designed as a way to revive the learning process rather than end it, and aim to develop together an understanding of the child's spiritual, social and learning nature rather than simply discuss school results. Although teachers each have their individual way of leading the process, there are essential values that serve as guidance, as well as a basic structure that is adapted for different age groups. The guiding backbone can be described in three main instructions:

1. Make it a dialogue. This conversation cannot be a joint monologue and the teaching team has to find a way to start a dialogue right at the beginning of the session.
2. Focus on the shared responsibility. Appreciation of all the opinions that you hear is essential.
3. Gain some basic knowledge of the concepts of empathy, sympathy and antipathy. Empathy in order to understand in an empathetic way, and to describe the child's individuality with confidence in your assessment without judgement. Sympathy to observe qualitatively, without prejudice but carefully and holistically, without picking out only the positives. Antipathy in the anthropological sense of shifting from the level of will and sensation to the level of imagination, and therefore move away from your old self and imagine what you would like to improve. This gesture has to be made by the pupil himself in order to be effective.

Beyond this guiding backbone there are also some "topics" that all the dialogues are based on. The aim is to capture a picture of the child with as many aspects as possible,

and therefore should include observations of the pupil's work, social development, subject competence, as well as from the "parent presentation"¹. The first and second parts of the dialogue concern the sharing of the different perceptions about the content and questions. Aside from the teacher's style and the age group there is also an attention to the dynamics in the conversation that influence how the dialogue is led. For example if a teacher notices that a family is very talkative then they might start with some content elements before opening the floor, or vice versa for families that need encouragement to participate actively.

The third and last part of the dialogue concerns the agreements. This part is crucial as it seals the commitment and clarifies the concrete actions or plans to be pursued. In early years these are based on the observations shared by parents, teachers and educators, and in the later years on the pupil's answer to the questions "What is difficult

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- 1 Two or three times a year parents are invited to attend a class and witness about 1h30 including parts of the main lesson and some individual subjects. It is the only way parents can "experience" what their children have every day.



for you?” and “What do you want to do differently?”. As Kilian expressed in his latest articles, it is essential to wake up the pupil’s willpower for this last phase, to revive the learning process with joy. The teacher often has many suggestions but the impulse should come from the pupil.

After the dialogue, minutes of the meeting are taken together with the signed agreements, and these two documents constitute the official documentation of the practice. Henrike and Iris explain that they also send the parents a letter with more information on the aim of the report, and for early years give recommendations on how to share elements of it with their children, in their own words and not as it is written. In later years pupils are fully part of the conversation, and as Monika, English teacher in class 9 and above, explains: although pupils do not always enjoy talking about themselves, the effect of the dialogue report can be noticed afterwards in their higher consciousness of the learning process.

The dialogue reports have definitely reached the objective of developing a dialogue culture within the school. A visible result they observed is a drastic decrease in the need for mediation between parents and class teachers. Before the dialogue reports there was a need for mediation with several families every year, and now this demand is close to nothing. This is not to say that teachers do not need professional training to carry out these dialogues in a fruitful way, but the investment has shifted from mediation to solve existing problems to additional professional development to prevent problems from arising.

It is hard to evaluate the effects on the assessment culture as a whole as there has not been a systematic analysis of all the outcomes after several years of implementation. This is something that certain members of the teaching team are keen on developing. In terms of limitations, Kilian underlines the difficulty for some teachers to change their habits, and the fact that if a child changes school the teacher is often asked to translate the outcome of the dialogue into a more standard form of assessment documentation. Moreover, certain parents would feel more comfortable if subject teachers gave individual feedback on learning goals, but that is something that has been addressed by offering time to meet subject teachers individually.



“In my view the positive outcomes of these dialogues largely surpass any possible limitations. Last year we had a very strong example of a child that both Iris and I had difficulties with and who completely changed after the dialogue with his parents. During the conversation we explained how he presented himself in the classroom, hardly ever expressing interest and mostly seeming to be “bored”. The parents were touched by what we said and showed us a completely different picture. At home he said that he loved school and talked about what happened every day with enthusiasm. It was agreed that the parents would talk to him to find out why he was acting in this way, and from one day to the next he completely changed attitudes, it was like welcoming someone new in the classroom!”

— Henrike Grüber



Sources

Narrative by Ilona de Haas, based on:

- Interviews with Kilian Hattstein- Blumenthal, Elke Pohland, Henrike Grüber and Iris Kirchbach - Sahabi in September 2020

As well as:

- Hattstein-Blumenthal, Kilian, *Blick nach vorn, nicht zurück. Entwicklungsgespräche machen Textzeugnisse überflüssig, Erziehungskunst, Waldorfpädagogik Heute, March 2014, www.erziehungskunst.de/artikel/leistung/blick-nach-vorn-nicht-zurueck-entwicklungsgespraechе-machen-textzeugnisse-ueberfluessig.*
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Photographs courtesy of the Rudolf Steiner School Berlin Dahlem



Opening Mathematics: Dialogical Learning (Switzerland)

Dialogic learning is a teaching and formative assessment method that enlivens the way that understanding arises. Pupils engage deeply and methodically with the subject and are given space to write down their thoughts and feelings, describing their engagement and how they specifically approached the task they were given. It generally includes a cycle of three: 1. an open task given to the pupils by the teacher, 2. individual and collective feedback on what the pupils produced and 3. planning of the next step taken by the teacher, mainly based on the concrete feedback obtained from the pupils and where the class needs to make progress. Applied to mathematics, it approaches concepts through the language of understanding before the language of the understood is developed together, giving room for all pupils to engage in the process in a way particular to each one of them and possibly involving their daily lives. Formal concepts are thus not introduced at the beginning but arise as results of a joint undertaking that builds on awakening self-evidence.

The School

The school Patrick teaches at is a state funded school situated in Cham, Switzerland. Cham is a small town of approximately 15.000 inhabitants. In total the town has three primary school centres and one secondary school centre. In his school, there are two buildings and about five hundred pupils, including a kindergarten. The other two primary school centres are similar. The school strives to be as inclusive as possible, and they have a class for immigrant children from Africa, Europe, Asia and America that offers them the possibility to learn German intensively during the first year, before joining the regular classes.

In terms of assessment policy, the school has a traditional exams and tests policy. Patrick has been teaching there for twenty-two years and explains that today there is a movement in the direction of opening up this policy and acknowledging that alternative methods can also be used for assessment purposes. Patrick is still alone today in the application of the dialogic learning method but this year (2020), for the first time, there is a small group of teachers (around five) interested in finding out more about how he teaches and assesses. Patrick is committed to transfer knowledge and experience and will see what develops out of it.

The Teacher

Patrick Kolb has been a teacher since 1991. He had always wanted to work with children and started his teacher training course for primary school at the age of 16 in parallel with his Matura (end of secondary school certificate in Switzerland). Today, teacher training courses start after school for all levels, but in Patrick's case, he was qualified to start teaching at the age of 21. At first he did not have much experience and had a lot to learn, 30 years later he is still teaching and has become a reference point as a practitioner of the dialogic learning method. Interest in this method is also finally growing around him. Patrick started his career at a public school in Zug, he then moved to Mettmenstetten for two years, before starting at the primary school of Cham in 1999.

The Practice

During his teacher training Patrick came across the ideas of Martin Wagenschein, a science educator who worked in mathematical and scientific didactics. Martin is one of the precursors of modern teaching techniques, such as constructivism, inquiry-based science and inquiry learning. Patrick was fascinated by his ideas on how concepts rose genetically, and how knowledge comes into being, and this was the beginning of his adventure with alternative teaching methods. Patrick recalls that one of the first real-life experiences he organised was a discussion with 24 pupils about how and why a candle burns. He began using the Socratic method, and fairly quickly transferred the questions and answers to paper. The advantage of the written form is that everyone gets a chance to express their thoughts independently. Patrick was moved by how the children wrote their stories about their experience.

IDENTITY CARD #8

Name of practice	Opening Mathematics: Dialogical Learning	
Type of assessment	<p>Formative: personalised feedback is given for every task the pupils engage with. A collective oral feedback process also takes place based on the pupil's work at suitable moments.</p> <p>Self-assessment: pupils record their thoughts and feelings regarding the task they are working on in their journals and are also regularly asked to summarise what they have learnt. Self-assessment is key for developing a deep connection with the subject.</p> <p>Peer: pupils are regularly asked to read and comment the work of their peers.</p> <p>Ipsative: assessment of the learning journals is purely based on the individual progress and learning journey.</p>	
Category	Class-wide practice. The school approves and encourages this teacher to use this method but has not made it a school-wide policy	
Field	Mathematics and German	Elements of it flow into other subjects and it is applicable to all fields.
Age group	Class 5 and 6 (age 12-13), ISCED level 1 and partly 2	The dialogic learning method can be adapted for all age groups, and documentation on how to approach it at different stages can be found in the books by Peter Gallin and Urs Ruf (for example Gallin and Ruf: <i>ich, du, wir: 4.-5. Schuljahr Sprache und Mathematik</i> , Zürich 1999; Gallin and Ruf: <i>Furthering Knowledge and Linguistic Competence: Learning with Kernel Ideas & Journals</i> ; Gallin: <i>Dialogic Learning: From an educational concept to daily classroom teaching</i> ; the last two articles are available at www.ecswe.eu/wren/researchpapers_assessmentevaluation.html).
School	Primary School Centre Cham	
Country	Switzerland	
Teacher	Patrick Kolb	Primary class teacher. Teaches all main subjects except for foreign languages: mathematics, German, biology, history, geography, sports and music.

Values

Contextualised: pupils are introduced to the process at the beginning of the year.

Individualised: the tasks are open and allow for individual creativity, also in the way pupils approach them. The formative assessment is based on this individual connection with the subject.

Participatory: this method is based on pupils' active engagement with every task. Pupils' answers to the tasks is also what determines the next step in the programme.

Timeline and preparation

The main preparation time goes into writing the open questions for the tasks and then reading all the journals to prepare the next step. This method is clearly time-consuming for the teacher but there are resources available to facilitate the process.

Form of documentation

The learning journals that the teacher gives feedback on with checkmarks and comments.

Implementation of outcomes

The determination of the next step in the programme and part of the final mark.

He then discovered the books by Peter Gallin and Urs Ruf, outlining the dialogic learning method and how to apply it. The books contained practical help and examples for every step, including how to formulate open questions for assignments. He did not have a dialogic teaching partner in his school but found a friend from the Mettmenstetten school he had taught at before, and organised an exchange of good practices with him. Patrick then convinced the school director that it would be useful to work in this direction. He was given authorisation to experiment. However, the director never decided to make it a part of the school assessment policy.

The dialogic learning method embeds the learning process within the formative, self- and peer-assessment process that in turn feeds into the determination of how and what content follows in subsequent lessons.

The method consists of three key steps. The first one is to engage the pupil in a creative process with a task (“Auftrag” in German, literally translated as assignment, but an “Auftrag” will generally have a wider scope than typical school assignments). It is

important for this task to be open, that is, not have a right or wrong answer to it. An example of an open task in mathematics concerning fractions might be: “collect or draw pictures that represent fractions”; “where do you find fractions when you go shopping?”; “where do you find them in real life?”. Patrick applies this dialogic learning method in the two main subjects for class 5 and 6, which are mathematics and German. One reason for this is that the books on the method give guidance for those two subjects, but the main reason is that they have the most dedicated time each week and are therefore more conducive for this approach to teaching. The philosophy, of course,



flows into the other subjects, notably into subjects like practical arts. An example of an open task to start a German lesson on describing a person from a given text might be: “Choose a person and describe what you think is special about them”, or “think about what you have read: what came to your mind while reading? Pay attention to your feelings, thoughts. What did you feel while reading?”. It is important to note that pupils are encouraged to not only work on the task but also to share their thoughts and feelings on how they are doing it. This self-assessment component is a part of the task itself. Patrick furthermore regularly asks them to write about what they have learnt. These summaries are often very interesting and include thoughts on how others have done things differently.

Tasks are often worked on in the classroom during lesson time. In such cases, the peer-assessment method of “musical chairs” can be practiced: pupils put their work down on their desk, walk around, choose someone else’s work and make comments on it. Patrick has observed that pupils get into this very naturally. Often pupils seek the positive elements and have a harder time being critical.

Once the tasks are completed, the following step consists of collecting the notebooks with whatever the pupils have produced, and to give them some quick feedback in the form of checkmarks and short comments. The checkmark system works as follows: one, two or three check marks are given as ipsative feedback, i.e. not against a normative standard, but seen within the context of the development of each pupil individually, i.e. depending on the depth that any given pupil has reached, and their previous level of understanding and abilities. Coherence is more important than giving a “correct” answer: a pupil may go off on a tangent based on a mistaken thought, yet still write a coherent text that may be more interesting than “a correct answer”. Three check marks indicate coherency and depth that Gallin and Ruf characterise as a “Wurf”, indicating an argumentative coherence in entertaining and wrapping up thoughts in a way that can pique the interest of the reader. One checkmark means “OK”, two somewhere in between, and a crossed-out checkmark indicates insufficient work. Giving checkmarks is not meant to be a scientific undertaking but rather a quick, more gut-like reaction of the teacher to the work of the pupil against the backdrop of this individual. Thanks to this regular, personalised feedback, this stage of the process is part of the formative element that also enables the teacher to understand what has happened in the classroom, and to develop a sense of what to do next.

Based on what the teacher has discovered in this stage two, the third step is to plan the next lesson. The content of the lessons is thus determined by the pupils' needs to progress, and not by a pre-made programme. During the class Patrick delivers some targeted explanations and selects excerpts from the pupils' work to share with others in the class. The principle behind this is that we can all learn from what the others have done. Generally, pupils feel elevated when their work is shown to everyone. Inevitably, the work of some is selected more often but a conscious effort is made to vary and give everyone a chance to contribute to this collective process. At the end of this third stage, it is time for a new task and the cycle begins again.

The focus of the method is enabling pupils to connect with the subject - and develop an understanding out of that. Not the other way around, as is often the case in school teaching, where finished knowledge is first presented by the teacher, expecting pupils to connect to largely finished forms, which tends to literally turn many pupils off, simply because they lack the ability to connect. In the dialogic learning practice, pupils are brought into motion from the very beginning, having to write something for every task, giving them time to engage with the subject deeply and methodically, and on their own terms. They do not just learn something by rote but engage as an actor: it can grow within them rather than being thrust upon them. In this sense, assessment is not a goal Patrick pursues in its own right, and it is not even primarily in his consciousness when he is teaching, but rather a naturally embedded dimension within the process of each and every pupil connecting to a subject individually. A direct effect of this dialogic learning practice is that pupils generally enjoy the subjects much more, including the subject of mathematics.

Patrick has been practicing dialogic learning with mathematics for over 20 years. He explains that the way to generate interest and engagement is to engage the language of understanding before developing the language of the understood (a distinction first proposed by Martin Wagenschein). Pupils may initially use words that are not usually considered adequate within the subject, but that is not a problem, as the construction of concepts comes afterwards, in a joint effort of the class, with the guidance of the teacher. It can happen that certain pupils will introduce unusual words out of their prime engagement with the subject, some of which may stick. These should not be seen as aberrations from the normative form agreed upon by

society, but rather as singular expressions arising from a singular learning group at a singular point in time. An example of engaging students in mathematics would be to list all numbers from 1 to 100, then cross out all the multiples of 2, 3 and 5, and ask pupils to observe what is left over. The quality of the remaining numbers appears through the exercise, and the concept of prime numbers is only introduced once they have reflected and commented intuitively. For other topics Patrick lets the children invent tasks themselves, within a topic. He says that pupils often come up with questions that are much richer than those found in textbooks, and in fact he even uses some of them in future tests. Another important element in mathematics is to work with language and encourage pupils to form complete sentences to describe what they observe. He takes the example of proportionalities that can be explored by describing everyday situations such as a birthday party and the link between the size of the pieces of cake and the number of guests. Starting with simple experiences and examples makes it possible for connections, later named as concepts, to become self-evident.

The formative assessment practice that is embedded in the dialogic learning method can be completed by a summative element. In Patrick's case there are some tests throughout the year, at the end of each subject cycle, that is, four or five per semester. The tests are always adapted to the content that was covered during the period and before each test, he takes time to reflect and summarise what the pupils have learned. If necessary, they also have the opportunity to do some traditional preparatory exercises. He notices that there is no particular nervousness around these tests, as they build on what pupils have already engaged with, and because the test gives them another opportunity to show what they are able to do.

The tests are the same for everyone but should contain questions that speak to different levels of competence. Moreover, the grades for the tests and the "grade" that arises from the check marks given to the journal work, which is purely ipsative, reflecting their personal progress and efforts, are amalgamated into one final grade that reflects both.

As Patrick has many years of practice behind him, he has received feedback from numerous pupils during and after their time in his class and has noticed some trends. He distinguishes the feedback he receives when they are still pupils, as opposed to



when they have a few years of perspective. Right at the beginning of engaging with the dialogic learning process for the first time, there is an adaptation phase, as they are suddenly asked to write much more intensively than before. Once they have gotten used to the routine of being set tasks, the phase of active engagement starts. Patrick explains that even those who had doubts at the beginning find something to write about every time and develop a personal relationship with the subject. After two years of practice, they are often happy to move on, as it is hard work to keep the journal up-to-date, so they are open to try other ways. A few years down the line, however, pupils often remark that they noticed how much competencies they gained from their learning journals. They are often very conscious of the life skills it has brought them. One of Patrick's former pupils recently confided in him that he had kept all of his learning journals as they are the most personal documents of his whole school life. Colleagues who teach in the upper classes have commented that the pupils taught by Patrick are autonomous, used to working with any topic they are introduced to, and able to produce something out of their own thinking.

In terms of communication with parents, Patrick introduces the dialogic method once at the beginning of the year every time he starts with a new class. During the year, there is no specific communication around the practice, except for informal communication and specific requests. Parents can also consult the journal of their child. This process could be improved if the necessity for more parental involvement is felt. Each year there is a parent-teacher meeting during which the final grades are communicated. During these meetings Patrick also tells them about the journals. Patrick explains that twenty years ago, parents were skeptical about his alternative methods, as the tendency back then was to have very high expectations and to put a lot of pressure on pupils. Today there is greater understanding and support. Patrick attributes this change to the fact that he is more experienced, has support from the school and that expectations from the school system are not as narrow as in the past. Generating more pupil engagement is even encouraged in the latest national curriculum reform.

Looking back at the strengths and limitations of this practice, Patrick underlines that over the years he has learnt much about mathematics, German, and the children who participated in the process. Although he has been teaching the same age group for all these years, working in this way brings diversity and gives the pupils more opportunity to show who they are and what they can do. Some may not perform so well in tests but they are able to show what they can do in their learning journals. Patrick recalls a pupil who often struggled passing the tests but was extremely strong in analysing her mistakes and wrote very interesting content in her journal, which was taken into account in her final grade. The only real difficulty he sees for the teacher relates to the time factor. It takes a lot of time to constantly be reading what the pupils write, although it can be very instructive. He also mentions that you sometimes have to resist pressure from the curriculum. From his experience it does not take more time to cover all the topics in this dialogic way, and delving into the depth according to where the pupils are leading you is essential, even if it seems to be leading you away from the programme temporarily. As Patrick engages the dialogic learning process for mathematics as well as German, this requires staying connected to both threads simultaneously and switching back and forth in his head.

According to Patrick, these challenges are worth overcoming for the depth of the engagement and insight that results from the process both for pupils and teachers.


When you adopt this method, the way that knowledge comes into being is enlivened. Teaching is then no longer a one-way street of “passing on” knowledge, but entails becoming a midwife for the rebirth of knowledge in each individual student. The subject becomes a base for dialogue between all parties, integrating a robust formative assessment practice within it.

Sources

Narrative by Ilona de Haas, based on:

- *An interview with Patrick Kolb in November 2020, with the help of Detlef Hardorp for the translation and edition*

Photographs courtesy of Mercédesz Skoda



Meeting Day: A Smooth Transition Between Primary and Secondary School (Hungary)

Shifting from primary to middle school can be challenging not just for the children involved, but also for the teachers, as they have to deal with the burden and responsibility of deciding about the composition of the new class. In Waldorf education, where learning is regarded as a social activity, the class plays a crucial role in creating the ideal learning context for everyone. It's not about picking the best pupils or bringing together children with similar interests or capabilities, but rather about building an inclusive heterogeneous learning community.

The Meeting Day, which is held months before the new school-year, provides time and space where pupils from the last year of the primary school meet both secondary school teachers and pupils coming from other schools and wishing to join them. It is a framework that helps the teachers assess where a set of pupils is, whether this particular school and class are the best for a given student to reach their full potential, and it also ensures a smooth transition from primary to secondary school.

The School

The Napraforgó Waldorf School was founded in 1994 in Debrecen (Hungary's second-largest city after Budapest) by a group of parents and teachers who wanted Waldorf education for the children in the region. The first class started in 1995 in a living room with five children, but the next year they already moved to a four-classroom school in the outer part of the city (Kismacs) and soon started to offer secondary education as well. The school grew dynamically, in 2011 they got a larger school-build-

ing for use in the centre of Debrecen, and in 2016 restarted the secondary school (classes 9-13). The practice described below has been developed in this context after the school had reached the point in its growth when it was about time to offer secondary education. As there were not enough pupils to fill up the 9th class, they offered the opportunity to join the school for pupils from other, non-Waldorf schools. It was necessary to create a time and space, an occasion where new applicants, old pupils and the teachers of the school would meet, get to know each other and find out whether they could work together. Hence the name "Meeting Day". However, over time it became obvious that the name "Meeting Day" has another level. It's not only the meeting of the newcomers and the old classmates, but also the meeting of primary school pupils and the secondary school.

The Practice

The practice is rather a framework than a set of rules, with its actual elements changing and developing over time, and being adapted to both the circumstances and the pupils and teachers involved.

The framework. The framework includes both individual and group activities. The group activities aim to provide the opportunity to observe the youngsters together, as a community. The observing teachers assess how the children, new and old, interact with each other, communicate, make arrangements, solve problems. Over the years these activities included painting, clay projects, collage making, plays, even military exercises. When deciding about the activity, the main factor is that it brings ease and joy, not only for the pupils but also for the teacher. It is usually something related to the teacher's passion or hobby, as they prepare for this day as if it was a celebration, a day of joy. The sense of ease and joy brings spontaneity, which in turn helps to show whether a pupil fits into this school and this class, or not. Adolescents tend to behave reserved and shut down, partly because of their age, but sometimes also because of their upbringing. The goal is to free up both the common and the individual parts, to help them feel good, relax and open up - both the newcomers and the old pupils.

As for the individual activities, the aim is to provide a space where they can express themselves individually.

IDENTITY CARD #9

Name of practice Meeting Day: A Smooth Transition Between Primary and Secondary School

Type of assessment **Formative:** the artistic group activities help the students find their role in the group, identify their strength, and learn to value differences, and to see each other as resources in a learning community.
Self-assessment: in the Threshold Conversation pupils reflect on their work, achievements and experiences, and based on them they are encouraged to set realistic expectations for the future.
Summative: the practice includes a written test aimed to identify significant gaps in students' knowledge.

Category School-wide practice specific to the shift from primary to secondary school

Field	Not specific to a subject	Holistic assessment where attitudes, skills, learning methods, interpersonal relationships, etc. are also being assessed.
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Age group	Class 8 (14-15yrs), ISCED 3	This practice is specific to the transition from primary to secondary school, which takes place at this age in Hungary.
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School	Napraforgó Waldorf Iskola	napraforgoiskola.hu
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Country	Hungary	Debrecen
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Values **Contextualised:** the activities of the Meeting Day are designed to provide the best context for the participants to present their skills and abilities in oral and written expression, as well as their interpersonal skills.
Individualised: the practice is designed with the children in mind, and a key element of it is to provide a space where they can express themselves freely.
Participatory: the group activities and the Threshold Conversation are built around the mutual engagement of the participants.

Timeline and preparation	6 hours	The practice described below takes about half a day: from 9.00 to 13.00 for the pupils and about two hours more for the teachers to discuss what they have observed and to make decisions.
Form of documentation	Written	The activities of the Meeting Day are documented in written form (notes of the observing teachers, written assignments, artworks created).
Implementation of outcomes	The outcome is a formal admissions decision (accept or reject).	



This practice consists of several parts: during the admission interview (so-called **“Threshold Conversation”**) pupils who have been attending the school for the previous years reflect with a pair of teachers on their work and achievements from the last years, and discuss their plans for the years ahead.

Those who come from different schools also have a conversation with the teachers, but with the aim of getting to know each other, giving some impression of their personality, their fields of interest, and their openness to Waldorf education.

Throughout the day there are common **artistic activities** through which not just the social skills and competencies are assessed, but also the expressive language skills that the participants use to express their observations. These activities aim to help the children reveal their creativity both in individual and in group work, demonstrate sensitivity in changing situations and display self-knowledge.

Although not a conscious choice at the beginning, a **written test** with logical puzzles and linguistic assignments has become a constant part of the day. This test, to some extent, resembles the standard admission tests in maths and Hungarian (that are used in state schools) in the pupils’ perception, which gives a sense of severity to it. It is a

quantitative element of the practice in that it translates to marks or points. However, it cannot be regarded as a standardised test, because there isn't one single "right" answer, but it is rather the reasoning behind the answer that is in focus. For example, to note whether a logical puzzle induces calculation or creative thinking in a particular child's mind gives the teachers useful information about them for the upcoming years. As a secondary purpose, it helps to spot significant backlogs in reasoning, logical thinking or verbal skills. Let's see how the Meeting Day unfolds and flows.

Preparation. The preparation for the day starts when the applications have been received. The application includes the application form and a handwritten motivational letter from both the pupil and the parents. All the secondary school teachers read these documents and design the day based on the shared understanding of what kind of pupils are coming from where and with what motivation.

My cover letter

I started kindergarten in France, where I went to a very ordinary public kindergarten. I loved it here, even though I could barely speak French, as I got help from a nice Arab girl. After we returned to Hungary, I started going to the Waldorf kindergarten in Gyöngyöstarján, which was about 6 km from the village towards the forest, next to a forester's house. This kindergarten, hidden in the forest, gave me many happy moments. For example, there was a stream next to the kindergarten where we could go down if we behaved well; unfortunately, this kindergarten has since been closed.

After that I went to the primary school in Gyöngyössolymos, which I also liked pretty much, although I sometimes had some quarrels with the teachers. Two years ago I went skiing with this class in the winter and it was great to see old friends again. During the four years I spent there I did folk dancing, swimming and orienteering. I loved folk dancing and orienteering, but I never made up with swimming.

The first time I visited Debrecen was when my dad came here to work and he brought me with him. I really liked the city, it wasn't like Gyöngyös or Budapest, you could really walk the streets and go out to the parks to relax. The next time I came here to meet my new class and we could build a small house together. It was an interesting first impression, because when I went down to the

basement and knocked on the door, Gergő grinned widely, shook my hand and asked me - are we going to be friends? This was the start of my Waldorf school years. After I got to know the class, I joined folk dancing. I was a bit reserved at first, but since then, I have made many good friends there.

I took private lessons in folk violin with Lilla Tóth, now I go to music school. I am interested in folk art. It is exciting to represent an older era, to keep it alive, both in the violin and in folk dance.

I am also interested in history, for me it is like going to another world. I am also fascinated by foreign languages, I find the beauty of different languages awesome. Moreover, I will need languages abroad, which is important because I am also very interested in the culture, landscapes and architecture of other countries.

More and more countries are going green; in other words, they are trying to be environmentally conscious, and I am very interested in that, which is why I want to travel abroad.

I also try to be environmentally aware, because that's my big goal in life. Languages help me to do this, and I want to learn several of them, so that I can see the world and learn.

At the moment, I want to be a landscape engineer so that I can create beautiful things. To achieve that, I would like to win scholarships abroad, and a Waldorf school is a good starting point for that.

When I first started going to a Waldorf school, there was something very calm in the air and the whole school was relaxed and calm. That's why I want to stay here for my secondary school years. Besides that, the community is what keeps me staying, I have very good friends here and if there is a chance I would stay with them.

Another thing I like about Waldorf schools is that they let you think, which is sometimes tiring but productive, as well as the epocha system which I like pretty much. Creativity will be important for me in the future, and I think emphasis on art at Waldorf schools helps to be creative; that is something we wouldn't get anywhere else.

Finally I would like to mention the culture of caring. Here teachers care about the children and I think that is unique. I will end my letter with this and I hope to see you in 9th grade.



On the Meeting Day pupils arrive with their parents at a classroom arranged for this purpose. This space is intended to put participants at ease and serves throughout the day as a place to connect, re-connect and relax. After some briefing by the class teacher-to-be, it is time to apply to the interview that will take place during the day in turns. The pupils and parents are now asked to write their names in a schedule pre-drawn on the blackboard, choosing the time and the set of interviewee teachers. The teachers are not there to help or coordinate the arrangements - they are observing how the participants interact, cooperate, communicate or negotiate until they reach an agreement that suits everyone. This is followed by a common activity, like singing or Bothmer gymnastics, and the individual written test mentioned above. Right after that, the interviews begin. Pupils take turns having a conversation with a pair of teachers, while those who are not being interviewed return to the tea room or join the artistic group activity.

In the pupil-teacher interview, the teachers are free to choose how they conduct the conversation. As an example, Jázmin uses a card set of life-management skills, which helps adolescents express their feelings and thoughts, which is often difficult for them at this age. However, the conversation usually goes along the same themes. They are asked to share their thoughts and expectations of the secondary school years, and to tell about the experiences they have already gone through; they are encouraged to discuss what they see as their strengths and how they think they can benefit from them in the coming years. The teachers ask them why they would like to stay in this

school and how they see their roles in the class. Alternatively, the new applicants are asked why they want to join this school and what commitments they can make to be here and to fit in. The discussion also marks a milestone for the relationship between the pupils and the teachers. Up to this point, the children had been addressed informally, from now on they are addressed formally, signalling a qualitative change in their relationship to the teachers. The importance of this is that although the teachers strive to ensure that the transition is smooth, it is a significant moment in the pupils' academic career that requires different qualities and attitudes than what was needed in elementary school.

During the day a parent-teacher conversation also takes place where parents can ask their questions and discuss their thoughts and expectations about the secondary school.

At the end of the day, when the children and parents have left, the teachers discuss their observations on the pupils and also on the families and make the admission decisions.

Assessment. These observations cover a wide range of aspects. The main factor is interpersonal compatibility. If it becomes obvious that a pupil fits into the community and they can work together, they will be able to express themselves and unfold their potential. Teachers have a strong focus on how the children make connections, how they interact with each other, and whether they dominate or adapt to others. Artistic activities provide great support to observe and assess these social behavioural aspects, and also their skills and competences like a sense of initiative and problem-solving. They reveal a dimension that doesn't belong to the domain of the intellect but contributes to the motivation to learn. Art moves the soul and calls forth instinctive movement, imagination and power without control. Here the task is not a burden but an opportunity that brings forth qualities and capacities that would otherwise remain unexposed.

Another thing that is observed is the outer appearance and the movement of the child. This is observed both in free space (in the tearoom, while interacting with their parents or other children) and during activities. The way they move and align the different body parts, their posture, the tone of their voice, their eyes, and the way they

use their body tell Waldorf teachers a lot about the being of a child, their personality, well-being, or possible disturbances. This knowledge is rooted in child study (“Kinderbesprechung”, translated also as child observation), which is practised in their everyday work as a science of qualities.

A third level is the results of the written test, which is used to provide another level of understanding of the child.

In the decision-making discussion all possible points of view are brought together, creating a common picture by discussing the observations. For the teachers who have been present and engaged in the observation throughout the day, and who have been practising child study for years on a daily basis, the decision is clear and unambiguous. However, it would be difficult to explain the decision to someone who is not involved, which can be regarded as a drawback of the practice.

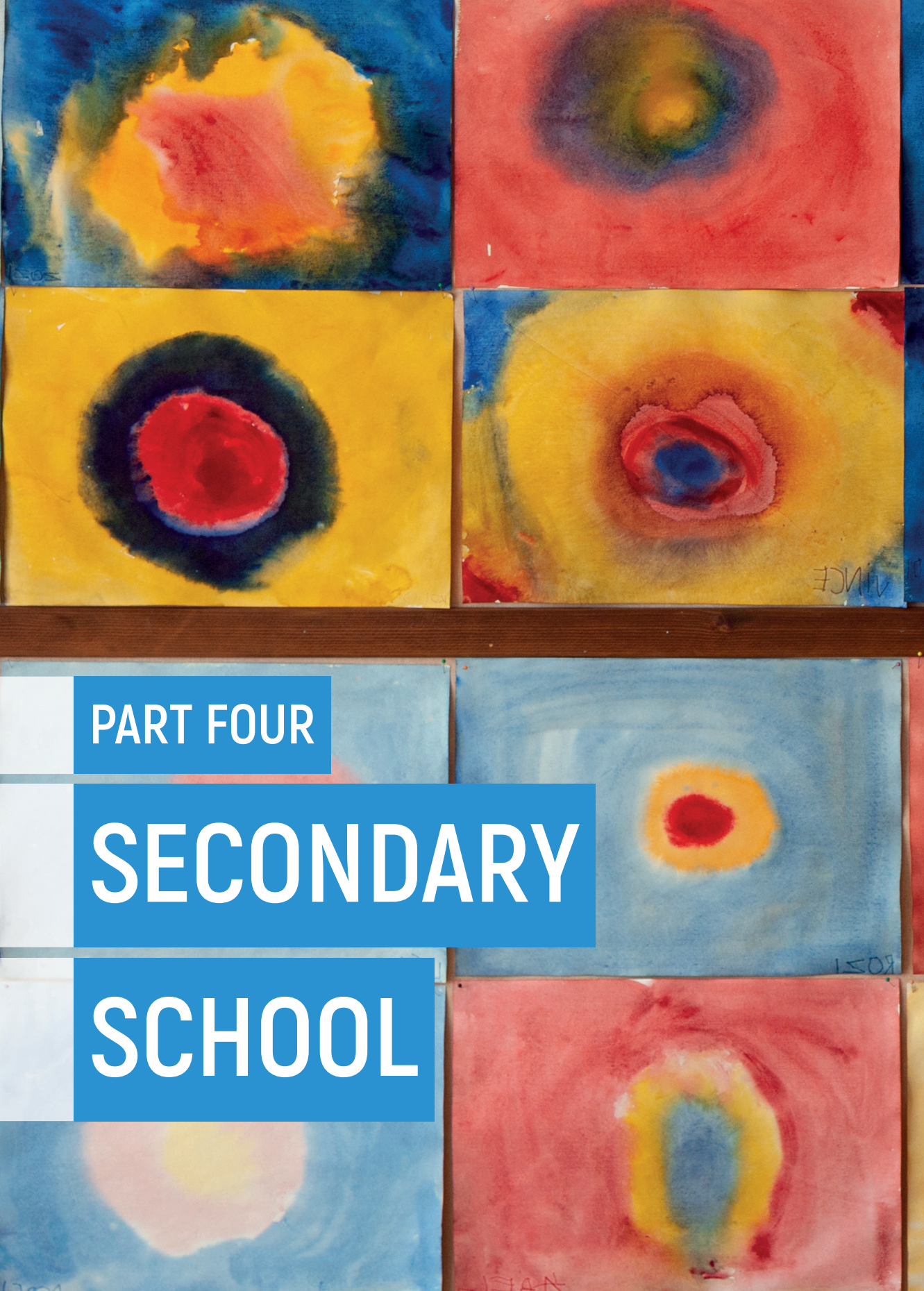
As mentioned above, the practice is adjusted every year to best suit the participants. Teachers also regularly look back and assess whether the practice serves the goal of creating an optimal learning community.

Sources

Narrative by Cecília Skarka, based on:

- *An interview with Jázmin Balogh and Imre Nagy in August 2020*

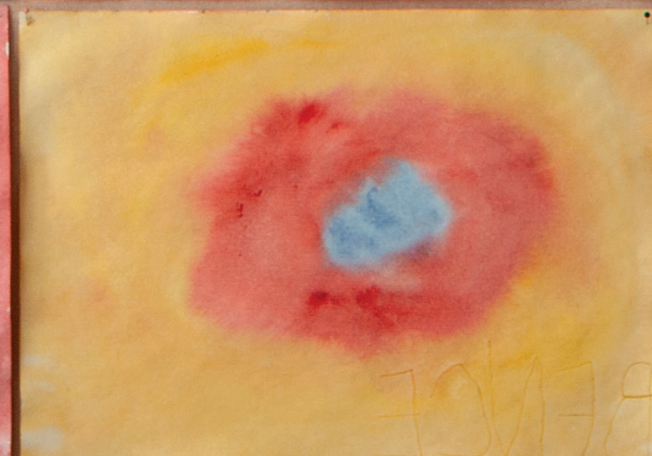
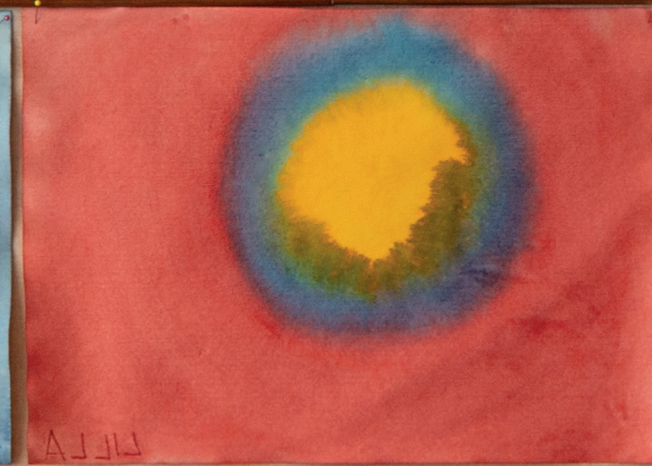
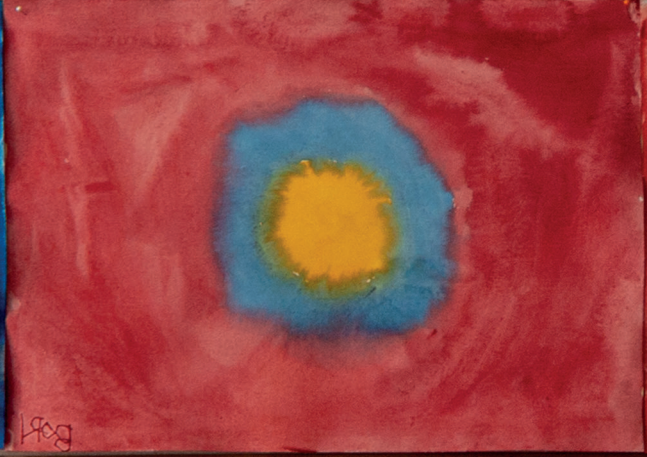
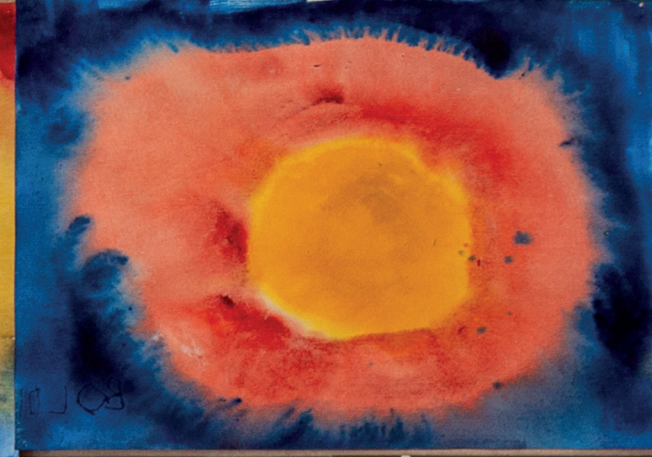
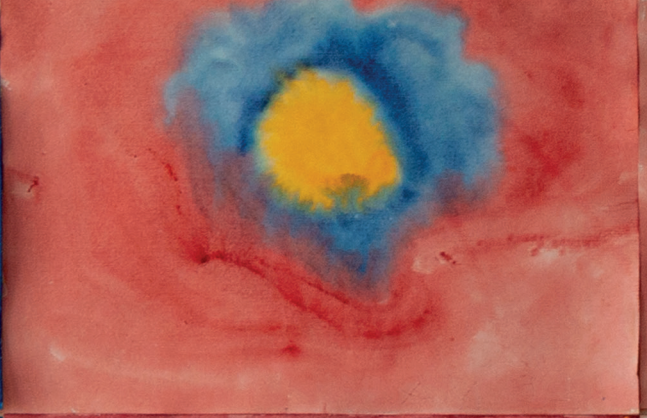
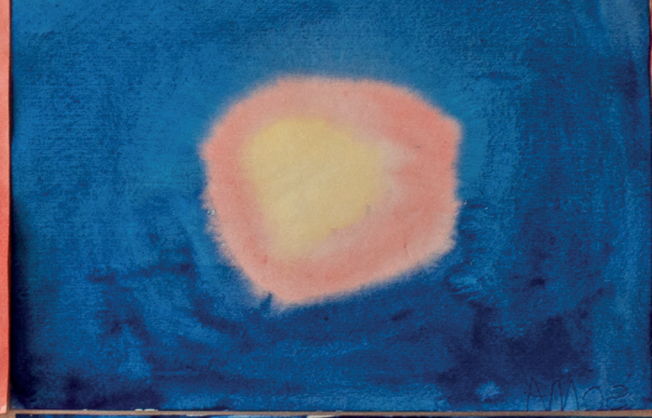
Photographs courtesy of Napraforgó Waldorf Iskola, Debrecen



PART FOUR

SECONDARY

SCHOOL



10

Innovation within Vocational Education: Creating a Card Game (the Netherlands)

Assessment - as with learning and education more generally - resonates closely with the emotions, as highlighted in this example of a good practice. The emotions here relate to the acknowledgement of presence and a sense of belonging, that is especially important for pupils from immigrant homes in low-income areas. These emotions were addressed in the example below by a deeply sensitive teacher (whose father was an immigrant), who used the exercise of creating a card game together to encourage social coherence through shared pleasure in learning. The context is that of vocational education, a 'stream' to which immigrant pupils often find themselves assigned. Issues around assessment and supportive relationships have of course far wider relevance.

The School

Naima Zeijpveld taught at the vocational training secondary school De Hef in the south of Rotterdam city when interviewed in 2019. De Hef describes itself as a modern vocational school where pupils can learn a useful trade in a structured and conducive environment. It is located in a 'difficult' area of Rotterdam where pupils tend to come from low-income immigrant homes. Of the 350 pupils, a substantial number are from refugee families and attend the school for language orientation - both Dutch and English - and mathematics, before transferring elsewhere for a broader education. Naima feels passionately about the limitations of the life chances of pupils in schools like this one, in comparison with those of her own children and herself (all products of what are popularly known as 'white schools'). A short film depicting Naima with her pupils in class can be viewed via the following QR code:



The Teacher

A colleague of Naima's at a master class on teaching commented after watching this film that there is no way of telling from Naima's manner towards a pupil whether that pupil is in the university stream or the technical stream or attending a vocational school. She addresses each pupil with personal interest and affection. In parallel, she relates to them as a person herself rather than as some impersonal teacher figure.

Naima's father, who was employed as a social worker, immigrated to the Netherlands from Morocco. As she says in the film, she feels driven to extend to her pupils the benefits of a parent who sees what education can mean for the future of a young person. At the same time she acknowledges with regret that having an immigrant parent does not necessarily mean that a teacher is sensitive to the emotions of pupils from immigrant homes.

Naima described her pupils as carrying heavy luggage with them from home to school and she was not referring to their backpacks. She prided herself on not scolding or punishing. She experienced very few disciplinary problems in her class because she tried to address minor infringement with humour and gentleness before they became major disruptions. (Her pupils' comments about her in the short film above are noteworthy here.) The class to which she was assigned as a mentor was sometimes experienced as a nightmare by her colleagues. This saddened her, because she felt that if all pupils were addressed as special individuals in the way that she did, "problem" pupils would become serious students with good future chances. When a colleague complained to her about her mentor class, she used her time with these pupils to discuss calmly and constructively how to make amends to her annoyed colleague. She asked colleagues not to complain directly to parents because that can mean the pupil is punished physically. With "difficult" pupils, she invited parents to a meeting where she told them that she understood how busy they were as single parents or as holding down two jobs to provide for the family, and she reassured them that she was looking out for their child when the child was on school premises.

IDENTITY CARD #10

Name of practice	Assessment Through Creating a Card Game together	Creating a card game that involves the whole class to encourage group learning and teamwork in vocational education.
Type of assessment	<p>Formative: the focus is on the process of learning as well as on the outcomes.</p> <p>Collaborative: assessment is woven into teamwork guided by the teacher.</p> <p>Peer: the class as a whole discusses and assesses the process.</p> <p>Self: individuals share what they have learnt through the game.</p>	
Category	Practice suited to a particular subject and age group that can be modified to other subjects and age groups	
Field	Nutrition	The principles can be adapted to other subjects.
Age group	A class of pupils aged around 13, ISCED 3	Other age groups could benefit from the practice.
School	De Hef post-primary vocational school	The school is located in a challenged part of Rotterdam and many pupils come from low-income immigrant homes. In addition, a significant number are from refugee families.
Country	The Netherlands	
Teacher	Naima Zeijpveld	Naima was the mentor for the same class and also taught English. She has now moved on from the school.
Values	<p>Contextualised: the subject 'nutrition' is addressed in the context that immigrant homes do not necessarily follow conventional Dutch diets and that low-income families live under pressures that affect their meals.</p> <p>Individualised: pupils take part as individuals who combine in group work.</p> <p>Participatory: pupils work actively together to produce a card game.</p>	

Timeline and preparation	The course on nutrition covered 3 months and the final 2.5 weeks were used for assessment through the creation of the card game	The process was developed by Naima over a few years, and she extended the game in 2019.
Form of documentation	The card game documents assessment, because for the game to work each component - contributed by pupils and groups - must fit well.	The card game is an attractive form of documentation that is well finished with cards made from stiff coloured paper and laminated, in a box made by pupils in the shape of a cheese and signed by all pupils. They were encouraged to use their own illustrations rather than take them from the internet.
Implementation of outcomes	For this course, the school followed a Swedish model of simply stating whether a learning objective has been attained.	

Her ambition is to design a school protocol for secure interaction between pupils, pupils and teachers, teachers as colleagues, parents and the school, and leadership within the school. Naima is painfully aware that the issues that she would like to address spread far beyond this school, to similar areas across the country and especially in the more densely urban western area of the Netherlands known as the Randstad.

She knew the names of most pupils in her section of the school and not only those in her class, through activities like selling them roses inexpensively to give to each other on Valentine's Day. Pupils outside her class knew her, too, and sometimes she was told "I wish you were my mother". There is in any case a strong maternal streak in her attitude to pupils and the manner in which she speaks about them. Secondary school pupils are approximately around the same age range as her own children at the time of the interview, from twelve years to eighteen. She described the thrill she felt when her eldest daughter chose to study law in order to specialise in human rights. Naima began her career in human resources but switched to teaching at the age of



forty, when she found doing homework with her children and their friends both effective and enjoyable. De Hef was the first school that she taught in, and she was there for around five years. Two evenings a week she attended classes at a university of applied sciences for a programme on health care and well-being, and she also participated in master classes on educational subjects such as working with diversity in the classroom. An example of how she adapts this knowledge in class is that when she teaches nutrition, she does not use standard examples derived from mainstream Dutch cuisine that the pupils are unfamiliar with, but instead she draws on foods that are common in their own environments. She also takes note that many pupils have to heat meals for themselves in a microwave oven because their parents are out working to meet the family's basic requirements.

Her studies included writing a dissertation, and Naima drew on transformative learning from master classes that she attended where the faculty members became friends with her. She says, though, that to do full justice to the lives of the school's pupils she would need to write a novel. Naima's approach to assessment seems to combine transformative learning with the subject of her study and teaching, which as mentioned falls within health care and well-being, with an emphasis on nutrition in the discussion below.

The Practice

For Naima, assessment of pupils is centrally about the process of learning and pleasure in learning, and she feels that the practice of assessment should incorporate both process and pleasure. Her practice would therefore fall within the category of formative assessment that focuses on process. It is also a collaborative assessment that involves the teacher, each learner and all peers, thus self-assessment and peer-assessment as well. Naima's face and voice were animated with pleasure as she described how pupils responded favourably to the exercise below.

She taught nutrition to a class of twenty pupils aged thirteen years, who also happened to be her mentor class. The course covered three months and she introduced an assessment practice within this period that took about two and a half weeks. The class did not know that this was assessment because it was seamlessly integrated into teaching and learning processes.

Within the subject of nutrition, Naima had in the preceding years developed an exercise around vitamins whereby pupils were divided into small groups and engaged in shared inquiry. This year she went a step further and incorporated the process so far into the creation of a set of playing cards for the Dutch game Kwartet (Quartet in English), usually played in family situations. As children of newcomers to the Netherlands, some pupils had not played this game and so were introduced to it.

The game essentially involves amassing related subsets of cards (for example, trees or animals) in the course of playing the game. In the version developed by Naima's class, the subsets were vitamins. Each group had to identify and choose distinctive vitamins and carry out shared research via the internet on the nature of these vitamins. They then had to formulate related questions that were sharp and interesting. This was as far as Naima had taken the process in earlier years, and now it progressed into creating cards based on the vitamins, coordinating between the groups so that the entire class produced the whole set of Kwartet cards between them.

The cards were made of good quality and attractive coloured paper, cut within the classroom to the appropriate size. The pupils asked Naima whether the illustrations should be taken from the internet or created by themselves, and Naima encouraged the decision towards their own illustrations. On the morning before Naima met me, the finished cards had been laminated within the classroom and the pupils had created a box to hold the cards shaped like a piece of cheese with holes. They had also evaluated the exercise for her, largely positively, giving her reactions to think about.

Naima's next step would be to ask all the pupils to sign on the box, which she would subsequently keep on the classroom shelf as a memento and to stimulate interest in the classes that followed in subsequent years. She would then explain that this was part of a process of assessment and that each group would be assigned a grade. The pupils had been keenly engaged anyway, and she thought that they would not have put in more or better work if they had known in advance that it was for a grade.

Assessment is less thorny now that the school has in certain cases adopted a Swedish model of simply stating whether a learning objective has been attained. This helps communication with parents who are focused on high grades and who can mete out harsh punishment to their children if grades are low. Naima says, though, that even



within more conventional assessment she was allowed a certain amount of leeway as a teacher who has an unusual approach (she laughs and uses the word “crazy”). For nutrition classes, she has also assessed an assignment whereby pupils went to a nearby supermarket to buy ingredients and prepare a dish together. When she taught English, the assessment was based on pupils creating a play or collectively writing a story.

For Naima, exercises for assessment are co-created, by teacher and pupils and among the pupils together, as with the set of Kwartet cards. For the game to work, each component - contributed by pupils and groups - must fit well. During their evaluation of the process, pupils discussed the step whereby tasks were distributed within the group and it often transpired that all tasks became shared activities regardless - an outcome that heartens Naima. Similarly, some pupils confided that they would have preferred to work as individuals, but that nevertheless working together had panned out well. Naima reminded them that their future work will most likely be in teams.

In our conversation, Naima often returned to the need to relate to each pupil with love. I asked her if after five years in a demanding school environment she found that her energies were being eroded. She shook her head and answered that love becomes an ongoing flow, like a tap that cannot be turned off once opened. She recalled a Beatles’ song and quoted “All you need is love”. I found the song playing in my head after our meeting ended and subsequently throughout the time that I was writing this narrative.

Learning for Well-Being

The Learning for Well-being principles are recognizable in Naima's approach - she tries to engage with each pupil as a *whole person*, to acknowledge *each one's unique potential* and *inner diversity*, to keep *relationships and processes* central in her view of education, to draw on the *engaged participation* of everyone in the classroom, to approach the school and its classrooms and pupils as *nested systems*, and to seek and give *feedback* with pupils as competent partners.

When she described her assessment practice to me, the core capacities identified by Learning for Well-being emerged in the words that she used and the activities that she described. Pupils *relaxed* because the exercise involved a game *embodying* the shared making of attractive cards. *Inquiring* proceeded both in small groups and across the class with considerable *observing, listening and reflecting* in progress. Naima emphasises the importance of intuition - and the related *sensing* and *empathising* - when she relates to pupils, intuition that they must take up in their communication with each other during exercises such as the one described. Creating Kwartet cards required *discerning patterns*, typical when playing a game as well as within the assessment processes that had been co-created. All these core capacities are in full use by Naima who encourages these same capacities in her pupils.

Source:

Narrative by Shanti George, based on:

- *An interview with Naima Zeijveld in February 2019*

Photographs courtesy of Adobe Stock (Mat Hayward and highwaystarz)

The Game of Ginter: History and Assessment (Austria)

The Game of Ginter is the name that pupils gave to the game of human history that Niko Ginter has created and practiced for 12 years at the Waldorf Klagenfurt school, Austria. The core idea of the game is to involve pupils in a simulation of the development process of a society and in the ability to make decisions that influence future events. The game is collaborative and has no winner or loser but serves as an enjoyable and powerful learning process and includes an assessment method, through observation of the game leader and the realisation of individual tasks. Learning through play, sparking natural curiosity and giving space to experience mistakes are some of the methodologies behind this practice. Niko Ginter has practiced this game with over 16 classes and 300 pupils and is now writing a book about his experience as a Steiner Waldorf teacher that includes a chapter on the game. He hopes to spread his practice and to create versions of it that can be adapted for other learning contexts.

The School

Waldorf Klagenfurt is located in the capital city of the Carinthia county, Austria and has around 200 pupils from ages 6 to 18, with several kindergartens affiliated to it. It is a publicly recognised private school, which in the national context means that it is funded by the state for 20% of the budget, the remaining 80% is to be covered by parents. Classes mostly have between 12 and 15 pupils each, with 24 being the absolute maximum.

Waldorf Klagenfurt was founded in 1979. Several Waldorf schools were developing in Austria at this time and the founders intended to create an innovative and liberal Steiner Waldorf school. In the first years some tension existed between the more traditional

teachers and others aligned with the liberal mindset, who wanted to teach out of their core, and use Steiner's ideas as inspiration. It also took several years for the school to be completely recognised by the national federation of Waldorf schools. Niko's personal opinion is that it is always good to have a bit of both perspectives and to tend towards a good balance between tradition and innovation.

Today only two or three teachers from the founding years are still active at school but the original impulse remains strong and Waldorf Klagenfurt is considered one of the most innovative Waldorf schools in Austria. An example of an innovative project is the **movable classroom** programme brought to Austria by Claudia Hotzy. This initiative facilitates the diversity of learning contexts by introducing simple multifunctional classroom furniture that makes it possible to change the classroom setting in a few minutes. Tables turned over become easels, benches become balance beams, and sitting in the classroom can be done in many different shapes and forms. Most of the 13 Waldorf schools in Austria have now integrated this concept. On a national level the school was nominated European school of Austria in 2005 due to all the international exchange projects that the school is involved in, and recently the school won a **media education prize**¹ for its thorough approach of the subject that includes teaching how to use digital tools, but also how to handle its dangers in a creative way. The school was also the first in Austria to push back school beginning time from 7h45 to 8h30, with the cooperation of a chronobiologist who had proven that starting later in the morning has benefits on learning.

Nevertheless, Niko recounts that when he started teaching at the school in 2006, the innovative mindset had only a slight effect on the school's assessment policy. Especially in the upper classes, assessment was done very traditionally and pupils studied for tests in a similar way to state schools. Niko himself did not know how to do things differently in the first two years, but feedback from Tobías Richter, pedagogical expert and fellow student at the Centre for Culture and Pedagogy, opened his mind to the possibility of evaluating in a more personalised way. Around the same time, he joined the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education, where the theme of assessment for learning was present too.

1 https://waldorfklagenfurt.at/schaut_her

IDENTITY CARD #11

Name of practice	The Game of Ginter: History and Assessment	Or the Game of Human History
Type of Assessment	<p>Formative: There is a continuous evaluation throughout the learning process, a participatory oral summary at the end of each class and a script book in which the teacher records the development of each pupil.</p> <p>Summative: This game serves as the end of year assessment for history.</p> <p>The end of year report is written based on the notes from the script book and a written evaluation of the myth pupils are assigned to write.</p> <p>Peer: Pupils assess each other's input and the way they carry out their roles throughout the game.</p> <p>Self: pupils are asked to evaluate what they have learned and how they are involved in the game regularly.</p>	
Category	Practice specific to a subject and age group	Adaptations for other subjects and age groups are possible.
Field	History	The fact that Niko had main lesson block periods for his history lessons made the game alive as the pupils played every day for three weeks. In another setting, a project style context with extra hours for history every week for a short period would be necessary to have the same effect.
Age group	Class 10 - ages 14 to 16, ISCED 3	This game could be adapted for other age groups but it is particularly interesting and relevant for pupils who are 14 years or above.
School	Waldorf Klagenfurt: waldorftkagenfurt.at	Niko Ginter was also invited to other Steiner Waldorf schools to practice the game on several occasions, namely Vienna (Poetzleinsdorf) and Devon (Totnes).
Country	Austria	Coming soon in Ireland.

Teacher	Niko Ginter	Subjects Niko teaches: music, history, geography, politics, and in more recent years ethics.
Values	<p>Contextualised: The assessment is embedded in the game.</p> <p>Individualised: The reports are based on observation of the individual's progress throughout the game.</p> <p>Participatory: The pupil and the teacher are in constant dialogue about the development of their role and assignments.</p>	
Timeline and preparation	The assessment process is facilitated by the game as the final report is based on notes the teacher takes during sessions	The participatory nature of the game makes teaching history more resourceful and less demanding.
Form of documentation	Written	Script book, end of year report, common and individual myths composed by the pupils.
Implementation of outcomes	The result of the game becomes a personalised end of year report that replaces all other tests in history.	



Resources also came from inside his school, where he learned a lot from a maths teacher who did no tests and evaluated his pupils by observing natural occurring evidence. Niko discovered a wholly new approach to assessment that resonated deeply with his values. An important realisation was that if you document and observe your pupils in a thorough way, tests will not give you any more information, as you gain a very good knowledge of where pupils are in their learning process.

The Teacher

Niko is a music, history, geography, politics and history teacher. When Niko was a child he strongly disliked school. He never felt recognised as someone who wanted to learn and felt unfairly assessed. This combined with his difficult family background almost led to dropping out of school when he was 17. When he was 18-19 he decided he wanted to try education again and started philosophy and politics at university. However, the experience was not conclusive, and he left Vienna before finishing his degree.

His passion for history and philosophy never left him though. Niko has the capacity of reading a book and remembering all of its content and this very naturally led to sharing his knowledge with others informally, namely with his wife's two children, who were interested in what he was saying and for whom he invented his first games. He had no further ambition initially, but a family friend observing his way of teaching suggested he would be an excellent Steiner Waldorf teacher. That is how he discovered Steiner's philosophy and got his first official teaching job at Klagenfurt. After that it all went very fast and he was one of the first in Austria to obtain a postgraduate degree in Steiner education. He was soon invited to represent his school in the Austrian federation of Waldorf schools and two years later he was the leader of its pedagogical section, and joined the European Council.

As a teacher he ambitions to make a difference in the life of his pupils, especially regarding his difficult personal experience. He hopes that all his pupils will remember school as a place where they learned relevant things for themselves and their lives. Moreover, he strongly believes that learning goes both ways, and that if a teacher stops learning from their pupils, they should stop teaching.

The Practice

The Game of Ginter was created for pupils and inspired by pupils. Niko recounts that before his first main lesson block he was invited to assist a German teacher teaching literature in medieval times, and he could feel that the class was in a playful mindset. They wanted to engage with the facts, reach a deeper understanding of what happened and of the emotional impact behind decisions. This experience encouraged Niko to start his first main lesson block with a game mimicking historical events as an introduction. It was so successful that the introduction quickly replaced the entire block period as well as the formative and final assessment of history for class 10 (ages 14 to 16).

The game described below is the result of twelve years of experience, with sixteen different groups. Niko explains that the first year was an experiment, the second year an attempt to repeat the experiment, and in the third year, it became a clearly constructed process with a conscious balance between structure and adaptability. The key for success is indeed to be able to read the group, find the adequate way to involve all

pupils and stay flexible. One of the challenges Niko had to face was to play the game with pupils he had never met before. He found that his role was easier when he had already taught the class or some of the pupils the year before. The composition of the group also has an influence on its rhythm. One year he had a class that raced through the game. Niko had to be creative and add extensions to keep up with them. Teaching and assessing with this game was a learning experience for Niko himself and as the years went by, he got more self-assured and aware. He always asked for feedback from the pupils and listened to the new perspectives they had to offer. Allowing himself to question the plan and adapt it if necessary as well as progressively increase the influence of the pupils on the game are two important elements that characterise the game as it is today.

Niko strongly believes that the meaning of education is to advance pupils in their development, not only gaining knowledge per se. This is reflected in the game because it does not follow a strict curriculum but rather has a general framework



and objectives. The game covers a specific time period, for instance from 6.000 to 10.000 BC, beginning at the Neolithic revolution that marks the start of communities and first settlements, and going as far as Alexander and the Greek influence of the Mediterranean sea. As the game focuses on learner development, the exact content covered in this time frame varies from year to year depending on where the game led the group, and the particular interests of the pupils. He once did the game with pupils who were very interested in music which led to a focus on the history of music and the creation of musical instruments.

The goal of the game is to provide an understanding of relations between people in early settlement situations and to further their development to a point where they could be described as civilised. This includes exploring how people in early settlement situations had to rely on one another and what the roots of cultural revolutions could be, from necessities to more personal phenomena like greed, strive for influence and power. Factors like art, mathematics and writing, laws and structure, knowledge, beliefs and heritage are important as well as pride, personal justice and ambition which are also part of our cultural evolution. Moreover, involving pupils in a development process enables a real understanding of historical context rather than looking down on history out of the 21st century. The process also leads to an understanding of the importance of cooperation and the qualities of social and asocial behaviour. Niko observed that this understanding translated directly into the classroom as social issues between pupils were sometimes resolved through playing the game together.

The game starts with two pupils who are placed on the map. The map is drawn on the blackboard that becomes a game board until the game is over at the end of the three weeks. This physical manifestation of the game requires cooperation from all other teachers. At the minimum this means that the other teachers have to work with a partially occupied blackboard and in some cases it also means organising a common lesson or passing by in a history session to bring in some special knowledge that the game has led to. In this first stage the only information available is the board created by Niko containing two rivers, woodland, grassland, mountains and a desert as well as how much time is needed to get from one place to another. The first two players are told they have to survive in a land where they have no personal sup-

ply of water, food or tools. As Steiner Waldorf schools often provide survival camps in the middle school classes, most of them have a good idea how to basically survive, so they often start by building a shelter and then looking out for water and food. Even without hinting towards the concept of settlement they quickly develop the idea that it is better to be in a group. To this end the initial players have to choose their team by looking out for skill sets, strength and wit. This part of the process has to be carried out carefully so no one feels left out.

The second stage of the game is to establish the first settlements. These can be moved several times during the game, but the pupils are told that their first choices will have an impact on how their development will move forward. A first set of roles is assigned, namely hunters and gatherers. Everyone can choose their role but needs approval of their tribe. This part of the game involves a lot of action from the pupils, lively debates and questions. This stage also includes establishing flora and fauna for the region, debating the land and its future possibilities as well as the advantages of collecting and hunting. At the end of stage two, two villages are formed and everyone has a task to fulfill to the best of their abilities. The idea of constant food and water supply is being explored as well as the early settlements, the reasons for being close to a river or the ocean, and what that implies for the future. Niko brings in some facts to help pupils make progress but gives as much space as possible to explorations and questions led by the pupils. The magic of the game is that it sparks natural curiosity so pupils ask many questions and do individual research. Niko explains that some of his classes even had WhatsApp groups to continue the exchange of ideas and information at home in between the sessions.

Stage three of the Game focuses on the inner structure of a village, what it takes to make a group of people consider themselves a culture, and how a founding myth influences the identity of such a settlement. By the end of the third day each settlement has to have their founding myth ready. This group myth sometimes inspires pupils for the creation of their individual myth that is part of the final evaluation. The game then continues to evolve through seven to eight more stages (ten to eleven stages in total). As the game advances in time village life increases in complexity, more roles are introduced and pupils are given specific tasks that involve individual research and communication of the results to their team. From hunting and collecting

they move to farming and reshaping the land, exploring concepts of time, seasons, ideas of religion and philosophy. The logical development of the game gives the historical framework and this implies that a coherence has to be kept in the evolution of roles as well. For example hunters become herders of animals and collectors become farmers. Some of the collectors later also become healers, hunters become soldiers and some of the farmers become priests. This logic is also possible to follow as at the end of each lesson pupils are asked to copy the map and take notes of the summary of important events.

In stage six and seven the village establishes rules and ways to control compliance which also leads to the development of writing. These are typical examples of specific tasks, developing village rules or creating a common written language. Peer assessment is embedded in the process as pupils present their ideas to the group and receive feedback from their peers. The ethics behind this is that an idea should never be downplayed but played with. Each team occupies a space and pupils move out of that space to go on their individual search missions. Towards the end of the game the two clans meet, in peace or in war and concepts of trade and hierarchy come into play.

Throughout the game the teacher is the guardian of the rules and the book of knowledge to empower the players. Niko decides when to open or close chapters, and when the game needs to evolve to the next stage. This allows him to intervene at certain moments that are targeted towards learning outcomes and when the pupils are stuck and need to add substance to their knowledge. The pupils are asked and ask questions before making decisions but they have the final word. Letting them play out their mistakes is an important part of the learning process. However, the spokesperson for each group is responsible for communicating every decision with Niko who is the only one who can decide on new phases, tasks and roles.

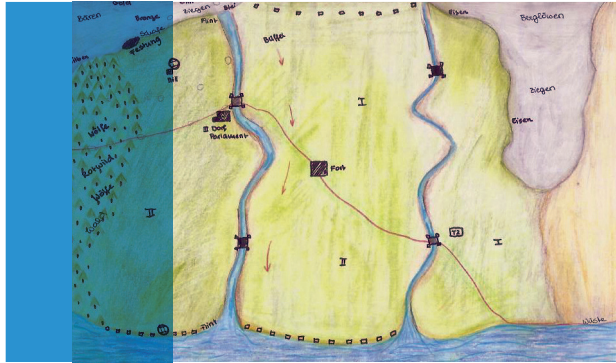
In terms of assessment, the game offers a strong formative and summative package with elements of self and peer assessment. The constant feedback and interaction with the teacher is part of the individualised formative assessment. At the end of each lesson Niko draws a circle on the board and asks the pupils to mention at least one thing they remembered. Experience showed him that they are hard to stop as they remem-

ber many elements and in great detail. This regular participatory practice gives Niko constant feedback on where the pupils are regarding the learning outcomes, and he can adapt the tasks and questions in the next stages of the game accordingly.

The game also creates many opportunities for self and peer-assessment. Pupils are asked to share their experience of the game and how they are getting involved as well as evaluate how others in the group are embodying their roles and are engaged in the process. Niko found that regularly making space for these evaluations enriched his perception of what was going on and increased involvement of “quieter” or more introverted pupils.

As for the summative part, Niko has a script book in which he takes precise notes of how each pupil interprets their role and develops as the game evolves. With this information he writes a detailed personalised report to each pupil at the end. The final stage of the game is very relevant for this report as on the last day a sharing circle around what they have done and learned during the game is organised and every pupil is invited to speak about their experience. The individual myth also has to be handed in at the end. This gives Niko an opportunity to evaluate the level of understanding of the importance of cultural identity. The format of the individual end of year report includes: a paragraph explaining the game, half a page about what they did, objectives and learning outcomes and then a personal part about the different roles and learning process of the pupil. This report is also shared with the parents.

Niko explains that his pupils have always been very enthusiastic and curious to read their reports. They contain how Niko saw them develop but also cover everything they went through and how far they got. The great advantage of the game is that it allows assessment without tests and at the same time go much deeper than pure observation, which is not always easy with pupils who are quieter or less outgoing. The game gives the opportunity to assign roles to everyone and to give special tasks to those who are less involved at the beginning stage. Generally these tasks are very well received as pupils feel involved personally. This also enables Niko to understand how each pupil learns and to encourage them in an adequate way.



Learning through play is very powerful as it connects with pupils on both an intellectual and emotional level, and also allows them to be actors of their learning. After a few years Niko observed that he did not even need to contextualise the game anymore, as pupils were talking about already two years before it was their turn. Naturally, older pupils talked about it without giving any details that

could spoil the experience of the younger ones. The most common feedback he got is that they remembered and learned much more through the game than in a normal lesson, and they said it had an important impact on their experience of history. Niko also received up to 300 personal feedbacks from his pupils that helped him further develop the game and understand their experience. In the box below, we analyse an extract of 18 feedbacks that were collected based on the following questions: Which roles did you play?; What was your take and how active have you been in it?; What was the historical perspective?; What would you have changed about the game?; Feedback to the game leader.

As for the parents, Niko often received comments about the pupils' engagement with the game and the fact that it had become a discussion at the dinner table. Parents were the ones who reported on the WhatsApp groups and confirmed that it occupied a lot of their children's attention.

The Game of Ginter has become famous in some Waldorf schools even if to Niko's knowledge no one else practices it as such yet. It most probably influenced others already because he talked about it during conferences, exchanged ideas with teachers in his school and beyond, and once hosted teachers finishing their teacher training who were very enthusiastic. This game can be used as a source of inspiration for other age groups or subjects. It is particularly relevant for class ten and onwards as it demands a great deal of critical thinking and capacity to distinguish yourself from your role.

Niko's objective as a history teacher is for his pupils to learn and be curious about historical context. This game has reached this aim brilliantly and invites to let go of others that are not as essential, such as covering specific facts about certain historical periods. Creating such a holistic learning and assessment experience transformed his pupils as well as him as a teacher. He hopes the time he is taking now to write about it will help other teachers to feel inspired and make this practice their own.

What pupils say about the game

The summary below is based on written feedback from eighteen pupils, who each answered questions about their roles in the game, how engaged they felt, what they learned about history, who helped them most in their process, what they would want to change about the game and any comments for the game leader (Niko).

What roles did you play?

The feedback reflects that there is a great variety of possible roles, and that some were clearly invented for a particular game based on what had emerged. The level of connection that the pupils managed to create with these roles influenced their capacity to embody them and be fully engaged in the process.

Did you feel engaged?

Overall, most pupils reported that they felt engaged.

What did you learn about history?

Many pupils reported on how much easier it had been to remember characteristics of different cultures, countries, reasons for trade, development and war, after having played the game and embodying the roles. One pupil mentioned that they had learned a lot about culture but little about the relationships between them. Other themes that came up very often: development from hunter gatherer civilisation to modern and complex civilisation. Money trade, cultural exchanges, war, technology, religion, farming, domestication of animals, founding of Greece, Babylon, fight for Troya, culture trade war and other themes.

Who was helpful?

In general, everyone who was prepared to get involved in the game and do some acting was helpful. Some pupils reported that their groups were very loyal and obedient, and that during the game they identified who they could trust and who they should better not trust, regardless of the role played. Many also reported that Niko the game leader was sometimes helpful but also set some traps.

What would you want to change?

To this question pupils expressed gratitude for the game, mentioning things like: it was great fun, this is much better than frontal teaching, I could remember many more things than in other block periods, this should have lasted longer, as well as the rules and elements that they would have done differently. One element that came back often was the way that decisions were made (e.g. to distribute the roles), throwing dice or coins was often perceived as unfair. Some pupils commented that they would have liked to move faster to the middle ages, or would have liked to receive more written information, spend more time looking into innovations, give more development potential to small roles. Several pupils also suggested coming up with a more efficient solution to engage pupils who had a tendency to get less involved.

Comments for the game leader

In this section pupils reflected on the way that Niko used his power as game leader. One pupil even asked why Niko did not accept a revolution against the game leader, and another suggested that there should be a second game leader to balance the level of unexpected ideas and moments that Niko introduced. There was a lot of humour in this section, and overall the feedback often ended with comments on how engaging, funny and insightful the game had been. Pupils also showed interest in the origins of the game, how it was developed and historical background.

Sources

Narrative by Ilona de Haas, based on:

- *An interview with Niko Ginter in February 2020*

As well as:

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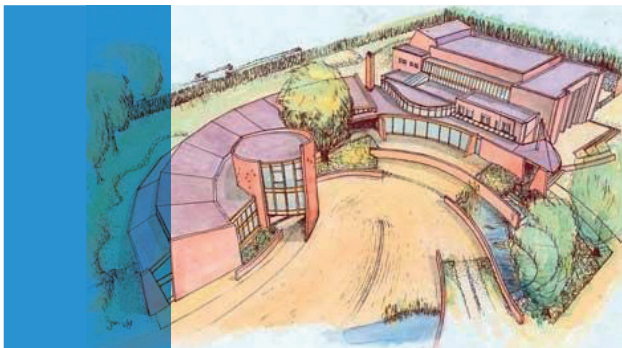
Illustration by Nico Ginter

Photographs courtesy of Adobe Stock (Juan Auni6n and Senaterek)

Five Roles and a Unique Me: Evaluating Open End Assignments in a Creative Way (Belgium)

Sam Versweyveld combined the best of two worlds by introducing a framework developed in the context of part time artistic education into the four senior years of the Steiner Waldorf secondary school de Zonnewijzer. This framework serves as a basis for the guidance, formative and summative assessment of open-ended personal assignments that pupils carry out throughout the year. Rather than giving a grade on the overall performance, supervisors evaluate how their pupils have embodied five roles that are key to the development of a project: researcher, teamplayer, artist, craftsman and performer, as well as the 6th very important role that concerns the expression of their uniqueness within their work.

The School



De Zonnewijzer was founded by a group of enthusiastic parents in 1982 in the city of Leuven, Flanders. Seven years later it was recognised by the state and became a subsidised independent school. Shortly afterwards the school opened a secondary section and moved to the beautiful building designed for the school in a suburban area of the city called Wijgmaal. The

architecture of the school is worth mentioning because it reflects the pedagogical spirit of Steiner Waldorf education. For example, the younger classes are in a string of

small houses with round, enveloping shapes and a slightly arched grass roof on the top, covering them like a blanket.

Sam Versweyveld began teaching in the secondary section of the school in 1994, when the first 12th class graduated. He feels this was at the end of the pioneer years, when the school's roots were strengthening. This was also the period when Steiner schools in Flanders received authorisation to develop their own learning outcomes, under the condition that they provide proof of their equivalence to those defined by the state. In terms of assessment in the secondary years (ISCED levels 2 and 3), the Belgian government allows schools to develop their assessment system, as long as there is documentation that can be shown to the inspection. Traditionally schools use tests and exams to create these documents, even though in theory other methods are possible too, complementing or even replacing these tests.

At the Zonnewijzer pupils do take tests at the end of each block period and throughout the year for languages. However, teachers work together based on their experience with different methods and the feedback from pupils to make the school's assessment system evolve and become as learner development oriented as possible.

The school has a tradition of extensive written feedback, and their policy is to focus on the learning goals and the progress of each individual. This implies that pupils who need it receive extra assignments to help them reach the learning goals they are challenged with, and this is being done in the form that gives them the highest chances of success. Pupils with learning difficulties such as dyslexia also have a personalised evaluation plan, for example one that replaces written evaluations with oral ones. Moreover, summative test results are not merely added up according to a formula. Instead, the teachers look at the learning progress as a whole and earlier test results thus become irrelevant.

Until 2012, the structure of assignments and one test at the end of each block period without a real exam structure was maintained. However, pupils in the higher classes felt that there were too many tests during the school year with no dedicated exam timetable during a class free period and that they needed more exam training to better prepare for higher education.

IDENTITY CARD #12

Name of practice	Five Roles and a Unique Me: Evaluating Open End Assignments in a Creative Way	Based on the didARTiek framework as defined by Erik Schrooten and Luk Bosman for the evaluation of artistic competences (artistiekecompetenties.blog).
Type of assessment	<p>Formative: continuous evaluation throughout assignment, in particular during the meetings between pupil and supervisor.</p> <p>Summative: the written report delivered at the end of the project is based on an evaluation of how the students embodied and developed within the different roles.</p> <p>Ipsative: the framework evaluates the pupil's own progress based on his or her starting point at the beginning of the project.</p> <p>Self: pupils assess their own process and performance based on the roles and discuss their impressions with their supervisor.</p>	
Category	School wide practice suitable for various subjects and age groups.	
Age group	Classes 9 to 12, ages 15 to 18, ISCED 3	This framework can be adapted to any open assignment, as soon as the pupils are ready for this type of assignment.
Country	Belgium	More specifically Flanders.
School	Steiner school of Leuven, <i>De Zonnewijzer</i> www.steinerschoolleuven.be	The framework itself, designed to evaluate artistic competence is used in several mainstream academies in Flanders (e.g. professional development, artistic programmes).
Subject assessed	Open assignments in any subject, often combining subjects	This method is best suited for personal research projects and open assignments that students carry out on a variety of subjects depending on their personal interests and skills. Open assignments in specific subjects can also use this method. Well suited for subjects like cooking, metal and wood work, textile arts, graphic arts.

Teacher	Sam Versweyveld	Subjects Sam teaches: languages and music. He is also a supervisor for year long projects in classes 9, 10, 11 and 12.
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Values	<p>Contextualised: the assessment tool gives the pupil clear criteria of evaluation at the beginning of the process and a road map to manage the project at the same time.</p> <p>Individualised: the written reports and oral formative evaluations are based on the pupil's progress in their project and tailored to the objectives defined with the supervisor.</p> <p>Participatory: pupils are asked to self-evaluate and discuss their evaluation with the supervisor at various stages of the project.</p>	
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Timeline and preparation	A few hours to be invested at the beginning to understand the six roles and be able to communicate them to the students	The broad range of aspects covered by the six roles evaluated make it not only useful as an evaluation method but also a road map for the pupil and the supervisor throughout the learning process.
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Form of documentation	Written	Extensive personalised written feedback that is handed to the student at the end of the project.
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Implementation of outcomes	The projects that are evaluated with this method are considered to be a course in themselves. The result thus influences certification as in theory pupils have to pass every course to move up to the next year.	
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The school therefore decided to organise a short exam session once a year for the four senior years covering the basic skills they have to master in languages and mathematics. This was re-evaluated in 2018 and kept only for the last two senior years.

Recent evolutions of summative assessment at the Zonnewijzer also include the introduction of the **Evaluation Rose**. This rose allows more precision in the overall evaluation of each subject by defining key learning goals that are all evaluated between one and six. Dots for each goal are then joined to form a rose. The objective is to avoid collapsing roses, both for process and results. Pupils are invited to draw their own roses and then time is taken to discuss the differences between their and the teacher's rose. Sam recounts that in many subjects pupils underestimate themselves and that this exercise is very important for the development of self-awareness and independence. Pupils feedback that the evaluation rose is not their preferred tool because it emphasises the points they need to work on. As Sam pointed out, this is all part of the learning process. Tools such as this one aim to bring the focus back to the qualitative aspects of feedback and influence in a positive way how pupils learn and study. The

evaluation rose is also used in the context of the ***Five roles and a unique me*** framework, with each role being one of the learning goals.

At the Zonnewijzer, many assessment systems exist in parallel and their challenge is to strike the right balance between diversity and coherence.

The Teacher

Sam Versweyveld did not plan to become a teacher. After graduating from linguistics, he was offered a job as a Dutch and English teacher at the Zonnewijzer and accepted the opportunity. This first job was a revelation to him in several ways: he discovered how much he enjoyed teaching, that the contact with pupils was very natural to him, and that he greatly appreciated Steiner Waldorf education. Sam had never been in contact with Steiner Waldorf pedagogy before and was surprised with the level of personalised attention for each pupil. Sam explains that he had never felt that his personal development had been of interest when he was at school. 26 years later, Sam is still a teacher at the Zonnewijzer, with an extension of his role as he completed a master's degree in music and now combines language and music teaching. On top of his language and music classes, Sam also coaches/supervises pupils for their year long projects, and it is in this context that he introduced the *Five roles and a unique me* practice.

The Practice

The didARTiek framework was developed by Erik Schrooten and Luk Bosman with the aim of guiding pupils to become competent art practitioners, in the context of part time artistic education programmes. The development took several years and was then rolled out in most art academies in Flanders (artistiekecompetenties.blog/artistieke-competenties).

An important part of their work was to name and describe artistic competences relevant for all artistic careers in a clear and open way to give direction and at the same time enough space for teachers and the artistic process. The six roles that re-group the competences are six simple and recognisable words that represent areas pupils can explore, and a common mindset, the DNA of artistic education. All artistic subjects

can include the six roles, with varying importance given to one or the other depending on the form of art that is being evaluated. These roles serve as a basis for evaluation and the result is a much more meaningful overview of the different aspects of the pupil's work compared to an overall evaluation intertwining all the roles together. The framework also includes a series of tools to help teachers give relevant oral and written feedback. In fact, Sam explained that teachers in artistic education are not necessarily trained to give qualitative personalised feedback in words and these tools give them key words and qualities to be used as inspiration (see an example here: artistiekecompetenties.blog/n).

Sam was invited to a conference on the framework and immediately saw the potential of using it in the context of the personal and open long-term assignments that students are asked to do every year from class 9 to class 12. The 9th class pupils are asked to do a biography assignment, 10th class a project that brings social value to their environment, and classes 11 and 12 do end of year projects on the subjects of their choice. These projects are very open and comprehensive. It can be anything from training a dog to be a sheep dog, keeping sheep and observing the effects of this on the well-being of humans involved and their environment, to writing a book or composing songs and making an album. These very diverse topics were hard to evaluate in a uniform way, and at the same time they needed a framework to have some kind of objectivity in the feedback given.

What makes evaluation based on the 6 roles so rich is that it does not only enable a holistic and personalised assessment of the project, it also provides guidance for the pupil and the supervisor throughout the process. To reach the final goal successfully, pupils will have to be researchers, craftsmen, artists, teamplayers, performers AND express their unicity. These six roles are interpreted as follows:

Researcher: how you research your topic in a broad sense. This includes text study but also interviewing relevant people, going to a museum, visiting relevant places, etc. One of the main qualities linked to this role is curiosity, the desire to find out more about the topic in any way possible.

Craftsman: the basic skills you need to develop to achieve your goals. These skills vary from project to project and can range from very technical to more academic: skills to



produce a qualitative paper, to repair a machine, play an instrument, etc. An important quality here is the capacity to learn and apply new skills.

Artist: the creativity that you put into your work. This role covers all the creative aspects: creativity in the artistic sense but also problem-solving capacities and the capacity of developing new ideas. Sam gave a great example of a project that involved repairing an old motorcycle. The pupil had prepared well and encountered an unexpected problem that he could not solve when doing the repair. The pupil developed a new tool that did not exist in the toolbox to be able to continue and that was a beautiful example of creativity in a very technical setting.

Teampayer: working together with other people. This role is relevant in different ways depending on the project. At the very least you are able to communicate well with your supervisor/coach but in some projects it goes much further than that and teachers sometimes add an assignment for pupils to work together. In class 10 the social projects often involve working in teams.

Performer: the capacity to perform or present the result of your work. In the open assignment context this concerns the presentation that pupils are asked to give in front of their teachers, class and parents. For the end-of-year projects at the Zonnewijzer they even have 15 minutes of presentation to an open audience. The challenge is to talk about the process they went through in an objective and positive way.

The sixth role, the most important one: **UNIQUE SELF**. This role is about the level of connection you have with everything you do, the individual expression and the unique quality your work has because you put something of yourself into it. Sam explains that often if the other roles are good, this one is there, too, as it strongly influences personal motivation and implication. This is also the role that really convinced him to use the framework as it embeds the objective of developing everyone's unique potential in the evaluation system.



When these roles are presented to pupils at the beginning of the project¹, it gives them a solid framework and at the same time a lot of freedom. Sam's experience is that it is the right balance between freedom and direction to support learners in the development of their independence and creativity. The way the roles are used during the process varies greatly from one pupil to another. Some need no more guidance and others need it to be developed into clear deadlines and objectives.

In terms of assessment, the final evaluation of the project consists of an extensive written document in which the supervisor goes through each role and describes how they experienced them. There is also a general statement indicating whether they consider the goal was achieved or not. This however is not turned into a grade and is not scaled. Projects that exceeded expectations greatly are recognised, but no other comparison is possible.

Throughout the process the roles are also used for the formative evaluation of the learning process and help to identify areas for further exploration and improvement to reach the next level. This is useful both for the pupil and the supervisor, as if one of the roles has been overlooked, it often gives an indication of what the pupil needs to focus on next (e.g. being stuck because not enough research was done, or missing basic skills to go to the next stage.). Up till now there has not been any formal documentation of this formative process. The self-evaluation aspect is carried out orally during the supervisory meetings, and in some cases with the help of a written document that pupils fill in with their observations². Sam comments that there is space for improvement in the time dedicated to this discussion, especially for the roles that learners often find the most challenging, such as the role of artist.

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- 1 Pupils receive a document with the instructions for the project, the learning goals and the way it will be evaluated according to the different roles.
 - 2 The document contains general questions and then the six roles with space for description and three general evaluation options that the students can circle to indicate whether the role has not been developed at all, has been developed but in a limited way or is well in development.

Learning for Well-being

Grouping skills and competences within a set of roles invites students to act within each role, which can favour engagement in the assignment or project. Through the lens of the Learning for Wellbeing framework, these roles emphasize the seven principles.

The combination of all of the roles enables an expression of **wholeness** in the pupil's project, looking at all the different aspects that participate in their global achievement. The principle of **inner diversity** allows the unfolding of **unique potential** in individuals by respecting individual interests and viewpoints, and is embedded in the system through the type of assignment concerned and the importance given to the sixth role. Moreover, the open ended assignments are oriented and defined by the pupils themselves and therefore require and encourage **engaged participation** throughout the journey. The teamplayer role gives a space to the importance of qualitative **relationships and processes** in everything we do and the way the formative process is led with the supervisor also ensures the conditions for constructive **feedback**. Last but not least, the overview of all the roles the pupil is expected to embody at some point in their project subtly introduces **nested systems** and how they influence one another.

The school has not yet done a global evaluation of the results of this method used by all supervisors since it was introduced, but Sam explained that overall the pupils react very well to it as it is concrete and makes expectations clear. It gives them a challenge but with a constructive method to confront them with it. Moreover it explicates soft skills that are not always easy to capture, such as personal connection with your work. Positive learner development is clearly present and below are some statements from interviews with recent alumni.



"I did my entire secondary education at the Zonnewijzer. In general terms, I found it useful to get a deeper look into the different roles that should be present in a project. For my internship in class 9, I was asked to hand in a portfolio and self-evaluate based on the roles. It was interesting and challenging at the same time because the internship was too short to really explore all of them. For my end of year project in class 12, I did a theoretical and practical project about Japanese woodblock prints and enjoyed the free and pro-active context. I was happy with my evaluation and appreciated that it looked at every component and how I grew and developed my abilities throughout the process. I think that the roles and the objectives of the framework could be more explicitly presented to their."

— *Arend, 20 years old, alumnus of the Zonnewijzer, now studying Japanology at the University of Leuven*

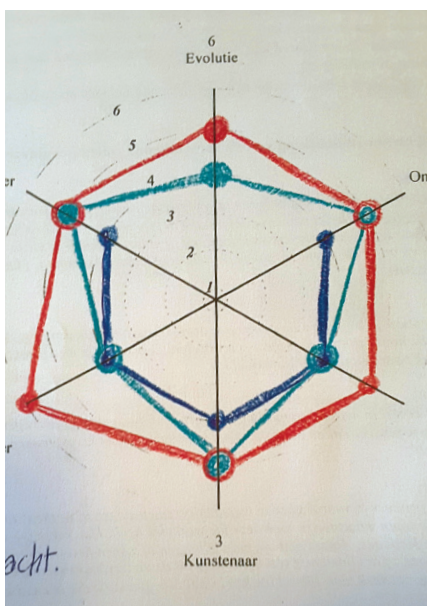


"My big project in year 11 had a significant influence on the professional direction I have chosen today and I am very grateful for the experience. Initially I wanted to make a short film but that did not work out and I ended up preparing a performance on the theme of psychosis that included many forms of art. I remember the roles as a way to evaluate different aspects of my project and in my case, to not only focus on the creative aspect. The self-evaluation was a way for me to explain my working process and in retrospect also to explain how I thought the process had unrolled. The roles are open and avoid yes or no answers. I do not remember all the ways they used them but what stays today is that you needed a bit of everything to make it work."

— *Celeste, 18 years old, alumna of the Zonnewijzer, now studying Performing Arts*



Teachers who use this method are also satisfied with the support it brings to leading pupils and evaluating the process as it unfolds. Some colleagues who teach subjects that are harder to assess in a traditional way have taken on parts of it to assess their course, using the evaluation rose in combination with the relevant roles.



Example of an evaluation rose, with the blue lines representing self-evaluation by pupils at two different stages of the process, and the red line the evaluation of the teacher. This rose is the evaluation of a course named "expression" that includes eurhythm and other artistic disciplines.

Pupils receive regular updates that parents can consult too, but often the updates are not detailed enough, so the method is explained to parents at parent-teacher evenings. Sam recounts that a lot of parents recognise the type of process from their working environments and are willing to think outside the box. In fact, assessing in this way may also participate in the preparation for professional life as understanding which role you are in at a certain moment is an important component of professional development. Sam explains that there are always some parents who are very attached to grades and competition, and this reflects in the pupils' reactions too.

Overall, five years after introducing the six roles, Sam considers the practice to have reached its objectives. He emphasised the importance of introducing it well in the beginning, keeping all the roles in and using it for the right type of assignment.

Sources

Narrative by Ilona de Haas, based on:

- *An interview with Sam Versweyveld in March 2020*
- *Short interviews with Arend and Celeste (alumni) in April 2020*

As well as:

- *De Zonnewijzer, Steiner School Leuven. Pedagogie. www.steinerschoolleuven.be*
- *Schrooten, Erik, Artistieke competenties: blog voor kunstig competente leraren. artistiekecompetenties.blog*

Photographs courtesy of De Zonnewijzer

13

Continuous Assessment: A Framework of Practices that Underpin Learning (Germany)

Assessment is for learning and must therefore accompany learning closely and continuously - this is the essence of and the strong message from the practice of assessment that is described below. It is therefore not a practice as such but a framework of practices that endeavours to be seamlessly integrated in order to follow and support fully the collective journey of learning in a classroom and within this the personal learning path of every pupil. The context in which this is embedded is both the Steiner Waldorf principle that education should enable each pupil to become what they are, and the specific methodology of Waldorf schools that takes the form, for example, of main lesson blocks.

The wider context is state regulation of schooling, in this case the German situation of requiring grades to be given to pupils in senior classes, working towards the Abitur or end of secondary school exams. Pupils are enabled to go through the final state exams with the strength that can be drawn from a school curriculum which has helped build pupils' abilities over years of assessment for learning rather than learning for assessment.

The School

The Christian Morgenstern School, like other Waldorf schools, begins with class 1 - closely linked to its kindergarten which nurtures children from 18 months to 6 years of age - and ends with class 13 to mark the end of secondary school education. The school was established some fifteen years ago and is therefore still growing, drawing pupils from the inner areas of Hamburg city. Currently a total of 320 pupils work with 37 teachers, some of whom are part-time. The state funds about four-fifths of school

costs, and the remainder is financed by school fees paid by parents relative to their income and limited by state regulation.

The school describes itself as inclusive and as welcoming children with different talents. As part of this mission, cognitive learning is balanced with artistic and practical learning as well as with the development of social skills underpinned by empathy. Pupils are also introduced early to two foreign languages, English and Spanish, to encourage communication skills and a broad sociability as well as the capacity to share other perspectives on the world.

Ulrike Sievers, the teacher introduced below and whose practice of assessment is discussed at length, is well integrated as a secondary school teacher into the Christian Morgenstern School.

The Teacher

Ulrike was sure from early on that her life's work would be with children. As an adolescent, she was already guiding groups of younger children at the village sports club, run in spare time by a woman teacher who provided an inspiring role model. Her image of relationships between children and adults was enriched at age seventeen, when philosophy classes in high school exposed her to Martin Buber's portrayal of relationships as mutual and reciprocal rather than hierarchically separated and detached. This reinforced her desire to listen closely in exchanges with young children and to suspend judgement, listening in the same way that her role model, the leader of the sports club, did. In later years, this listening attitude found a theoretical basis in Otto Scharmer's Theory U, with the concept of four levels of listening.

Growing up with a father who ran a tree nursery imbued Ulrike with an affinity for nature from an early age. When she entered university, specialising in children's medicine seemed an appealing combination of natural science and a profession centred on children. However, following her first year of study, a placement for practical experience in a hospital ward for children with heart diseases proved a negative exposure, far from Buber's perspective on meaningful relationships, with a particular child becoming 'the case in Room X on such-and-such machines and combination of drugs.'

IDENTITY CARD #13

Name of practice	Continuous Assessment: A Framework of Practices that Underpin Learning (Germany)	Assessment as continuing acknowledgement of where each pupil is, rather than a later stage of 'testing': An integrated framework of continuous assessment that underpins learning.
Type of assessment	Ipsative: assessment for learning, with the framework of practices accompanying the pupil in the process of grasping how they learn, therefore also formative and incorporating self -assessment and collaborative assessment, with peer assessment encouraged through discussion between pairs and within groups, and with summative assessment brought in at the end in the context of tendencies rather than grades.	
Category	School-wide practice suitable for various subjects and age groups	
Field	Biology	The framework of practices described underpins all learning and all subjects. The examples given are drawn from biology, and similar examples can be given from teaching languages and geography.
Age group	Secondary school, ISCED 3	This framework of assessment is integral to learning and as such can be adapted to all age groups.
School	Christian Morgenstern School	
Country	Germany, Hamburg	
Teacher	Ulrike Sievers	She rejoices in bringing together what is generally separate, whether the teaching of biology along with languages, or the richness of Waldorf pedagogy with the best of basic teacher training for state schools.
Values	Contextualised to a particular subject whilst drawing on integral methodological, social and personal concerns. Individualised to each pupil's learning journey. Participatory in facilitating every pupil to grasp how best they learn.	

**Timeline and
preparation****A three-week long lesson block**

The three-week lesson block provides the timeline, and the documentation described below punctuates this period with a clear rhythm based on explicit and carefully considered preparation. Prompt communication also maintains the rhythm, with the teacher discussing progress with pupils as individuals or in groups whilst their classmates are engaged in other work. The same differentiated rhythm is used when examining written work, which comes in from different groups of pupils at specified intervals instead of mass submission at the end of the three weeks.

**Form of
documentation****Written**

The integrated practice of assessment is reflected in the systematic documentation. This begins at the start of the three-week 'lesson block' with written information to all the pupils concerned, giving details about the criteria that will be used for assessment. These criteria unite a variety of methods, materials, and social forms. The teacher's ongoing notes on each pupil flow into the summative assessment at the end. Checklists maintain continuous 'tracking' throughout the lesson block. At the end of this period, the pupil receives a feedback sheet organized around the criteria that were circulated at the start. This sheet focuses on personal guidance and tendencies rather than grades, with grades given in the upper classes when required by the Ministry of Education.

**Implementation of
outcomes**

This integrated framework of practice can be used until the end of secondary school education in Germany that is marked by a public exam called the Abitur. Although not directed towards the Abitur by 'teaching to the test', it can be argued that good progress through the teaching and assessment practices described will logically take a pupil through the Abitur in most cases. A few pupils who do not wish to write the Abitur or feel that they will not be successful in it, leave the school after Class 11 or 12 instead of staying until the end through Class 13.

Ulrike then reconsidered her life choices at the age of twenty. A year away from university, working and travelling with opportunities to develop her interest in foreign languages and especially English, brought her back to professional training from a new entry point that integrated her various passions. She trained as a teacher specialising in biology and English. Becoming a teacher rather than a children's doctor attracted her because of ongoing daily contact with children and with specific groups of children for a length of time, a context that will return in her practice of assessment described below.

She trained at university to teach in the state school system. Fairly soon after she qualified, however, Ulrike shifted to a very 'hands-on' approach to children, because instead of launching into a teacher's career, she stayed home for ten years looking after her own three children. The midwife who delivered her children followed Rudolf Steiner's teachings and found an interested interlocutor in Ulrike, who then sent her children to a Waldorf school, played an active role there as a parent, followed training courses in Waldorf education and took on a teaching post at the Waldorf school soon after her youngest child joined it.

Ulrike is grateful that she could combine her experience of teacher education for state schools - during which she was fortunate to encounter tutors with enthusiasm, warmth and open minds and to gain a sound basis in methodology - with her long-term teaching experience in Waldorf schools. She has always tried to combine a warm heart for pupils and colleagues, an open pedagogical mind and technical expertise with deep roots in Waldorf pedagogy. She likes to reach out in different directions and draw varied elements together, as she does also with teaching both biology and English rather than either the sciences or languages. After fifteen years as a teacher in the Waldorf school where her children studied, she shifted to the school described above five years ago and has taken on leadership roles in addition to teaching.

Two reasons why Ulrike finds her current school hospitable to her vocation as a teacher are closely related to her approach to assessment. One is that all subjects are taught through lesson blocks, a class of ninety minutes that is scheduled each day for three weeks, including for languages which at many schools are scheduled three times a week. The second reason is the inclusive nature of classes in this school. We

will see in the description of her assessment practice below how and why these features are crucial.

More broadly, Ulrike is one of the founders of ELEWA (scan QR), an online professional forum within Waldorf education, and in 2017 she published a book on *Creative Teaching - Sustainable Learning: A holistic approach to foreign language teaching and learning*.



The Practice

Ulrike's good practice in assessment is deeply embedded in her approach to teaching. For her, the essence of teaching is the relationship with each pupil as well as with the community of learners whom she meets within a classroom. This is why teaching in blocks as mentioned earlier is centrally important to her, because this engenders extensive contact every day for three weeks with pupils, rather than meeting them for a relatively short lesson a few times a week.

A teacher's mission, Ulrike feels, is to accompany each pupil on their distinctive journey of learning. To achieve this, a teacher needs to know what every pupil's journey is and what point the pupil has reached at a particular moment. For her this is the crucial task within assessment, rather than grading a pupil for a route within higher education or as a reference point for future employment. (The tasks can be mutually reinforcing, where supporting a pupil on a strong learning path leads to good outcomes that are reflected in further study and professional direction.) Key influences on a learning path are a pupil's personal motivation, interests and daily realities.

Such an approach gives the term 'continuous assessment' greater depth, because this is not assessment based on a weekly assignment instead of periodic exams: it is assessment that continues during every moment of contact between pupil and teacher and between all pupils in the classroom and the teacher. Ulrike invokes the writings of theatre director Peter Brook to communicate this - notably his book *The Empty Space* - because the shared arena during class time requires a similar building up of relationships between teacher and pupils as in the theatre, where each member of the audience and the collectivity need to feel distinctively engaged.

The 'inclusive' classrooms that characterise the Waldorf school where Ulrike moved five years ago take the process that she describes a step further. If a teacher is making contact with each pupil, then the skills required to work with a pupil described as experiencing learning difficulties can be subsumed under those used to understand pupils' varied learning paths. When a teacher welcomes diversity and seeks to develop meaningful ways to engage with it, 'inclusion' is already well in progress.

Ulrike also makes reference to the book *Thinking, Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman. She contrasts today's encouragement of quick judgement - for example, pressing a particular button to rate satisfaction when leaving a public facility - with the almost constant process for which she strives, of implicit conversation with each pupil about 'Where are you now on your learning path and do you now understand better what this path is and how you learn most effectively?' Whereas summative assessment is based on selected achievements, ipsative assessment or assessment for learning essentially *accompanies the pupil in the process of grasping how they learn*. The various practices that Ulrike and her colleague Martyn Rawson have developed are oriented towards this.

Such a perspective goes beyond assessment as one stage, in the teaching and learning process that is conventionally depicted as 'the teacher imparts knowledge and then assesses the pupil to measure how much knowledge has been imbibed.' For Ulrike, assessment involves continuing acknowledgement of where each pupil is, rather than a subsequent stage of testing.

The inter-subjectivity - emphasised by Buber in his portrayal of meaningful and reciprocal relationships - extends from inter-subjectivity between teacher and pupil to that between pupils in the same classroom, encouraging them to give each other useful feedback and to listen to each other actively. Such inter-subjectivity would ideally include the parents of each pupil. Inter-subjectivity presupposes the trust to open up to another person. This level of trust is not always easy to establish with parents, for whom understandably the questions in mind are 'Is this teacher good for my child?' and possibly 'Will the learning path identified lead to further education and a sound financial position in later life?'

Ulrike sees continuous assessment as incorporating *on-going self-assessment by the teacher*, asking herself unremittingly 'Have I grasped correctly where this particular pupil is on a distinctive learning journey, and what indications are there to show me whether I have achieved this or not?'

Ulrike and Martyn have developed a closely integrated framework of assessment practices that helps pupils and teachers to navigate learning journeys, thereby strengthening pupils' abilities to understand and manage their own learning, and enabling teachers to facilitate this process.

This framework underpins the lesson block of three weeks. At the start of this period, pupils are informed through written communication about the theme for the block, the learning aims and the criteria for assessment. The criteria are drawn from the teacher's understanding of the development tasks involved. Relevant factual knowledge is specific to the subject, while criteria derived from the methodological, social and personal context of learning are common across various subjects:

- participation in shared exploration by asking questions that usefully illuminate the subject, and in recall activities through reinforcement of learning in pairs and groups.
- independent work by individuals, pairs and groups carried out in class or at home, usually involving choice of topic and creative forms such as mind maps, posters, craftwork, real objects or short films in addition to written work and oral presentation.
- tests in the form of written tasks that are usually open and within which a pupil can exercise choice of topic, focus and form of response.
- documentation of the entire block within a portfolio that the pupil composes - putting together written work, mind maps, posters and other media used - with the purpose of tracing the learning journey and related processes as the pupil understands all this.
- norms around presentation, timetables and self-organization.

These criteria weave together a variety of materials, methods and social forms. The common framework of assessment provides orientation and criteria for the block as it commences and is then used at the end for assessing the outcomes. The teacher



monitors individual achievements and levels of participation, and these notes flow into the summative assessment at the end. Key criteria include active participation in the learning process and discussions, group work and the quality of verbal and written contributions.

Ongoing assessment is thus supported by ongoing tracking, using checklists. Teachers thereby have a record of naturally occurring evidence on which assessment is based and that provides the basis for annual reports. Crucially, if a teacher notes that a pupil is straying from the course or encountering difficulties on the journey, this is made manifest and can be addressed in a timely way. Each pupil receives a feedback sheet at the end of the three weeks from the teacher, giving again the criteria for assessment agreed on at the beginning of the main lesson block. For each criterion, a mark is made on a spectrum simply indicated by a line with a plus sign '+' at one end and a minus

sign ‘-’ at the other end. If the mark is closer to the ‘+’, the pupil can see that the teacher estimates that learning progressed successfully according to that criterion, as well as more generally in terms of sense of purpose and efficacy. This mark represents a tendency and not a grade. Grades are given only when necessary, in the upper classes of the school, in order to conform to the Ministry of Education’s requirements. A personal comment to the pupil from the teacher, that highlights both achievements and areas where reinforcement is desired, rounds off the feedback sheet.

In addition to a careful documentation of the individual and group journeys, further elements in the assessment practice maintain the pace of communication during the learning journey. The advance flagging of criteria for assessment helps here. Prompt communication is enhanced by using part of class time for discussion with individual pupils or small groups when the others are engaged in separate work. The assessment process is similarly streamlined by ensuring that written work is not all handed in together at the end of the block, so that the teacher can respond quite quickly with comments on a stream of submissions and not be caught in a log-jam.

Assessment practice constructed in this way seeks to avoid what John Hattie and Gregory Yates identify as an unfortunate ‘empathy gap’ in assessment, whereby teachers feel that their feedback is conscientious and serious, yet pupils find this same feedback infrequent and of limited use, and outsiders assess it as insufficient in quantity and quality.

Given that this practice is intricately embedded in the process of teaching and learning, Ulrike holds that it is essentially the same for all subjects, though this needs to be adapted to the various age groups and fine-tuned to context. As a passionate teacher of biology and lover of the outdoors, she invites pupils to experience nature in all its reality and to capture their learning in various forms, for example producing a video explaining an aspect of a theme, writing a news article on evolution, creating a mindmap on genetics or designing a poster on ecosystems. This is illustrated by a mind map related to water, about the various forms of water pollution and the effects, as well as how much water we need and what we use it for, and a feedback sheet from a lesson block within biology on the inner organisation of the human body. (These illustrations follow at the end of the practice.)



Ulrike muses on her practice of assessment: "I am constantly observing and taking mental notes, and when at home I write some things down, far from comprehensively though. So my assessment is made up by a process of observation, to which I add my impression of written work or a folder handed in. All this produces a differentiated feedback which takes into account various aspects. However, it is not drawn from a long series of ticks in a list, but rather from an overall impression which is the result of careful observation, regular note taking and incorporating different aspects of the pupils' achievement. It is this picture that I offer to the student as feedback, and then I am open to dialogue and in case the pupil doesn't agree (which is rarely the case but happens - most likely in my and their judgement about active participation in class), I am willing to have a closer look the next time and I ask the pupil to do the same."



These musings are relevant to a broader life journey, described by Ulrike through the work of Gert Biesta: that pupils become aware of what they know and how to put this to use (qualification), that they participate well in a shared learning environment (socialisation) and that they grow personally (subjectification).



Learning for Well-being

The Steiner principles, on which the framework of practices described above is based, are clear in the story just told and some further connections to the Learning for Well-being principles and core capacities will now be made.

Wholeness, among the seven principles, is exemplified by the emphasis on the pupil as a whole person, the class as a whole community, and the curriculum as representing a wholeness that embeds assessment within learning. The journey of discovery embarked on by the entire class during the three-week lesson block is seen as encompassing the multiple and varied learning paths of individual pupils, thereby recognizing each one's *unique potential* and *inner diversity*. The *processes* of learning entwined with assessment are encompassed by the *relationships* between every explorer pupil and the attentive teacher, as well as the relationships between pupils, with good *outcomes* seen as following from good processes and relationships. Emerging from all this is continuing *engaged participation*, within *nested systems* in which every individual pupil's learning is included, in addition to learning within the class as a whole that extends to the teacher's learning. Assessment here endeavours to *measure what matters*, the ability of each pupil to understand and learn to steer their own learning journey, rather than grades given to determine admission to university - although university may well figure on the future journey of pupils who see this as a further unfolding stage.

Of the nine core capacities that are central to Learning for Well-being perspectives, *listening* is emphasised by Ulrike from early on in her life narrative and *observing* in her musings above. The learning journeys that she describes call on continuous assessment by the teacher, that includes *inquiring* about, *reflecting* on and *empathising* with the personal progress of each pupil, sometimes *sensing* this intuitively, all leading to *discerning patterns* in the pupil's manner of learning as well as that pupil's ability to understand their own learning. *Relaxing* is central to the different forms of learning simultaneously at work here. In the specific example of biology, Ulrike encourages pupils' *embodying* explorations outdoors, followed by close scrutiny of forms of life brought back indoors.

Source

Narrative by Shanti George, based on:

- *An interview with Ulrike Sievers in September 2020*

Illustrations courtesy of Ulrike Sievers

Photograph courtesy of Adobe Stock (oksix)

Feedback biology block, class 10, September 2020

Active participation in class discussions in group work	-----X-----?+ -----X-----?+
Attention during lessons	-----X-----?+
Homework assignments	<i>Regularly presented</i>
Documentation of our work during the block in your folder - organisation of folder - readability in your learning diaries (daily entries)	<i>A well-organised folder 😊 with informative drawings; good to read your entries for the learning diary are sometimes rather short – here you could improve</i>
Individual project about a chosen topic finished and handed in on time relevance of information design of your video understandability of presentation mentioning of sources	<i>In your video about veganism, which was handed in on time, you collected some relevant information which you presented in a meaningful way. Including an interview with a classmate made it especially interesting for your class. 😊 The interview was just a bit difficult to understand - next time you should make sure that you either find a quiet spot or get rid of the background noise in the recording. Please don't forget to mention your sources!</i>
Ability shown for self-directed / independent learning (working)	<i>You have shown that you are able to work independently – at least when you are interested in what you are doing.</i>
Written test	<i>You could show that you have developed an understanding of how respiration, circulation and digestion work together in our bodies.</i>
Overall comment:	<i>Your way of participating has much improved from last year's block. 😊 Great! You handed in a neatly written and designed folder. In our next block you should try to write a bit longer texts, though. Ulrike Sievers</i>

The Physics Menu: Using Gamification in Assessment (Hungary)

The Physics Menu is based around the concept that learning journeys can be as different and individual as children are. Although the expected learning outcome is set in the curriculum, the journey that takes one there may include various learning elements and learning experiences. A school where individual paths and autonomous choices are valued and children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning can be a perfect environment for a practice that builds exactly on these values. To make the learning process more effective and to maintain motivation, the practice also includes a gamification assessment element. This helps the pupils follow their progress, gives the teacher instant and continuous feedback about the effectiveness of the teaching, provides the opportunity to adapt or correct both the teaching and the learning process during the course, and helps to provide personalised and formative assessment.

The School

The Mária Göllner Waldorf Secondary School opened its doors in 2013 in Budapest as the first regional Waldorf secondary school in Middle-Europe, with the mission to apply the original idea of Waldorf education to the modern age. The founding teachers had many years of experience in Waldorf education, knowing its merits and limitations. They wished to create a school that built on this experience and didn't make the mistakes of the past; one that reached back to the original Waldorf concept, without the dogmas and habits that had been accumulated through the years.

Needless to say, it's easier said than done, so this set them off on a long journey of trials and errors.

The teachers' college has been constantly trying to renew their teaching ever since, looking for new ways of teaching that best serve the students. Every year they look back and reflect on their practices to see what they are doing, why they are doing it, whether it is necessary to do it and whether it is a good practice. This in itself has a huge pedagogical value: pupils see that it is okay to try new things, even if we fail, as long as we keep standing up and looking for better ways.

In order to find these new ways of teaching, the teachers' college tries to balance two aspects: the experiences, reactions and comments of both the teachers and the pupils, and what they want to achieve - what they think the young people as "outcomes" should be, what skills and human qualities they need to possess, and what needs to be done to achieve these.

Although they have been working on this from the very beginning, most of the teachers felt that it was not enough. Traditional frameworks and practices, like classes, class schedule, homework, tests, and the passive and receptive role of the pupils, are not sustainable any more and should be left behind. They come from the past and don't serve the children of the present. The teachers' college was searching for something new, something different that shows the way to the future: a school that gives space for learning beyond subject boundaries, that teaches for life and not for the final exam. As a result, in the summer of 2019, they started a new process to renew teaching in the school.

The main organising principle in this process has been to reduce the number of things happening on a given school day. Instead of switching from subject to subject that have nothing to do with each other, they were looking for ways to have big projects that integrate knowledge and disciplines from different fields and establish connections between them. They were working on a system that enables pupils to dive deeply into a topic, explore different perspectives and engage with it actively, over an extended period of time. This system requires from the teachers really strong collaboration and good communication - skills that are appreciated and encouraged in the class as well, thus leading the students by example.

IDENTITY CARD #14

Name of practice The Physics Menu: Using Gamification in Assessment

Type of assessment **Formative:** ongoing assessment using gamification elements and digital assessment tools to support the learning process
Summative: the system includes a standard end-of-term test, although its significance is minor in relation to the overall assessment

Category Class-wide practice suitable for various subjects and age groups.

Subject assessed Physics

Age group	Secondary school, ISCED 3	The practice can be adapted to various age groups
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School	Göllner Mária Regionális Waldorf Gimnázium	prwk.hu
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Country	Hungary	Budapest
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Teacher	Ferenc Erdész	Secondary school teacher teaching maths, physics and IT
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Values **Contextualised:** pupils receive the “menu” and the points associated with each task at the beginning of the course with instructions about the assessment criteria.
Individualised: the assessment is based on what and how the pupils choose to learn.
Participatory: pupils’ involvement in their own learning process is a key element of the practice. They have to choose what tasks they want to do or they may come up with their own ideas.

Timeline and preparation The assessment is continuous through a 5-6 weeks long period. The preparation time goes into designing the quizzes and linking them to the teaching content and also into deciding what selection to offer for individual work. However, these may be reused throughout the years. Reading and/or evaluating the individual works and essays and preparing the personalised written reports can take days.

**Form of
documentation**

Online

Pupils can follow their results online

**Implementation of
outcomes**

Written report based on the results. In classes 11 and 12 scores also turn into grades.



In September 2020 the school introduced its new thematic and interdisciplinary main lesson system. However, as secondary schools in Hungary had to switch to online education in November 2020, it was only applied for one term, and the new system has been put on hold for now.

Interestingly, both online education and the new system helped to move away from tests. In online education, tests don't make much sense, while for projects where pupils immerse themselves in a theme for five or six weeks, tests are equally meaningless. Testing is still used, to give an outer perspective on pupils' progress, but the new project-based system focuses on continuous and self-assessment. As a matter of fact, some teachers have already been using other assessment practices for some years. One of them is Ferenc Erdész who teaches physics, maths and IT at the school.

The Teacher

Ferenc Erdész had been a teacher for some twenty years at state schools when he reached a point where he felt that traditional education had so many limits and walls, that it disabled him to fulfil his vision on teaching. He quit his job and started exploring new opportunities and searching for his path. When he discovered the Göllner School in 2017, he felt that he found what he had been looking for. The way teachers looked at pupils and teaching was the same as he did, and he was also impressed by the children's enthusiasm and openness. When he started working in this school, he wasn't aware that the teachers' college was an initiative-driven team open to innovation in education, but now he is happy to be part of the process.

His approach to assessment was formed by an educational development project called Geomatech, which was launched in 2014 and aimed to help pupils to engage in math and science using digital technology. The project recognised that modern technology can have adverse effects on children if used in a way that steers them away from cooperating and communicating with each other or from thinking critically. The project leaders aimed to help children use technology as an experiential learning tool. As Ferenc had used these tools beforehand, he applied to be a teacher in the project. He became part of a community of like-minded people and has learnt a lot of new things. One of them was using a point system in assessment. The starting point and main source of inspiration was a blog (tanarblog.hu), but he soon found himself joining a Facebook group on the use of gamification in education, which formed his views significantly. For example, he recalls that ten years ago he would have strongly disagreed with the idea that not everyone should learn or do everything that is included in the curriculum; due to the discussions in the group, his views on this have changed as well. If a pupil misses a task but takes another that they can enjoy, dive deep into, and through which they can learn something that is meaningful for them, it has a much higher value than doing something obligatory that they don't enjoy and possibly forget very quickly. He tried to use this approach already at the state school but the possibilities were limited there, and it was only at the Göllner School that he could freely experiment with it and develop his system.

The Practice

Ferenc has been using his assessment system for three years now, particularly in physics classes. The essence of his practice consists of a “menu” with different tasks and activities on it, from which pupils get to choose and draw up their own lists. The list of tasks and the points associated with them are presented in a table at the beginning of the course, and the pupils can access and follow the scoreboard online in a Google Sheets document. The points add up and contribute to the final evaluation. The youngsters may also put their own “dishes” on the menu. A final test is also part of the system, but it is not obligatory either: if a pupil decides not to take it, that means they have to add other activities. However, they tend to take it, as there’s nothing to lose; in fact, even if they don’t prepare appropriately for the test and perform poorly, they still gain points that add to their overall score. This is an important element of the system. In a traditional assessment system, where the final grade is calculated as the average of all marks, a test with weaker results can have an adverse effect on prior good results and give the pupil a negative experience. In this system, however, the result of a poorly written test still contributes to the total points, although to a lesser extent, while giving a sense of urgency to take on other tasks (i.e. engaging more with the subject) to gain additional points and improve the end result.

The menu consists of items such as carrying out an experiment at home, making an experiment-tool, writing a biography or an essay based on their own research (preferably using foreign language sources as well). Class participation and the quality of work in the main lesson book also add to the scores. At the beginning



of the classes, they also have quizzes, which are very powerful tools if the questions are asked well. For quizzes, Ferenc uses gamified digital assessment platforms (such as Quizlet or Kahoot). They give instant feedback to the teacher about the pupils’ knowledge, help to identify and correct deficiencies or misconceptions, reinforce what has been learnt, and thus help the teacher build on a more solid base of knowledge.

The quizzes always have something that refers back to the learning content of the previous lesson, to revisit in an engaging and playful way what has been learnt. It also has something that reflects on an issue that will be addressed on that day, making the pupils open and curious, eager to find answers. There are also cooperative quizzes where pupils have to work and find answers together. For example, they are working in groups of four, getting the answers to a question on their phone, but they don't know which one is the correct answer. In order to find out, they have to recall what they have learnt and discuss their take on it, and if they don't find the correct answer, they have to start all over again. This has proven to be a good method for practising, repeating and processing the learning content, without the pupils even realising they are learning.

Throughout the assessment, the values Ferenc is looking for are creativity, independent and critical thinking, scientific approach, collaboration, and the ability to work independently.

The ability to formulate one's own ideas in a scientific way is assessed according to the pupil's age. The higher the grade level, the higher level of a scientific approach is expected. He stresses both the need for working independently and in cooperation. However, in his opinion, it's important to accept that there are youngsters who can work more effectively on their own and those who can work better with their peers. This needs to be taken into account, but it is equally important to sometimes put them in situations that go beyond their comfort zone. To do this, the teacher has to know the pupils very well. The teachers need to master the art of deciding whether a pupil should or should not be allowed to work alone, about what serves them best in a given situation. It is possible to teach well without a strong relationship with the pupils, if teaching is taken in the sense of delivering the learning material. However, the kind of individual help teachers in this school want to give is much harder to offer.

This is something that can be regarded as the limitation of the practice. It can be a pedagogical challenge to find a way to motivate pupils who don't want to do anything. However, he thinks that it is the teacher's responsibility to onboard them as well. Everyone can be brought to a place where they have a sense of accomplishment, some sooner than others. But once we have that moment, we're on the right track. The

difficult thing is that when children come to this school in class 9, the teachers lack prior knowledge about their skill levels, their background and their personality. That means a lot of margins for error in this technique at the beginning. Fortunately, other teachers in the school use a point system as well, so they can discuss these issues and give each other good ideas.

According to their informal and formal feedback, the pupils have been really positive about this practice. They like to have the ability to choose and do what they want to do, and also learn without stress. Ferenc finds that due to this practice 80-90% of the youngsters can find something they are good at, like and enjoy doing in the context of the learning material. They do acquire the learning content set in the curriculum, but Ferenc aims to go beyond that and help to develop critical thinking through a scientific approach. In our world, it's increasingly important to develop a sense of responsibility and engage in rational, reflective and independent thinking. When reading or hearing something on a TV channel or the internet, people know that they don't necessarily have to believe it, and if they do, they understand what it means.

Ferenc also tries to apply his practice in maths, but it has some limitations. In mathematics, the framework is much more rigid, and the elements of the curriculum are linked to each other in a way that you can't omit anything: you can't tell your pupils that if you don't like it, skip it.

Pupils get a written report at the end of the half-term and the end of the year. As Ferenc teaches three subjects to about 300 pupils throughout the year, these reports are bound to be rather mechanical. Although students are happy to read these written reports, Ferenc feels they have less pedagogical value. However, he also gives subjective and personal feedback verbally in specific situations, on an ongoing basis. They are more meaningful, and because of the relationship of trust between the pupils and him, the pupil can reflect on it and a dialogue can emerge.

Sources

Narrative by Cecília Skarka, based on:

- *An interview with Ferenc Erdész in November 2020*

Photographs courtesy of Göllner Mária Regionális Waldorf Gimnázium

Creative Thinking Skills: A Philosophy of Integrated Education (Republic of Ireland)

The Crossfields Institute Level 2 Integrated Education Diploma is more than a qualification, it is a philosophy of integrated education and it can serve as a base to structure a school-wide assessment policy that acknowledges creative thinking skills and the importance of enabling pupils to connect to their unique potential and capacity to learn independently. The three mandatory modules, the *Independent Project*, *Creative Thinking Skills* and *Personal and Social Learning Skills*, support pupils to: follow their passion and explore an interest or career aspiration in depth, use a range of creative thinking skills to make connections and use different perspectives to community ideas and concepts and develop pupil's responsibility for their own learning. The Raheen Waldorf school is a small secondary school in Ireland, and implementing this progressive and recognised qualification is supporting the pupils', the teachers' and the school's development all at once.

The School

The Raheen Wood Steiner Secondary School provides a progressive full-time educational alternative for 12-16 year olds in East Clare, Ireland. They describe their programme as ALFA, Active Learning for Adolescents, an authentic and project-based learning programme to develop the hands, hearts and minds of the pupils, grounded in the principles of Waldorf education. Learning at the Raheen Waldorf school is integrated, experiential, and the intellectual subjects such as sciences, history, maths, geology and languages are complemented by hands-on afternoon workshops in a variety of crafts, such as blacksmithing, woodwork, ceramics, rustic furniture and stained glass making, bookbinding, wood carving, wool felting, basket weaving, marionette, shadow puppetry and drama.

Currently the school is attended by just over 30 pupils, 14 in the junior group (class 7-8), 19 in the senior group (class 9 and 10), and four in the transition year that prepares for a move to a different school for the last year, or to an alternative route to higher education. The Limerick Institute of Technology (lit.ie), for example, offers the possibility for pupils to do a general course for one year that gives access to undergraduate courses. Given the size of the school, there are only four main teachers who share the equivalent of two full-time positions, each offering their subjects of expertise. They are complemented by some subject teachers and an administrative helper. This is a fee-paying school, but parents pay according to their income, and the school complements its financial needs with help from trusts and private funding partners.

In terms of assessment policy, the school had a very simple and open structure before introducing this new qualification. For the formative component, pupils received personalised feedback on their main lesson books at the end of each main lesson block, and were asked to do an exercise of self-assessment based on questions like: what did you enjoy about this main lesson block? How did you perform? At the end of the year a final year-report with a summary of the content of each course and a summative written feedback was provided.

The Crossfields Institute Integrated Education Diploma has enabled the college of teachers to work together on assessment practices, and this has also impacted the teaching methods in a positive way. The school saw various benefits in integrating it: structuring a coherent and learner-oriented assessment policy was one of them, and working with a recognised qualification to gain access to further funding organisations was another. The additional funding opportunities have allowed the school to offer more hours to various teachers and reduce the school's dependence on school fees. The school remains ineligible for state funding, however.

IDENTITY CARD #15

Name of practice Creative Thinking Skills: A Philosophy of Integrated Education

Type of Assessment **Summative:** Pupils are asked to demonstrate how they have reached the learning objectives by looking through their work and selecting the evidence corresponding to each goal. A mark and personal feedback is provided based on this selection.
Self-assessment: In multiple modules pupils have the opportunity to reflect on their learning process at several points in time, and hand this self-assessment in with the result of their work.
Peer-assessment: Pupils are encouraged to work with their peers and share feedback and resources.

Category School-wide practice, in partnership with the Crossfields Institute, crossfieldsinstitute.com/

Field The qualification covers twelve fields. Three mandatory modules: independent project, creative thinking skills, and personal and social learning skills, and nine optional modules: language and literature, mathematics, natural sciences, art, craft and design, computing, physical education, movement - eurhythm, global awareness and performing arts.

Age group	Class 9 & 10, ISCED 3	This qualification is a two-year programme suitable for pupils of minimum 14 years.
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School	Raheen Wood Steiner Secondary School	www.alfaproject.org/
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Country	Republic of Ireland	
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Teacher	Cormac Griffith	Physics, maths, history and Irish
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Values

Contextualised: pupils receive an outline of each module with the objectives, learning outcomes and the evidence they have to provide for the final assessment.

Individualised: each pupil gathers their evidence of reaching the learning outcomes, and evaluation of this selection takes individual progress and learning process into account.

Participatory: pupil engagement is at the heart of this qualification, from the project-based learning methods it encourages to the way the objectives and learning outcomes are communicated and the self-agency required to demonstrate individual progress.

Timeline and preparation

What is needed to implement the qualification at school level highly depends on the school's starting point. Once it is running, however, pupil's engagement in the process makes it lighter for the teacher whose role is that of a mentor, guiding individual assignments and projects.

Form of documentation

The way pupils demonstrate their learning varies according to the module. The feedback by teachers is written and includes a mark.

A portfolio of evidence, artwork, oral presentation with supporting documentation, a creative writing piece.

Implementation of outcomes

Crossfields Institute Level 2 Integrated Education Diploma, recognised qualification in the UK and Ireland.



The Teacher

Cormac has known that he enjoys teaching since the age of fourteen, although mainstream teaching had never appealed to him. After studying engineering at university, he worked at the Irish Seed Savers Association and began giving grafting and orchard workshops. He had discovered the ALFA project six years before they offered a job to him as a maths and physics teacher. Today he teaches maths, physics, history and Irish. He has learned a lot from the course on the philosophy and practice of integrative education, and is happy to be active in the implementation of this new qualification.

The Practice

Cormac's experience with ACTS (Acknowledging Creative Thinking Skills) started in January 2018, when he was invited to join the philosophy and practice of integrative

education course delivered by the Crossfields institute. The school's connection with the course was close to home as one of the senior teachers at Raheen Waldorf school had taken part in the pilot programme. After the first six months, Cormac gave his first presentation about it at one of their teachers' retreats, and implementation with an initial group of pupils followed shortly thereafter.

About Crossfields

The Crossfields Institute is an awarding organisation and educational charity specialising in holistic and integrative education and research. The Institute develops specialist qualifications which aim to support the development of autonomous pupils with the intellectual rigour, practical skills, social responsibility and ability to think creatively and act decisively. The Institute is also a higher education institute (HEI) and works in partnerships with universities in the UK and overseas.

They aim to support schools/centres in providing a high quality educational experience. They also believe that for pupils to get the most out of this qualification they should be encouraged to be autonomous and responsible in their approach to their studies. A clear, accessible qualification specification is key to this.

The Integrated Education Diploma consists of three mandatory modules (independent project, creative thinking skills and personal and social learning skills) and nine optional modules (language and literature, mathematics, natural sciences, art, craft and design, computing, physical education, movement - eurythmy, global awareness and performing arts). The three mandatory modules can be completed by the end of class 9 (14 years old) and the subsequent modules are to be completed in class 10 (15- 16 years old), leading to the obtention of the diploma. The Raheen school is in the process of implementing the full diploma, but this narrative focuses on their experience with the two first mandatory modules, which are what they started with in 2019. The short description of the three mandatory modules below exemplifies the priority that this qualification gives to developing pupils' unique potential, learning to learn, cross-curricular links and the role of non-formal and informal learning contexts parallel to formal learning.

Extract from the Crossfields institute Qualification Specification

1. Independent Project

This module supports the pupil to follow their passion and explore an interest or career aspiration in depth. It develops skills of independent and self-directed learning and develops the creative thinking skill of co-ordinated thinking.

2. Creative Thinking Skills

This module supports the pupil to use a range of creative thinking skills to make connections and use different perspectives to communicate ideas or concepts. Pupils will also develop skills of reflection and make reasoned judgements. Evidence for this module can come from formal, non-formal and informal learning and across the taught curriculum.

3. Personal and Social Learning Skills

This module identifies and develops the student's responsibility for their own learning and supports their personal and social development.

The Integrated Education Diploma was adopted and is being integrated smoothly at the school level, as its philosophy is in alignment with the already existing values and ways of working. Cormac explains that at Raheen there is space and opportunity for teachers to pursue their own interests and to adapt to their group within the way that the curriculum is defined. Moreover, there is a true commitment to continuous professional development of teachers, and value is given to teachers' initiatives to approach their subject in personalised ways. This is what led Cormac to offer a main lesson block exploring the history of food from the neolithic revolution up to the modern period, including the hybrid seeds of the "Green Revolution", the history of cattle and dairy products, the issues with pesticides, the organic food movement, and the ecological aspects of the soil food web.

In terms of the Integrated Education Diploma, the first important change that was implemented in the pilot year was the addition of a 45-minute time slot every week to give space for the independent project modules. Pupils reacted well to this addition as it offered a space to pursue their interests and passions. As Cormac explains, some needed more guidance than others in the definition of the project, as the freedom of such a project can be overwhelming at first. The objectives of this module as formu-



lated in the Crossfields guidelines are to develop as an independent pupil, be inspired and enthused by new areas or methods of study, enable pupils to direct their own learning, and give them the opportunity to plan and review their own work. The way that the objectives and learning outcomes are formulated in the documentation support self-agency, engagement and learner development: they are formulated in the second person singular, addressing the pupil directly, “supervisors” are called “mentors”, and it is recommended that pupils communicate with their peers to share feedback and resources. It is also clearly stated that this project represents an opportunity to explore aspirations for further study and career development, encouraging pupils to connect with a personal purpose.

Pupils receive a list of the evidence that they need to provide to attain the module objectives, which gives pupils a frame, and at the same time enough freedom to choose their preferred methods of evidence. For example, they can choose to produce a 2000 to 3000 word creative piece, or give a 20-30-minute presentation accompanied by notes, slides or handouts, or a performance of 15-30 minutes with evidence of 30-40 hours of rehearsal and preparation, or artefact(s) and/or artwork(s) with evidence of 30-40 hours of workshop or studio time. On top of this final result, pupils are asked to reflect on the process. Cormac gave the example of a pupil who made a ukulele and brilliantly documented the process of making it as well as the history of the instrument. Another example involving the creation of a 15-page comic with an original storyline and characters was very good in terms of result, but was missing the process part.



A similar structure to the independent project modules applies to the other ones, be it the mandatory or the optional. The intended state of mind is to look for the evidence that learning outcomes have been reached, and to find a suitable way to show it. In the creative thinking skills module, for example, the first learning outcome is to “make connections between activities, knowledge and influences”. Cormac explains that one pupil showed evidence of this by presenting a poem she wrote about the life of a raindrop, linking scientific knowledge to literature, or another who had made connections between landscape and boat building, the history of boat building, and how the landscape influenced the boat building process. Other learning outcomes include “using different perspectives to make observations and draw conclusions” or “reflecting on own perceptions and judgements”, which are also transversal, transferable and essential “life skills”.

Unlike the independent project, this module had not been given time during the year in the pilot phase, and the pupils felt that the learning outcomes were abstract and hard to demonstrate in the little time they had to gather the evidence at the end of the year. To overcome this challenge, Cormac and his team are working on making the links between subjects more explicit and integrating exercises to explore them. By nature, creative thinking skills are multidisciplinary and hard to put into a box, but it is more a process of making sense of what is already there rather than adding something new. Cormac gave the beautiful example of a pupil who did a jewellery project during a workshop week inspired by the platonic solids he had discovered in the maths main lesson, and in future these examples are to be recorded. This development of cross-curricular collaboration is a very concrete positive outcome of the implementation of the qualification.

In terms of the assessment process, the fact that the pupils are asked to collect their work themselves in a portfolio of evidence is an important element, as it gives them the opportunity to make connections and analyse what they have done throughout the period. This collection of evidence based on their assignments and projects in all forms (oral, written, video presentation) and done online via Google classrooms, replaces other forms of summative assessment. It is evident that for this process to be successful, the teachers have to design the assignments and projects based on the same learning outcomes. The quality of the questions, and the challenges presented

to the pupils has a direct impact on their results. At Raheen they did not have any form of standardised tests before introducing ACTS, but that might be the case for other schools that decide to switch to this alternative qualification.

After looking through the evidence provided by the pupils, teachers are expected to grade and provide personalised feedback. The evaluation matrix proposed by Crossfields is closely related to the level of autonomy that the pupils have in this demonstration of their knowledge and skills. For example, the difference between a distinction or merit and a pass is the ability to demonstrate learning in a well-structured way “with occasional guidance” or with “regular guidance and prompts”. The purpose of giving a grade on top of the feedback is to evaluate the overall performance. Cormac explains that this mark reflects the individual progress of the pupil given the process and the fact that the criteria are open enough to take individual learning rhythms into account.

The implementation of the Integrated Education Diploma is not only transforming the assessment practices at the school, teaching methods are also being improved. Especially for the optional subject modules that are currently in a pilot phase, guidance from Crossfields has encouraged the teachers to go further in their project-based pedagogy, engaging pupils to choose an angle of the subject at hand and learn by leading small- and medium-size projects throughout the modules. Cormac gives the example of tensile testing in physics, which he would have taught in a traditional way before, and now approaches through the realisation of individual experiments with a material of their choice.

Overall the implementation of this new qualification at the Raheen Waldorf school is generating many benefits. On the school level it is creating a common assessment policy that is clearly structured and is in line with the school's values, and it gives the school access to further funding as the qualification is recognised. At the classroom level the teaching environment is evolving positively, the project-based pedagogy is being deepened, as well as the cross-curricular collaborations and engagement of pupils in their own assessment. It is still very new and too early to evaluate the mid- and long-term benefits, but this qualification can definitely serve as a source of inspiration, and in the UK and Ireland become a viable alternative qualification focused on creative thinking skills, learner development and autonomy.

Sources

Narrative by Ilona de Haas, based on:

- *An interview with Cormac Griffith in October 2020*

As well as:

- *Crossfields Institute (2021). Vision and philosophy. crossfieldsinstitute.com*
- *Raheen Wood Steiner Secondary School. Mission. www.alfaproject.org*
- *Crossfields Institute Qualification Specification for the level 2 integrated Education Diploma, version of May 2019 (school access only).*

Photographs courtesy of the Raheen Waldorf School

16

Assessing the Arts: Nurturing Creativity (the Netherlands)

Change requires courage, and changing a system of assessment arguably requires a special courage, more so when the assessment system includes national tests at the end of secondary school. In the story that follows, a secondary school - set up sixteen years ago to embody innovation, notably around arts education - struggles with traditional assessment that contradicts its original innovative and creative impulse. The school's new director attempts to lead a process of change in pedagogy to precede changes in assessment that pupils, staff and parents speak out for. This process is primarily one of dialogue and discussion, in preparation for the reorganisation that is required to align pedagogy and assessment with innovation that nurtures creativity.

The School

Vathorst College was established in Amersfoort, the Netherlands, in 2005 as a secondary school, and for the first few years it was located in a temporary building, in a small space that felt like a warm home to some 70 pupils who studied there in one of the initial years. Today 980 pupils and around 110 teachers (including part-time staff) flow through the school building that was built with many striking aspects: spaces and studios for theatre, dance, music and art, embodying a strong emphasis on culture, art and creativity, at the same time that science finds its place. Vathorst College falls into the extensive network of state-funded education which means that it is essentially free of charge to pupils. An annual parental contribution is expected at most Dutch schools, and at Vathorst College this is lower than at many other state-supported schools, at 150 euros per pupil per year.

Pupils travel from surrounding towns as well to attend the school, and there are more requests for a place than there are places available. The popularity of the school is related to special features, summarised as the four pillars of the school's pedagogy. In addition to art and culture, these pillars are the responsibility of pupils for their own learning, context-rich learning and digital learning. Related to the pillar of art, pupils can take up two of the arts as a subject for the final years of school and can develop their related talents through a personal project, for example by composing a piece of music or choreographing a dance or creating a piece of art - a choice that is attractive to pupils with artistic talents and to their parents. This special feature of the school is associated with the time of its establishment in 2005, when educational policy encouraged new schools with a progressive orientation to learners rather than the traditional strong focus on a curriculum.

This emphasis on the arts helps to give Vathorst College an unusual atmosphere. Among other descriptions, it is said to be a school with a kind heart. The new director of the school, Annette van Valkengoed, who will be introduced below, gave two examples of this. In her first months at Vathorst College, Annette observed a reaction by pupils who were moving in a busy corridor when a new pupil joined the flow and accidentally pushed a passerby. The new pupil was clearly surprised when instead of swearing, the passerby apologised for being in the way. On another occasion Annette saw a boy expressing emotion through tears, not common in the Dutch culture of "tough young men".

The emphasis on the new and unconventional may possibly explain why students feel comfortable without binary genders, and seem free to identify with a range of identities in between conventional male and female. A boy may come to school wearing a skirt and no comment is made.

Vathorst College describes itself as inclusive, for example of pupils with physical and mental health challenges. All three streams characteristic of Dutch secondary schools - oriented to vocational training, professional qualifications and university education respectively - are combined here. Pupils from these different streams are brought together in shared spaces in addition to their separate classrooms and these shared spaces are known as "learning homes".

IDENTITY CARD #16

Name of practice	Rethinking assessment practices across a secondary school oriented to the creative arts (The Netherlands)	
Type of Assessment	The present practice is dominated by summative assessment which frustrates artistic creativity, and the rethinking of assessment practices is oriented towards much more space for ipsative and formative assessment that will nurture creativity	
Category	Practices across all years and streams within the secondary school. Although this school is centred around art and creativity, the practice could be adapted to other secondary schools that have a different orientation.	
Field	All subjects are to be addressed in the rethinking and consequent redesigning of assessment practices school-wide. A key intention is to address the current fragmentation between subjects.	
Age group	12 to 18 years ISCED 2 and 3	This is the usual span of secondary school education in the Netherlands
School	Vathorst College	(vathorstcollege.nl)
Country	The Netherlands	Amersfoort
School leader	Annette van Valkengoed	Annette was introduced in Chapter 4 about <i>Laterna Magica</i> , where as the first director she guided the emergence of a successful innovative school. She is now supporting Vathorst College in returning to its innovative origins and in redesigning conventional assessment practices that were brought in when the ideals of innovation clashed with the reality of national tests for school leavers.

Values When redesigned, assessment practices will become *individualised* by allowing personal art projects to express pupils' creativity rather than frustrating this with unresponsive grading, *contextualised* within an integration of educational streams into "learning homes" and *participatory* through enabling both pupils and teachers to experience flow and work pleasure instead of work pressure.

Timeline and preparation Rethinking pedagogy should lead to redesigning assessment, rather than external imperatives around assessment determining the school's pedagogy. A knowledgeable consultant came on board in 2020, to organise focus groups of teachers in examining the changes required to generate pleasure in teaching and learning, and currently working groups are taking specific recommendations further. When the new school year begins in 2021, the school management will work out a timetable for redesigning assessment practices.

Form of documentation The process has been documented in the consultant's report with its recommendations and in the notes of the working groups that are taking forward the recommendations

Implementation of outcomes Rethinking pedagogy will be followed by redesigning assessment practices.

A special feature of the school mentioned earlier generates a related problem. A pupil may invest time, energy and passion in a personal art project for the final years of school, and the relevant teacher may grade the pupil very highly in the internal final exam of the school. However, the national standard end-of-school examination focuses on theoretical knowledge and not on practical projects. The rules of the Inspectorate of Education allowed very little divergence between the grades for the internal school exam and the national end-of-school exam. This usually meant that the arts teacher had to reduce the grade given to the personal art project to match what can be achieved in the external final examination. This led to heartbreak for the pupil and related unhappiness of the parents, as well as frustration for the teacher who was struggling to reconcile different obligations. Such situations undermined morale within the school.

The school's initial pioneering years were followed by a period marked by an acute dilemma, between responding to the Inspectorate's requirements and addressing the school's special mission around the creative arts. The Inspectorate at that time repeatedly criticised the school for not attaining specified criteria around the national school leaving exam. In its first fifteen years, the school director changed four times, with an additional interim director. This situation of flux affected relationships between members of staff and some sensitivities remain. Further, to deal with the dilemma that has been described, elements of traditional pedagogy and traditional organisation were brought into the school, even though it had been established to nurture innovation, and this resulted in something of a contradiction in the school's approach.

Yet Annette describes strong positive features within the school from her first six months as the new director: warm relationships around learning and teaching pedagogies, and staff who are prepared to work together to move the school forward, as well as the school climate of mutual kindness described earlier.

The School Leader

Annette van Valkengoed has already been introduced in another narrative within this collection, based on her long tenure as director of a primary school called *Laterna Magica* located in Amsterdam. Annette moved to Vathorst College in Amersfoort in September 2020. This shift to a secondary school was after much effort on Annette's



part to enlarge Laterna Magica to an extended school that would welcome pupils from birth onwards until they left secondary school around age eighteen. These efforts were not successful and so Annette decided to move to a secondary school where she could expand her understanding of how young people learn between ages twelve to eighteen. She has already picked up much in the first half year at Vathorst College, especially about continuity in the unfolding of learning capacities, as she sees how positively adolescents can respond to new opportunities and exposure.

Annette moved schools in the middle of the pandemic, and the challenges have been extensive. Below we concentrate on longstanding issues around assessment practices. Annette already has general ideas about changes that she would like to initiate, for example to make the learning homes described earlier more truly inclusive, because she sees that even within these shared spaces invisible walls still seem to keep pupils from the three different streams of vocational, professional and university-oriented education in their own groups somewhat separate from each other. She says:

“traditional classes are still visible within the learning homes”. Annette would also like to go beyond the conventional scenario where - in secondary schools - a lone teacher stands in front of a class of pupils to be followed by a different teacher, according to the subject taught. She wonders whether the learning homes could act as units that bring teams of teachers together to cooperate according to what they are able to contribute and to cross-fertilise what is offered to wider groups of pupils beyond what can be found in a single classroom. Such teams in learning homes can nurture the holistic development of all pupils as well as their individual learning capacities.

She wishes to play the role of a sensitive gardener who can work within the school to prune away much of the conventional pedagogy that crept back into the school as a response to the difficulties that arose and that impede the original mission of the school. Much of the pruning relates to the traditional assessment regimes that embedded themselves in the school in response to the Inspectorate of Education’s critique from the very beginning of the school onwards. As will be described below, it appears



that some wider changes in the landscape of the garden will be required before the pruning of conventional pedagogy and assessment can be undertaken.

Annette was interviewed on a Friday afternoon in early March, at the end of a hectic week of preparing for the partial re-opening of the school following the disruptions and uncertainties of the corona pandemic. Although clearly drained by the demanding week behind her, Annette spoke with passion and energy about the wider changes that would need to precede the redesigning of assessment practices. She described the conversation as “reflective moments for me to express my partly analytical and systematic thinking and partly an intuitive approach”.

The Practice

The story that will now follow complements the other narratives in this collection - that are located within a classroom or a school or a cluster of schools - by describing a meta-practice that is required in some situations in order to address assessment practices that require change across a school, in this case a secondary school. This description is from the viewpoint of the school leader who is responsible for convening groups and energies within the school and for facilitating the related processes. Annette sees her role as that of a convenor and facilitator and not as a conventional director who introduces change through a top-down process.

Soon after Annette assumed her new position as director of the school in the autumn of 2020, she inquired into what staff saw as priorities for change. “Reduce workload and work pressures” came the immediate response from many voices. It was clear that the workload and its pressures were related to the traditional pedagogy and traditional organisation that had overlaid a school originally intended to vibrate with innovation. The consequent contradiction shows in the approach, workload and pressures, and is exemplified by the conventional orientation to testing. Pupils experienced each school year as a rigorous obstacle course from one test to the next, and teachers were fatigued from navigating pupils through the obstacles along the route.

Annette heard from various groups within the school about this problem of testing from their point of view, and she encouraged the Student Council to initiate a process



of dialogue within the school. The Student Council then wrote a letter of complaint about the current system of assessment to the Consultative Council that is composed of four teachers, two parents and two pupils. The parents here responded very strongly, and the Consultative Council wrote to the school management - comprising Annette and four deputy directors - asking that the assessment process be better adapted to the felt requirements of staff and pupils. It requested that the needed changes be introduced when the next school year began in September 2021.

The school management responded sympathetically and pointed out that the timeline of changes to begin from the start of the subsequent school year would be too hasty, especially since the current school year was already in upheaval to cope with the fallout from the corona pandemic. The offer was instead made by the director and four deputies to draw up a programme from the beginning of the new school year to investigate the changes required in the assessment system, including a realistic further timetable to bring in agreed-upon changes.

More widely, the school management pointed out that in any case a shift in the assessment system could not come about without relevant broader changes in school pedagogy, and that it would be more fitting for pedagogy to lead changes in assessment rather than for assessment to continue to determine pedagogy. The process of dialogue around pedagogy could begin already, with further dialogue around assessment practices to start in the next school year.

Dialogue is facilitated by shared metaphors that advance the process of thinking together. Annette's metaphoric understanding of her role as the school's new director was - as mentioned earlier - that of an attentive gardener. Now a broader and more collective metaphor was required to draw the school together in a shared endeavour of addressing pedagogy before engaging with the needed reorganisation of assessment.

The term "compass" proved a useful metaphor here. Learning processes within the school should not be dominated by the navigation of an obstacle course of assessment through a timetable of tests. Instead, learning was to be experienced as a collective journey of exploration and discovery that drew together different personal learning pathways. The shared exercise of redefining pedagogy was to provide a compass for the joint learning journey as well as one to move from the present unsatisfactory situation to a more acceptable one.

"Flow" as a concept served as a valuable guide, giving a sense of a desired journey beyond the stops and starts of an obstacle course of tests. What might be the key to enhancing the sense of flow within the days and weeks and months of the academic year? In her own case, Annette realised, flow came from positive energy and motivation through meaningful work and satisfaction: "work pleasure" rather than a burdened sense of "workload and work pressure".

Ben van der Hilst, a consultant, was identified to support dialogue within the school because his doctoral work had centred on work pleasure and the related flow, around team organisation that focused on quality, flexibility and job satisfaction. He began at Vathorst College with focus group discussions that were held face-to-face on the school premises - which were otherwise closed because of the pandemic, and of course the groups followed the rules of social distancing. Around forty members of

the teaching staff took part in the discussions and the recommendations that were generated, and these were then shared more widely within the school community through online meetings. Subsequently, working groups were set up to examine how best these recommendations could be put into practice. Almost half of the teaching staff was closely involved, with the others constituting an outer circle, and this was believed would activate a critical mass to help move the school forward towards the desired positive change.

Annette supported the process by hosting four-sided conversations around the square table in her office, with herself on one side, and a pupil, a parent and a teacher on the other three sides. The pupil and parent were unrelated, and after every such conversation each of the three found a peer to take part in the next meeting around the square table. By early March, around twenty such conversations had taken place.

Processes of flow unfold within a space and across time. Two of the key recommendations under discussion are of interest here. In order to enhance pleasure in work, the focus groups argued that the current fragmentation needed to be addressed - fragmentation created by traditional pedagogy between the three different streams of secondary education (vocational, professional and university-oriented), the separate subjects within the curriculum and the various years into which secondary school is subdivided. Here the potential of the learning homes - already identified by Annette, as referred to above - can be developed so that they truly live up to their name. They can become spaces that bring together the different streams, subjects and years to meet with supportive teams of teachers who act as nurturant mentors, assisted by specialist teachers who will join when their expertise is needed. One idea is to have learning homes that span the first three years of secondary school, and another set that integrates the second three years, as spaces that unite pupils rather than fragment them. It has become clear that the teams guiding the renewed learning homes will require powers that match their enhanced responsibility.

The timetable is also under discussion, to see how it can become hospitable to flow instead of being fragmented into separate hours for different subjects. A different use of time might allow more pleasure in work and less of a feeling of workload or pressure for both pupils and teachers.

For wider inspiration, Annette looks to the special focus of the school on artistic creativity, something to which flow is essential, whether in the case of dance or music or theatre or visual appeal. She used an artistic creation - *Singer Trio*, by William Kentridge (2017-2018) - to mobilise teams within the school. Three exquisite Singer classical sewing machines are topped by gracefully swivelling megaphones that give voice to an African folksong (the artist is the son of anti-Apartheid activists). Annette evoked this creation to argue that flow can be represented by the smooth lively hum of well-oiled sewing machines in coordinated motion, but that she also wished to hear activist voices within the school speak about education and its further possibilities. "Let all voices be heard", she urged, invoking a complex integration of stability and change. Not everyone, however, can visualise or engage with this level of complexity, and processes of change will have to address resistance.

Art exemplifies unity, integrity and wholeness, instead of fragmentation, as well as stimulating emotions of pleasure. Annette is encouraged by Gert Biesta's book on *Letting Art Teach* (2017), a re-envisioning of art education today as engaging in dialogue with the world around. She reflects:

"The arts offer a unique opportunity to meet the world and to meet yourself in relation to the world. The arts have the quality of meeting the resistance of the world, materially and socially. What is the world asking of me? What is the world trying to tell me? What is the world trying to teach me?"

Annette feels supported in this by an exchange with Gert Biesta after she joined Vathorst College and she continues:

"Can education be seen as art? We bring teaching and artistry together. After all, teaching is a creative and therefore artistic process."

If Vathorst College can develop a pedagogy of flow, unity and pleasure, it is to be hoped that this will soon include assessment practices that will embody all of these - and that finally (after so much effort over the years) assessment of an artistic project by a pupil in the final year will also exemplify these true attributes of learning.

Learning for Well-being

Pupils at Vathorst College - and especially in the final years of secondary school where they are often engaged in personal projects that are rooted in the creative arts - are possibly more aware than their peers in conventional schools that their learning within traditional assessment systems is alienated from their well-being. To present this within the Learning for Well-being approach, pupils yearn for *wholeness* beyond the fragmentation they currently experience between subjects, classes and educational streams. They seek to realise their *unique potential*, notably through their individual creative projects that are a main focus during the concluding years of secondary school, but they encounter dissonance when the creative project is marked down to align with traditional assessment and when their *inner diversity* is denied by a standardised system. The *processes* of flow that pulse through the creative arts and that should pulse through the joy of learning – and the *relationships* that nurture this pulsing – become bogged down in a narrow focus on *outcomes*. Not only pupils, but teachers and parents find that their *engaged participation* in supporting the blossoming of youthful creativity ends in frustration when blighted by harsh marking that is necessitated by the constraints of the system. Redeeming this downward spiral will necessitate - as dialogue around the required changes suggests - creating *nested systems* within the learning homes so that these provide unifying bridges across fragmentation. Changing what has been described will generate feedback that *measures what matters* within learning that is entwined with creativity, leading towards an upward spiral of learning for well-being.

For this, certain core capacities central to learning, well-being and creativity will have to be liberated - *relaxing* (and not the stress of standardised assessment), to enable *observing, listening, inquiring, empathising, reflecting, embodying, sensing* and *discerning patterns*, all to be expressed in visual art, music, dance and theatre.

Source

Narrative by Shanti George, based on:

- *Interviews with Annette van Valkengoed in February and March 2021*

Photographs courtesy of Vathorst College

17

A Personal Portfolio: Socratic Dialogue in a Secondary School (Finland)

The essence of this practice is to enable pupils to become an active part of the teaching and assessment process. For thirteen years, Eeva taught Finnish language and literature to class 9, 10, 11 and 12 pupils, without textbooks and tests. Her lesson structure is based on a Socratic dialogic teaching method, and has space for personalised feedback and individual work in every class. Pupils are given the opportunity to engage with all subjects, through the dialogue and then through an assignment that she provides personalised comments on, to support each pupil in their individual evolution. With the help of a course guide, the pupils can plan their journey and select the assignments they would like to include, and discover how they can best show their capabilities in line with the instructions. At the end of the main lesson block, pupils bring all of their work together in a portfolio, make the necessary adjustments, and hand it in to receive a summative evaluation, consisting of an overall grade and a written comment.

The School

The Lappeenranta Steiner (Secondary) School has been running since 1989. It describes itself as a safe village-like school and a place where each individual can be heard and seen, as well as let their personal strengths emerge as an individual in the community. As in most traditional Steiner Waldorf schools pupils stay in the same class community up to eighth grade, enabling long-term pupil-teacher relationships. Today the school is attended by around 100 pupils, all in lower and middle school as the secondary school closed in 2018 along with several other Steiner secondary schools in Finland due to insufficient numbers of pupils (this narrative is based on Eeva's experience in the

school for 13 years, between 2005 and 2018). The Lappeenranta Steiner (Secondary) School offers the same curriculum as traditional schools, with a different approach to teaching and education. This enables the school to receive state funding and thus offer free schooling and high quality Steiner Waldorf teaching and education at the same time. They also offer a resourceful environment including a school-yard in the middle of town and organic food for every meal. Another important part of the school's life is the cooperation with parents. The way the school is run allows parents to be listened to, involved in the decisions, and aware of what is happening at the school and how their children are doing.

In terms of assessment policy, the school has a very general policy that puts forward the following values: the nature of assessment should develop as the child grows, and evaluation should encourage creativity and look forward rather than back. It is also a common understanding that tests cannot be the sole origin of the grades. Aside from these values, space is left for teacher autonomy, a very strong feature of the Finnish educational system. Most teachers do give tests at the end of their courses, and all teachers like Eeva can do to spread their good practice is to present their ideas and give examples in the hope that some will feel inspired. Some teachers have taken inspiration from elements such as the lesson block structure or the percentage structure, but her practice has not resulted in a change in the school policy.

In terms of official benchmarks, there are indications for criteria corresponding to numerical grades in the official curriculum, for example what a class 9 grade 8 represents in terms of criteria, and based on these each school develops their own criteria. This is currently being refined on a national level to reduce large discrepancies in school levels. It is also important to note that numerical grades used to be obligatory only from class 8 and recently became mandatory from class 4. This implies that class teachers have to learn to assess and grade, something that Eeva is intensely involved in as she now works full time at the Snellman-korkeakoulu¹, a teacher training college for Steiner school teachers.

1 <https://snellman-korkeakoulu.fi>

IDENTITY CARD #17

Name of practice A Personal Portfolio: Socratic Dialogue in a Secondary School

Type of Assessment **Formative:** pupils are given the opportunity to hand in assignments on every topic discussed in the classroom throughout the course in order to receive personalised comments and grow in their language awareness and literature skills. The structure of each lesson gives space for feedback on previous assignments and guided preparation for the next.
Self-assessment: pupils are asked to comment orally on how they experienced the assignment and some even leave comments on their learning process in the final portfolio.
Summative: at the end of the main lesson block, the pupils bring all of their work together in a portfolio, with a chance to complete or correct if necessary, in order to receive an overall grade and comment.

Category Class-wide practice

Field Finnish language and literature. This can however be adapted to other fields.

Age group	Class 9, 10, 11, 12: 15 to 18 years old, ISCED 3	This philosophy of teaching and assessing can be adapted to all age groups that need to be assessed against learning outcomes and are able to produce work on their own. Since marking has become compulsory in Finland from class 4 onwards, Eeva is giving a course to help class teachers to adapt the method for class 4 to 8.
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School	Lappeenranta Steiner (Secondary) School	www.lprsteinerkoulu.fi/
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Country	Finland	
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Teacher	Eeva Raunela	Finnish language and literature teacher in class 9, 10, 11 and 12. Currently a teacher trainer at the Snelman college.
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Values **Contextualised:** pupils receive a course plan at the beginning with an outline of aims, topics, assignments and evaluation criteria. **Individualised:** personalised feedback is provided for each piece that the pupils hand in, enabling them to evolve and develop throughout the course before handing in the final portfolio that is marked and also associated with personalised comments. Each pupil has the freedom to choose which assignments they would like to complete and in what way to show the best of their capacities. **Participatory:** pupil involvement is at the center of this practice, from the dialogic learning method to the active engagement with each topic of the course for the preparation and production of the formative assignments. Pupils' view and self-assessment on the process is also given space, orally and in written form.

Timeline and preparation Successfully implementing the dialogic teaching method takes practice. Reviewing pupils' work throughout the lesson block can be more time consuming than setting an occasional test. The final marking for the portfolio, however, goes rather quickly as the teacher already has good knowledge of how each pupil has evolved and has seen most of the work.

Form of documentation	Written	Written comments are made on each assignment that is handed in throughout the formative stage and the end-of-block portfolio is graded together with a personalised written comment.
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Implementation of outcomes The grade and final comment of the portfolio count towards the final mark for the subject at the end of the year.

The Teacher

Eeva felt and decided she wanted to become a Waldorf teacher when she was in class 8. At university she studied Finnish literature, leaving the pedagogical studies for the last year of her university studies. Her career started with a teaching job, and she has not left the profession since. She taught for 13 years in the Lappeenranta Steiner (Secondary) School and is now a full-time teacher trainer at the Snellman college. During her time at the Lappeenranta school she did a master's degree in Steiner Waldorf education in Norway, and a PhD research study on *"I learned to learn from myself" – An Autoethnographic Action Research Study on Developing High School Students' Language Awareness through the Use of the Socratic Method of Teaching in the Teaching of Finnish Language and Literature*". Her courage to experience assessment without tests is clearly rooted in her own positive experience of not being graded throughout her school-time, and she observes that teachers who have never had such an experience in their own childhood sometimes find it difficult to change.



Eeva's story with this assessment practice dates back to impressions in her first years of teaching. Eeva remembers that her pupils spent the majority of their class-time listening and writing in their main lesson books. She used to tell them what content should be reflected in their books, and when she looked through them the contents tended to be very similar, so she found it hard to give personal feedback. This teacher-oriented content did not satisfy her, she wanted to know what her pupils thought about the material and what they could bring to the classroom. 15 years later, she is teaching future teachers how to integrate Socratic dialogic teaching methods and formulate essays and assignments based on her experience.

The Practice

The assessment structure that Eeva developed for her Finnish language main lessons is rooted in a philosophy of pupil engagement. The process starts with a Socratic dialogic teaching method that involves a careful preparation of questions on the theme that is to be explored. The structure of Eeva's lessons is inspired by the main lesson methodology proposed by David Brierley, which can be adapted in different ways, the important element being to come back three times to the same topic to facilitate integration. This structure can be summarised in four main elements: a recall phase about what was discussed the day before, an explanation of the assignment related to this content and a 45-minute period to start working on it in the classroom with the possibility to ask questions or interact if necessary, feedback on the previous assignment, and in the last 45 minutes a dialogue on the theme of the day that was announced at the beginning. This teaching method affects Eeva's role as a teacher as she becomes less of a leader and more of a co-learner, contributing as much as the pupils themselves. The pupils also feel that they are seen and heard.

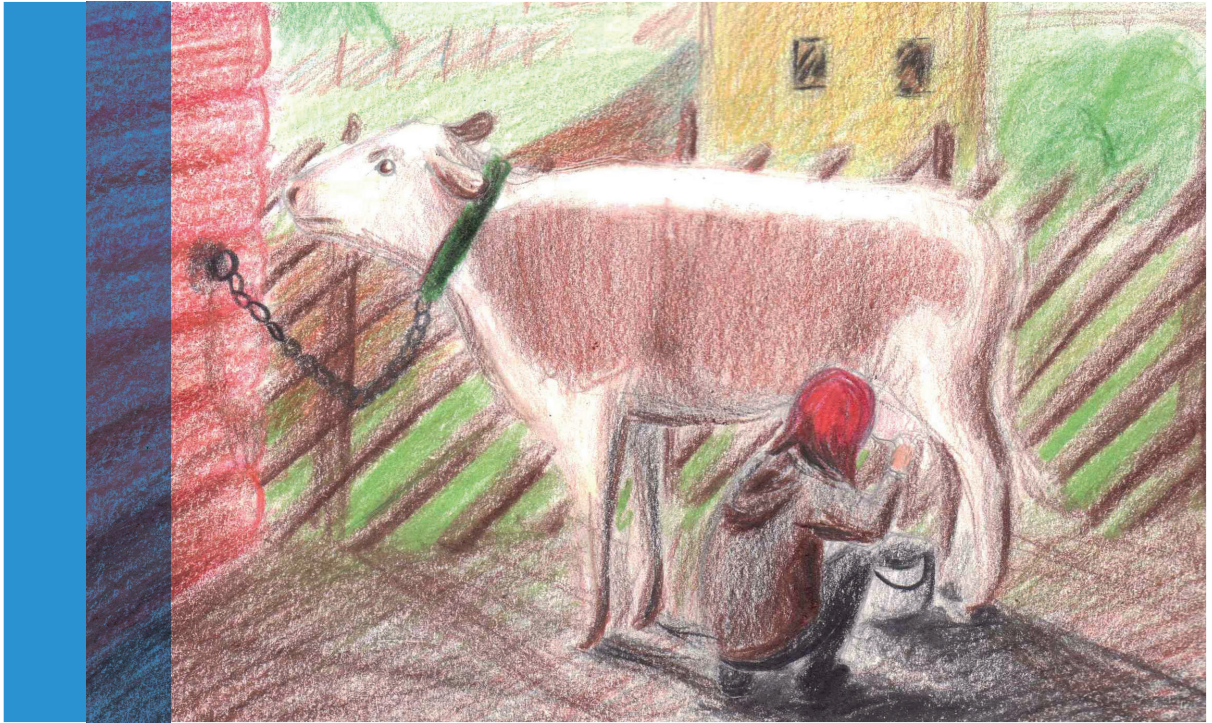
This lesson structure is a key part of the formative quality of this assessment practice. Indeed, a time to prepare for the assignments and receive oral and written feedback on previous work is integrated fully into the learning process. It is important to mention that the feedback stage goes both ways, introducing a self-assessment dimension to the practice as pupils also have the opportunity to express their view on how it went for them, including why they did not complete the task if that is the case. Eeva explains that compared to a traditional setting of content transfer followed by a test or assignment,

there are more assignments in the structure she proposes and thus more opportunities to engage actively with each topic, receive personalised feedback, acquire new skills and give the teacher a realistic picture of where each pupil is. This also means that any need for individual help or guidance can be identified early on in the process.

This focus on supporting the learner in their development is also reflected in the type of feedback given, which is in the form of short and pragmatic comments on how to improve, and oral feedback to the whole class, addressing some of the recurring problems she noticed and sometimes using the pupils' work as examples, if they agree. Moreover, the fact that the assignments are based on the content that has been discussed during the dialogue is also very important as the pupils have already created a personal connection to the topic, and every text includes the writers' own experiences about it. This is how Eeva explains that pupils do not fear the white paper and hardly notice that, in fact, they are in a continuous assessment process.

Although pupils have the opportunity to produce something very often, there is no obligation to fulfill all of the tasks. It is part of the individual process for pupils to choose the assignments that they would like to deepen and include in the final portfolio that is to be handed in at the end of the main lesson block. Eeva recounts that this selection process is especially beneficial for perfectionist pupils, who learn from the experience of not doing everything the teacher proposes. In order to make informed choices, the course plan that is shared at the beginning of the course can serve as a guide. This plan covers the aims of the course, the topics that will be covered, as well as the bigger, main assignments, and the weight of the different types of assignments for the final grade. The criteria of evaluation are also made clear: language, form, content and coherence with the assignment instructions as well as participation and study skills.

On top of choosing which assignments they want to complete and include in the final portfolio, pupils also have some freedom in how they materialise the instructions: by choosing the text or theater play they want to write or speak about, by choosing to record a presentation in advance or give it live, the length of the text that they produce, the book they would like to read and analyse (respecting the course criteria). The objective is to give each pupil the opportunity to show the best of their capabilities.



As Eeva explains, there needs to be a way for the teacher to enable all of the pupils to learn, to show their learning and to reach a high mark. Her experience is that giving a clear outline at the beginning offers a chance for everyone to plan their work according to their individual context. Moreover, deadlines for the bigger assignments are always discussed in advance and adjusted if needed.

The connection between the formative and the summative aspect of the assessment is worth underlining, as the pupils receive feedback on their work in the formative part, and before handing in the portfolio bringing everything together they have the possibility to check that they have enough material, complete it if necessary or make corrections to existing pieces of work. Eeva then goes through the individual portfolios, which not only gives her an overview of everything the pupil has done, but also a picture of how the pupil evolved during the course and implemented the advice she had provided along the way. Self-assessment is mainly present in the classroom as outlined above, but pupils are also invited to write some personal reflections in this portfolio.

Grading the pupils is a state obligation, but as Eeva explains, on what and how numerical marks are given can be creative and there is no obligation to organise standardised tests. The portfolio is what Eeva gives a grade to, by evaluating how well the pupil has integrated the curriculum objectives and acquired the skills corresponding to it. She avoids as much as possible the comparative element that grades can lead to, and considers the summative written feedback an important element that translates and explains the grade. Although it is a reality that the pupils often look at the grade before reading the feedback, the fact that they have the opportunity to show their capabilities through several self-directed assignments integrates this marking process in



the development journey in a harmonious way. There are also several different lesson blocks of Finnish language and literature throughout the year, and a lower mark in one of them is easily compensated by another one if necessary.

As for the mandatory curriculum objectives, Eeva covers all of them too, but always looks at how to make them relevant to her pupils' lives, and how to present the material in a coherent way with her teaching method and philosophy of human development. One example of this is the distinction between the "what", "why" and "how" questions depending on the age group at hand. In class 10 she often focuses more on "what" questions that allow for many clarifications on meaning and direct links with personal experiences. In class 11 the questions become more analytical, "why" things happen, and then in class 12 she turns to the "how" which often resonates with the pupils' focus on their future, on the tools that they need in the outer world. A progressive evolution in the depth of the questions also takes the process of acquiring the communication skills for the dialogic method into account, which has a lot of value as such, but can take time. Eeva explains that when she has new classes in year 10, pupils need to get used to each other and it is not easy to hold deep conversations on pupils' experiences. To overcome this challenge, she recommends to let go of expectations, trust the process and persevere, so that the pupils feel the aims and the space of listening. She was surprised to discover that although she sometimes feels like the dialogue was chaotic and did not lead anywhere, her pupils do not necessarily experience it that way and often find it enriching in those cases too. Making smaller groups to start the dialogue, and not occupying the space as the teacher, often enables the magic to happen sooner or later.

In 2018, Eeva published a PhD paper, *"I learned to learn from myself" – An Autoethnographic Action Research Study on Developing High School Students' Language Awareness through the Use of the Socratic Method of Teaching in the Teaching of Finnish Language and Literature*. As part of her research process she collected feedback from pupils on her teaching and assessment methods. One element that was mentioned numerous times is that holding dialogues in the classroom is an effective way of learning, as they remember the content, and assignments are easier. Pupils also felt that this process helped them to learn to think independently. One pupil explained that she felt as if she had received individual teaching although she was in a group. The climate of safety

and trust that Eeva creates for the dialogue is a condition for high involvement. Pupils need to feel that their ideas are wanted to be seen and heard, and not that they are forced to speak. Eeva comments that this is something she still feels she can develop further, especially in the case of the very silent and shy pupils. Furthermore, appreciation was expressed for the diversity of topics that her teaching structure enables to explore.

In terms of communication with the parents, Eeva sends them information on what is coming at the beginning of the course, including some information on the assignments. There is also a parent-pupil-teacher meeting that is organised once a year, usually before Christmas or before the March break. In this meeting the pupil is actively involved, and based on the results they have received, they are invited to explain what they are planning to do to improve and build on what was done. Pupils and parents are usually comfortable with this meeting thanks to its positive focus on the future.

In coherence with the spirit behind her teaching practice, Eeva's research report takes the form of a chronological narrative about her personal growth in becoming a teacher. Among the results of her research, she underlines the influence of the teacher's own language awareness and consciousness of the impact of their actions on the language development of pupils. Another key element is the connection with language in real life reading and expression contexts as well as the atmosphere of acceptance in the classroom, for all pupils to feel safe to express themselves. In the abstract (erepo.uef.fi/handle/123456789/20664) she beautifully highlights that "any teacher attempting to understand the human being, can create a personalised practice¹".

The objective of Eeva's assessment practice is to enable her pupils to become actors of their learning, their learning process and assessment. She reaches this objective by shifting the focus from the content to the aim, and to plan the assessment, which is the active part for the pupils rather than the teaching. Thinking about her teaching in terms of how she could activate and motivate her pupils is also what led her to use the

1 Raunela, Eeva, "I learned to learn from myself" – An Autoethnographic Action Research Study on Developing High School Students' Language Awareness through the Use of the Socratic Method of Teaching in the Teaching of Finnish Language and Literature; University of Eastern Finland, 2018; Publications of the University of Eastern Finland; page 12.

dialogic teaching method. On top of reaching the main objectives, Eeva also sees that this practice enables a more effective emergence of pupils' potential, by suggesting a wide range of assignments and ways to complete them.

Sources

Narrative by Ilona de Haas, based on:

- *An interview with Eeva Raunela in October 2020*

As well as:

- *Raunela, Eeva, "I learned to learn from myself" – An Autoethnographic Action Research Study on Developing High School Students' Language Awareness through the Use of the Socratic Method of Teaching in the Teaching of Finnish Language and Literature; University of Eastern Finland, 2018; Publications of the University of Eastern Finland; page 12. erepo.uef.fi/handle/123456789/20664*
- *Lappeenrannan steinerkoulu. USEIN KYSYTTYÄ. www.lprsteinerkoulu.fi*

Photographs courtesy of Lappeenranta Steiner (Secondary) School



PART FIVE

LEAVING

SCHOOL



18

The Art of Writing Good Reports: an Alternative to Grades at the End of Secondary School (Denmark)

The art of writing good reports is part of the assessment DNA of the Steiner Waldorf school in Odense. Continuous formative assignments and dialogue leading to a better understanding of who the pupils are as well as how they learn and interact with different subjects and people, give teachers the information they need to write extensive individualised reports. The one at the end of class 12 is remarkable as it aims to give a clear, honest and positive picture of the pupil to higher education admission officers or employers. What is more, this alternative way of finishing school is recognised by Danish law.

The School

Rudolf Steiner-Skolen i Odense is the third largest and oldest Steiner school in Denmark, situated in scenic surroundings in the southern part of Odense. The school was founded in 1971 and today has over 330 pupils in 13 grades: from kindergarten up to and including 2nd HF¹ (class 12 - ISCED level 3). Next to the school is a nursery that also builds on Steiner's educational thoughts, and in a nearby town the school has a department with a special pedagogical programme for pupils with intellectual challenges between 6 and 18.

1 State recognised programme for the two final years of secondary school, named the Steiner HF

The school's official status is that of a free school which means it is partly state-funded (up to 78% of its budget) and partly funded by parents. If parents are unable to contribute financially, help from private funds or the school solidarity fund are easy to apply for, which makes the school accessible to all.

As of the 2018/2019 school year, the school also offers a state recognised programme for the two final years of secondary school, named the Steiner HF. The new law gives the Steiner end of secondary school report the same value as the state school diploma. This means that pupils can apply to university without requesting a translation of their report into grades or taking additional exams. Moreover, they gain access to the state funding programs for higher education. Of course, this comes with a series of obligations such as a minimum of 20 pupils per classroom in order to receive extra state funding, and the necessity for all teachers to have a university degree. This has put pressure on the small school in Odense, and some teachers are currently studying and teaching simultaneously. However, this means that the end of secondary school reports that pupils receive are guaranteed to be valid for higher education admission and access to public funding for higher education is opened for them. In the past, they did not have access to student funding and loans, and the report did not always suffice for admission. Some students had to take external exams and preparatory courses, or teachers had to translate the report into a set of grades during the application process. Interestingly, a research on students in Denmark² shows that despite starting later than public school children, both public school and Steiner school pupils finish their degrees at the same time. One reason would be that there is a greater percentage of public school students who change their minds and start over several times whereas students from Steiner schools take more time to start, travel and take extra courses, but start when they know what they want. It is also worth mentioning that there are two channels to apply to university in Denmark, one that is based on grades and the other that considers other formats for students from abroad, working students, or students from schools with personal assessment practices.

2 Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitet (2012). Didaktisk Analyse Af Rudolf Steiner Skolers Laeringspraksis I 9. Til 12. <https://www.steinerskolerne.dk/ungdomsuddannelse/dpu-undersogelsen-2012>.

IDENTITY CARD #18

Name of practice	The Art of Writing Good Reports	The Danish end of secondary school written report
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Type of Assessment	<p>Formative: dialogue and continuous assignments influence and lead to the final report. The one-to-one evaluative conversations at the end of class 11 are an essential part of the process.</p> <p>Summative: the end of secondary school written report looks back on the syllabus, learning process, interaction and achievements of the pupil in two or four years.</p> <p>Ipsative: the report evaluates the pupil's own progress based on their starting point and how they developed.</p>	
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Category	School-wide practice used for all subjects in the last two years of secondary education.	
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Field	All subjects that the pupil followed during the last two or four years of upper school	This assessment process is suitable for all subjects.
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Age group	Class 12, ISCED 3	The entire process lasts 2 years, with an oral one-to-one evaluation halfway through.
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School	Rudolf Steiner-Skolen i Odense	www.rss-odense.dk/
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Country	Denmark	Odense
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Teacher	Saskia Haas Henriksson	Presently class teacher in class 8. Saskia teaches history, drawing, geometry, health studies, Danish, English in classes 6, 7 and 8. She is also an English teacher in classes 10, 11 and 12.
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Values	<p>Contextualised: pupils are conscious that this will be their final evaluation and have been accustomed to the art of written feedback for several years.</p> <p>Individualised: the written reports are based on the pupil's progress in the subject, with very few external standards.</p> <p>Participatory: dialogue is at the center of evaluation throughout the period leading up to the final report.</p>	
Timeline and preparation	Time to write the report will vary greatly from one teacher to another	Time is not the main challenge but rather the quality of presence, observation and methodology to keep track of progress over time.
Form of documentation	Written	Extensive personalised written report.
Implementation of outcomes	The Danish end of secondary school written report is valid for higher education admission	As this national recognition is new they do not yet have much feedback on pupil application experience yet. The national Waldorf association is in contact with universities to make sure the process is smooth, but how it will happen for pupils that apply to universities in other countries is uncertain yet, although it should work in theory.

Giving pupils smooth access to higher education, both in terms of application process and funding combined with the freedom to assess according to their values gives the school the possibility to offer qualitative Steiner Waldorf education, in line with the intentions of the founding members of the school. In terms of a school-wide assessment policy, this implies that personalisation and assessing according to the unique development of each child does not only concern **the way** pupils reach learning objectives but also **how the objectives are set to begin with**. Saskia explains that the school sets no external standard, as standards lie within each child. In younger years this is achieved mainly through observation and finding a way to help each child grow based on how they interact with the world around them. In older years pupils have an active role in defining what they want to learn and the goals they would like to set themselves. The process involves dialogue with each individual learner, and from 14 years old onwards dialogue combined with written feedback.

Parents' involvement made this reality possible!

The fact that the final year written report as described in this narrative (Vidnesbryd in Danish) is accepted as an alternative way of finishing school by the Danish government is the result of over ten years of academic and advocacy efforts by a group of Waldorf parents with a varied set of competences, perseverance and courage. The journey started with a white paper written together with all Waldorf schools in Denmark that identified an ambitious goal: to change the law in order to make it possible to graduate without grades and exams and with pedagogical autonomy and funding.

Christina Lærke Vilhelmsen and Thomas Uhrskov, members of the core team that led this process, explained that each person in their team of four brought essential ingredients for the success of this process: the capacity to bring in a helicopter view and anticipate problems, emotional intelligence, perseverance and journalistic interviewing and presentation skills, accounting skills and capacity to keep focus.

The process rolled out in two main phases, the first one being research and content production and the second one negotiation with politicians. It became clear as soon as they started that having clear answers to questions about what a Waldorf

school is was indispensable. On the one hand, they edited a book called “Embracing Everything” with subjective contributions from a variety of people in contact with Waldorf, and on the other hand, a university research paper of 150 pages about what Waldorf schools say they are doing, what they are really doing and the visible results of their work. This last paper led to some important data collection, for example showing that 70% of Waldorf pupils continue to tertiary education, which is 5% above the average rate in Denmark, or that Danish Steiner schools have comparatively more unemployed parents, or who are studying or single, contradicting the perception that the schools only attract privileged audiences. In the second phase of the process, negotiations took place with four different ministries of education. It was a long journey to become active participants in the debate with other stakeholders in education. When they reached the stage of suggesting a change in the law, the most challenging thing was to convince them despite the relatively low number of students involved. Even without having high numbers, however, it seems that the arguments they presented were strong enough to persuade them to give this new law a chance. After five years of implementation, a ministerial evaluation will take place to assess its success. The team is confident, but nevertheless closely following-up with all the pupils who are leaving school in this new way.

In order to fulfil the minimal state requirements, teachers need to keep a written trace of the pupil's progress and be able to show that students are on track compared to state school levels by the end of class 3, 6 and 9. Saskia explains that meeting these national requirements happens naturally as there is enough time between each reference year for pupils to develop at their own pace. For example, it is required for all pupils to read and write by class 3, but the order in which they learn these elements of literacy and whether they master it in class 1, 2 or 3 can vary greatly. Teachers are, however, required to do a translation exercise, by translating their personalised assessment into state language for the inspection.

To show how the school assessment policy can be put into practice by individual teachers, Saskia gives the example of her main lesson in history in class 6, 7 and 8. In this case, her assessment is essentially based on what the pupils produce in their main lesson books. At the beginning of the main lesson block she clearly expresses



her expectations regarding the creation of their book. At this age this is done orally as putting expectations in writing can be felt as pressure. Every morning there is space to reflect on what was explored the day before, and pupils can ask questions and receive suggestions on how to improve their work. At the end of the main lesson block the books are handed in and Saskia looks through them carefully, then writes about half a page of written feedback. Every book has varying content and levels. What Saskia looks for is whether the pupil implemented suggestions that were made during the learning process, asked for help when needed, managed to show their engagement and interest, and whether they have made progress based on where they started three weeks earlier. In this way, the written feedback about the same initial task might be very different from one book to another.

The Teacher

Saskia Haas Henriksson has been in contact with Waldorf education for as long as she can remember. Her mother was a Waldorf teacher and Saskia grew up in a Camphill community: a community that offers opportunities for people with learning disabilities, mental health problems and other special needs to live, learn and work with others of all abilities in an atmosphere of mutual care and respect. She grew up in the United

Kingdom and moved to Denmark when she was 18. Today Saskia has three children of her own, she is a class teacher in class 8, an English teacher in class 10, 11 and 12, and a student of English and philosophy at university. Saskia started teaching in 2008, and before teaching at the school in Odense, she had worked at the Steiner school in Aarhus¹. This was a city school, and when she visited the school in Odense, she fell in love with the atmosphere, school building and surroundings. Saskia explains that she also feels the difference in the classroom as the children live in the country and are not as influenced by capitalism and high media exposure. In the teenage years she even noticed a delay in puberty compared to city environments.

The Practice

The art of writing qualitative written feedback is part of the DNA of assessment at Steiner Odense. The particularity of the end of secondary report is that, for the first time in the pupil's path at the school, the report's objective is to give third parties an overview of their learning process and information about who they are, whereas the previous ones mainly served as tools to support the pupils in their development. The end product is a 30+ page document with details on subjects that the pupil has been in contact with in class 11 and 12. Before the Steiner HF, subjects documented also included those covered in class 9 and 10. Another new element that came with the new regulation is that teachers are expected to include a general PASS or DID NOT PASS statement for all official HF subjects. This is evaluated based on whether the pupil had been present and active or not. In both cases the extensive written evaluation is provided.

The document contains a detailed account of the syllabus for the subjects not included in the official HF curriculum (for which the syllabus is defined by the ministry of education). The aim is to contextualise the testimonies that follow, and to inform on the learning opportunities that the pupil had. The second part of the report is personalised but structured in the same way for every subject, according to five key measurement themes described below. The state of mind behind the writing process is to give a positive, clear and honest picture of the pupil. Unlike previous reports, it is written in the third person and with an external reader in mind. As Saskia explains, the art of writing

1 <https://www.steinerskolen-aarhus.dk/>

about strong and weaker points in a positive and character building way is challenging and requires creative writing skills. It is important to mention that this feedback is not based on a final test or exam, but on the overall learning process and the formative assignments that the pupils handed in throughout the period. There is no standard system as to how the teachers should keep track of their feedback in the years leading up to the final report. Often this includes their comments on all the assignments and other forms of work the pupil showed.

The 5 measurement themes

Attitude towards the subject

A short comment on the interest and involvement of the pupil. What did the teacher perceive about the pupil's relationship with the subject?

Learning process

How did the pupil work with the subject? The criteria for this point vary from course to course. Examples of what is reported here include for example whether the pupil met the deadlines, did some further work outside of the classroom and how they were involved in the group work.

Achievements and abilities

This paragraph is about hard skills. What has the pupil achieved? Where are their strong points? What can the pupil do today? For language subjects, for example, this will include what type of texts the pupil can read and write and how much they understand and are able to communicate orally. No grade is awarded here, the evaluation is put into words, in the most positive way possible.

Developmental/future perspectives

What foundations can the pupil build on for future evolution in this area? Talents and challenges relevant for a future in this subject are also described. This is one of the more debated headlines of the report. Does it make sense for all subjects to talk about the pupil's potential future with it? It can, however, be very relevant for subjects that pupils want to deepen at university.

Social qualities

How is the pupil in the learning environment, towards the subject, the teacher and other pupils? This can be similar across subjects, but including it for each topic also guarantees that personal preferences do not take over.

Although there are no exams, the pupils have numerous opportunities to self-evaluate and show how they are learning in the two or four years leading up to this final report. A fundamental element of the process is the formative conversation that is held at the end of class 11. During these one-on-one sessions both pupil and teacher share their experiences of the learning process and what they think could be improved. How the pupil applies the results of this conversation can deeply affect the content of the final report. Saskia gives the example of a pupil who hardly participated or handed in any work in class 11. During the conversation at the end of the year, Saskia explained that she did not have enough information to give him qualitative feedback as he had not given her enough opportunities to see him learn. They then talked about his motivation and in the following year he completely changed attitudes and made a lot of progress. Of course in an exam this pupil might have had an average grade, but in the written report he received very good feedback on his changed motivation, strength of character and all the efforts he made. In contrast, this might not be the case for a pupil with higher capabilities who made little progress.





“I have been at Odense Waldorf school since preschool and I am really grateful and feel lucky to have been at this school.”

When did you receive your first Vidnesbyrd?

“I received the first written report (Vidnesbyrd in Danish) addressed to me directly the summer after 6th grade. The summer after 6th grade I remember waiting for it to arrive in suspense and I think I felt seen and valued after reading it. The teachers had described the nice things about me and the work I had done and it was acknowledged in a very nice way.”

What were your impressions and expectations about this particular one?

“Before receiving my end of secondary written report I was pretty excited, just as I have always been before receiving a Vidnesbyrd. I really like that it’s “written” feedback and the fact that I can recognise myself, my work, my development in the words. I was more nervous before opening the class 12 Vidnesbyrd because I knew this one would be more important and essential for further studies. It was also written differently - it was somehow “intended for others” whereas the other ones I had read were essentially for me. It was also somehow relieving to finally receive it. I had been thinking about it the last few years (how it would be, how it was set up, what would be written, if I could use it...), and as it’s the “result” of so many years in school, I feel the Vidnesbyrd contains the “success” I feel. But it’s not the end result of my time in school. The “outcome” I received from being at this school is much broader.”

What did you think and feel about the process that led to the Vidnesbyrd?

“The fact that it’s based on the teachers’ views and experiences through the years is pleasant, as it’s not a result of a short test or exam which could have been done differently, at another time. The talk with the teachers at the end of class 11 was a good opportunity to reflect and think about my own work, attitude and status and then meet that with the teachers’ views. It was somehow a very intimate way of receiving feedback because of the face-to-face setting. But I really think I used what I learned there. All the feedback I have received, as the process towards the final Vidnesbyrd, have helped me a lot. It’s very nice to know what to change the next time in an assignment or what to focus on the next time or in further studies.”

Are you confident to apply to university with it? What are your future plans in terms of study?

"I am confident that I can apply to university with it. I need to apply through "quota 2" which requires more than just handing in the grades. I will need to fulfil some extra requirements (e.g. volunteering work) but that suits me well. I think the Vidnesbyrd will be a help for me and gives me a better chance, even though the procedure is a bit more complicated than just handing in the final grades through quota 1 (quota 2 admissions are allocated according to criteria published by the education institution(s) to which you have applied. Please note that the number of study places in quota 2 at some programmes is very limited)¹."

How was the Vidnesbyrd shared with your parents?

"I read it myself and repeated some of it out loud to them, as they were sitting nearby and I wanted to share some phrases or the Vidnesbyrd in one of the subjects. They were mostly just happy on my behalf and wanted to know how I was feeling about it."

Overall, do you think this is a good way of assessing pupils? If not what could you imagine instead?

"I really like it, yes. It's diverse, in depth and useful for me. It's not competitive and is not calculated to be compared with other pupil's assessments. I have, through the years, been told what I did well and what I was good at, and that has been the motivation to keep up the (good) work."

— *Esther, 19 years old*



The Danish end of secondary written report has the advantage of giving a much more complete image of who the pupil is, by explaining achievements in words, but also by looking at how the pupil interacted with the subject, teacher and co-learners. One could say, however, that this method lacks objectivity. According to Saskia this process based on relations during which individuals look at individuals is part of what makes it rich and human. Of course, one has to be vigilant that no personal feelings

1 <https://ufm.dk/en/education/admission-and-guidance/how-to-apply-for-a-higher-education-programme-in-denmark-1-15.8.20>

and interests get in the way, which should not be the case as teachers are expected to act professionally. However, if a pupil or parents do feel that personal feelings have influenced the teacher, there are many opportunities for dialogue to reach a better understanding of each other, both formally and informally, that is, in the feedback meetings that are organised by the school or on demand. Saskia recalls that this happened to her with a pupil who was persuaded she did not like her. After talking about it, their relationship completely changed. The true Achilles heel of this practice is not the teacher's presence but their absence. In fact, if a teacher leaves before the end and does not leave detailed feedback about their pupils behind, a plan B has to be put into place. This might be to set a test, an assignment, and ask for cooperation from teachers in previous years for the same subject.



“When my children received their end of year written reports we did not yet have the state recognition, but the content was very similar. In the early years I remember that it was always a pleasure to read through these full reports on how my children were doing. It was like a mirror in words of what I could see and sense about them. When they got older I had to ask if I could read the report and accepted that the answer might sometimes be negative. I trusted that if there was an issue the teachers would contact me. There were often no surprises in these reports but they enabled us to open conversations, and gave guiding awareness to my children. I remember a conversation I had with my son about geometry, a subject he was very good at. He had received positive comments with a strong invitation to also present his work in a neat way, which allowed me to discuss the question of investing time and care in his work, and although he did not change hugely, it made him more aware of where he could evolve and I think this stimulates the will.

Now that I have become a school principal I also receive feedback from other parents. One recurring concern relates to the continuous communication with parents. Parents insist that there should be no surprises in the report and that if there is anything to address, teachers should reach out to parents during the year.”

— *Solbjørn, parent of two Waldorf pupils and now also school principal*



In comparison to traditional methods, this practice does not necessarily take more time than correcting exam papers - on the contrary. What it does require is presence and strength to connect with and visualise each pupil. At the end of class 8 the school in Odense delivers a similar report but in even more depth, and Saskia explains that she does not manage to write more than two a day. This report is addressed to the pupil directly, in first person, and in a format that resembles more that of a letter. The end of secondary report, however, is slightly easier as the writing style is more neutral, and Saskia says she can do up to five a day. Of course this writing process comes on top of everything else in May and June, and if you are not well prepared as a teacher that can generate a lot of pressure.

Sources

Narrative by Ilona de Haas, based on:

- *An interview Saskia Haas Henriksson in May 2020*
- *A short interview with Solbjørn in February 2021*
- *Written exchanges with Esther (alumna)*

As well as:

- *A presentation by Christina Lærke Vilhelmsen & Thomas Uhrskov dated from May 2017*
- *Rudolf Steiner-Skolen i Odense. Paedagogisk-vaerdigrundlag. www.rss-odense.dk*
- *The Ministry of Higher Education and Science (15.8.2020). The admission system in Denmark. ufm.dk/en/education/admission-and-guidance/how-to-apply-for-a-higher-education-programme-in-denmark-1-*

Photographs courtesy of Rudolf Steiner-Skolen i Odense

The New Zealand Certificate of Steiner Education: A Route to Tertiary Education (United Kingdom)

The New Zealand Certificate of Steiner Education enables the St Michael Steiner School to offer a secondary education leaving certificate whilst keeping the essence of their curriculum and limiting the impact of summative assessment on their teaching methods. Especially in the social sciences, the assessment criteria within the NZCSE, e.g. *to examine perspectives and demonstrate empathy for people in a specified context*, can be adapted to nearly any content, and in the subjects where that is not the case, teachers are encouraged to submit revisions. Instead of formal examinations, pupils hand in a series of assignments throughout the year, with the personalised feedback, support and challenges that they need. The assessment method supports the learning process, develops autonomy of pupils and favours collaboration between teachers.

The School

The St Michael Steiner School, a fee-paying school based in London, was founded in 2001 by teachers with many years of experience of living and teaching in the city. They describe their guiding vision as follows: a modern, urban school; a continually evolving curriculum based on ongoing observation and understanding of child development; a flexible programme of activities that develops practical skills, imagination and thinking, and which acknowledges and addresses the needs and interests of modern children; an education that will prepare children from diverse backgrounds to orientate themselves towards whatever comes to meet them in life. In the first eleven years they were based in South West London on the top floor of a state primary school. In the

summer of 2012 they moved to a two-hundred-year-old vicarage set in three acres of wood and parkland two miles south of Heathrow Airport, and prepared to open their first ever secondary school class. Amanda, history teacher, led the opening of the secondary section with a colleague English teacher.

Today 150 pupils attend St Michael school.

The Teacher

Amanda Bell has a background in practical art and spent the first few years of her professional life as a dressmaker. When her children were small, she discovered Waldorf education, and her curiosity was sparked by what was happening at her children's school. Very soon after this discovery, when her son was still only nine months old, she started her teacher training. Amanda's career at school started as a handwork assistant, and the transition towards class teacher was catalysed by a replacement she stepped into when one of the class teachers left in the middle of term. At first she thought she would not be able to do it but discovered it was fantastic, and that she was actually made for the job.

After leading her first class up to class 8, she left the school she had started at with a colleague English teacher, and they started the St Michael Steiner School together. In the initial shared premises of St Michael's they were not allowed to welcome pupils beyond class 6. This changed in 2012 when they moved to new premises, and it is then that they saw the opportunity to open a secondary school and continue the educational path with their pupils until class 12. English and history have always been Amanda's favourite subjects, and as her colleague would cover English, she became the history teacher and took a part-time university course whilst continuing to teach class 8.

Today, Amanda teaches at lower secondary level (class 6, 7 and 8) and higher secondary level (class 9, 11 and 12). She has been running a teacher training course since 2000 and took over the directing of the course in 2010. Amanda has also developed an expertise in schools run by a teachers' college, as St Michael is an example of a well functioning school that is run collectively.

IDENTITY CARD #19

Name of practice	The New Zealand Certificate of Steiner Education: A Route to Tertiary Education Official website of the qualification for the UK: nzcse.co.uk/	
Type of Assessment	Formative: pupils have the opportunity to hand in draft assignments to receive feedback and improve them before handing them in for marking. Completing assignments throughout the year rather than taking exams at the end also gives them a chance to measure their progress along the way and to receive personalised support and/or challenges. Summative: the assignments replace formal examinations and traditional summative assessment.	
Category	School-wide practice	
Field	The qualification covers all secondary school subjects necessary for graduation in New-Zealand.	
Age group	Class 10, 11 and 12: 15 to 18 years old, ISCED 3	This qualification covers three levels: the first is completed at the end of class 10, the second at the end of class 11, and the third at the end of class 12. Level 3 is the equivalent of a school leaving certificate.
School	St Michael Steiner School	stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk/our-ethos/
Country	United Kingdom	London
Teacher	Amanda Bell	History teacher for classes 9 to 12, as well as a part-time teacher for classes 6 to 8. She also directs a teacher training course.

Values **Contextualised:** pupils receive a detailed outline of assessment criteria and instructions for the assignments at the beginning of each lesson block, accompanied by oral explanations by the teacher. **Individualised:** personalised feedback is provided for each piece that the pupils hand in, and individual support or further challenges are suggested by the teacher based on the pupil's progress. Personalisation is also present in the form assignments take, as they can differ from one pupil to another depending on what will allow them to best demonstrate their learning. **Participatory:** pupils' involvement in their own learning process is embedded in the assessment method, and they are responsible for handing in their drafts and asking for the help they need. All tasks give space for pursuing independent research and creating links that often the teacher would not even have imagined.

Timeline and preparation The planning of the assessment tasks goes hand in hand with the preparation of the course content. As the qualification does not prescribe a curriculum, teachers need to provide the links between the content and the assessment criteria. However, organising formal examinations is very time consuming too, so in that sense this qualification is not more burdensome than the traditional alternatives.

Form of documentation	Written	A mark (achieve, achieve with merit, achieve with excellence) is given alongside written feedback for all assignments.
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Implementation of outcomes The NZCSE is the equivalent of a New Zealand national end of secondary certificate, and can be used to apply to higher education institutions thanks to the Lisbon recognition agreement.

The Practice

When preparing for the opening of their secondary section, the question of qualifications appeared as an important challenge. On the one hand, they did not want to integrate GCSE's and A Levels because of the prescriptive element contradictory to their curriculum, and their desire to continue giving practical skills and experiential work a central role. On the other hand, offering a qualification that opens doors to higher education seemed to be a survival condition for the nascent school. It was during a refresher's course for Waldorf upper school teachers in Kassel that Amanda and her colleague met representatives of the NZCSE: the New Zealand Certificate for Steiner Education. The advantage they immediately saw was that the certificate did not come with a prescribed curriculum. Although it was a leap of faith to follow this path, they felt it was the right thing to do and had the support of the parents of their pioneer class 9 pupils. They soon realised that parents who were not part of the pioneer group were not as easy to reassure, but luckily time has proven that the qualification offers sufficient security regarding university entrance.

The assessment criteria of the NZCSE are set by moderators in New-Zealand and can be applied to almost any content. Moreover, revision and renewal of the assessment criteria by the teachers who are using them is an integral part of the structure. Some of the teachers at the St Michael school have participated in that work, especially to address differences between what they teach in certain classes and what is taught in New Zealand. This narrative focuses on examples from the history course that Amanda has been working with since 2013. As she explains, humanities are best served by the qualification, as assessment is so broad that it can easily be adapted to local content, which is not necessarily the case for mathematics and science. This is due to the fact that the criteria for these subjects have been taken directly from the national qualification in New Zealand, and therefore the special quality of Waldorf education is to some extent undermined by the assessment. The advantage is that the necessary changes can come from the bottom up, and moderators are flexible. As Amanda underlines: the content demanded by universities in these subjects are also much more prescriptive than in social sciences, so in that sense the NZCSE prepares well for higher education as it is.



In social sciences, assessment criteria might be to demonstrate an ability, for example to describe, explain, evaluate or analyse; to demonstrate practical and artistic skills, creativity, presentation, leadership, planning and problem-solving. Within the given criteria, teachers are free to write the assessment tasks themselves based on what they plan to teach and what they want pupils to get out of it. Amanda explains that she always plans the content of her lessons based on what is happening in the world, the interests of pupils in her class, as well as their abilities. Although it is a requirement for the NZCSE to determine the assessment task before the beginning of the teaching block, she tries not to focus on that aspect before she has a finalised structure of her content. Once that is clear, she sets the most appropriate assessment task for the pupils to demonstrate the skills and learnings intended. A recent example of this is the class 11 medieval block that she based around the plague. The assessment task she chose involved demonstrating empathy, and this was particularly relevant as pupils could compare the plague pandemic to the current COVID one. The assessment task was built into the content and relevant to pupils' reality. This anticipation process defined



by the NZCSE does not always work well as the focus of the block often changes along the way, which sometimes leads to assessment tasks that are not centred around what revealed itself to be the focus of the block as it developed. As she cannot change the task she usually gives a separate list of essay topics that she draws up during the block, so that the broad topics are in the written assessment task, and the specific questions are given later, or in some cases redirects the last few lessons. In any case she is determined to keep this teaching freedom and does not want to fall into the easy trap of “teaching to the test” just because the assessment is set ahead of time. Of course avoiding this trap also involves the skill to design and to implement the assessment tasks in a clear and open way: clear so that pupils understand what is expected, and open in the sense that it can be realised in multiple ways, and that it samples the pupils knowledge to give scope to extend topics independently. Amanda recounts that one of the best outcomes of the NZCSE has been to put in place the “critical friend” system between colleagues, so that teachers support each other in this task and in their way

of working with pupils. This in itself is a peer-assessment practice that contributes to the development of teachers and benefits learners in terms of quality of teaching and assessment, but also to balance tasks across subjects and curriculum. For Amanda the most important thing is to help her pupils do their best and develop skills, consciousness and experiences out of her history lessons that mean something in their lives.

In terms of contextualisation of the assessment, teachers are expected to hand out written documentation, instructions of the task and assessment criteria. Amanda hands this out at the end of the first week or the beginning of the second week of her lesson block, and also delivers detailed oral explanations of how they can achieve the criteria. It is important to note that the personalisation of the assignments not only applies on the teaching level in the choice of task, but in most cases also to the pupils in the form they choose to demonstrate their knowledge. Amanda has found that allocating forms to pupils is best in class 9 and 10, as they do not know themselves well enough at that stage to make the right choices, whereas in class 11 and 12 they are usually ready to make those choices on their own.

On average, pupils complete three assessment tasks every four weeks. In total that represents about 27 assignments over the course of the school year, all subjects together. The advantage of having it spread over time is that they have a way of measuring their progress very regularly, can work on their challenges and ask for help as they go along, and teachers can add in elements to support or challenge them. In history the formative element is amplified by the possibility to hand in a draft of each assignment before the due date, on which Amanda gives written feedback that they can take into account to improve their work before being marked. This process is not mandatory, but recommended, and once pupils reach class 11, they have to take the initiative themselves. During the lesson block pupils also work in groups on questions set by the teacher to explore the various topics. Pupils are invited to hand in the notes of these sessions to receive written feedback on those too, which in some cases are even relevant for the bigger piece they are working on in the meantime.

Amanda recounts that there is a clear evolution in the experience of and relation to these assignments as the pupils get accustomed to producing marked work regularly. In class 9 they see their fellow classmates in class 10 working on their projects, and so they get excited to get started. In class 10 it is exciting and daunting at the same time,

and the workload is huge as they often do too much. At this stage pupils experience a lot of emotion and even some competition. Pupils focus on the result and omit reading the written feedback occasionally, which gradually changes as they realise the comments are useful, and their focus shifts back to what is happening in the classroom. By class 12 they are much more relaxed, and they integrate the assignments into their student life in a smoother way. As for the final mark, it is constituted from all of the assignments handed in during the year, and there is no extra summative piece at the end. Sometimes the final mark also takes into account what the pupils have shared orally in the classroom, especially for level 1 (class 10), as at that age their oral contributions are often better than the written work, which is not necessarily the case anymore for level 2 and 3 (class 11 and 12).



“We have deadlines all through the year, similar to CSE. This way of being assessed was easy for me to transition into, as I was used to it and knew how to stay focused and work hard at different times of the year. My course-mates who had only ever had end-of-year exams in school really struggled with completing midterm assignments.”

— *Maya Forster, 21 years old, graduated from St Michaels in 2018, and is currently in her second year of a Liberal Arts with Languages undergraduate degree at King's College, University of London*



An example of a level 1 (class 10) assignment could be *“examine human interactions with the environment and natural resources, including different perspectives of people”*, with a choice of topics that can be applied to areas, like the use of caves in Europe by the Paleolithic people, or the advent of agriculture and the development of iron smelting, or current issues such as global water supply. For level 1, the list of topics for the assignments have all been covered in the classroom, and a list of further resources is provided. At this stage quite a lot of guidance is given. This does not mean that pupils do not find the freedom to follow their threads in a creative way, sometimes even in a richer way than what the teacher would have imagined. Amanda gives the example of a pupil who researched the effects of the advent of agriculture on Palaeolithic societies, and then wrote about the effects on society of intensive food production today.

This led her to an understanding of the relationship between population growth and food production, which connected to what she had studied in ecology and geography, and so she could experience the connections between subjects. Level 2 and 3 assignments require pupils to do more independent research and analysis work, and what they write about differs from what was talked about in the classroom. An example of a task for level 2 could be “*examine perspectives and demonstrate empathy for people in a specified context*”, followed by a list of topics.

Once the teacher has assigned their marks: **not achieved**, **achieved**, **achieved with merit** or **achieved with excellence**, a sample is moderated by a colleague at the school and then externally in New Zealand. This assures a minimum of objectivity, without the facelessness of conventional exams. Although it represents a lot of work for teachers at the school, it requires taking interest in other people’s work and thus a good knowledge of what is being taught and expected from pupils in other lessons. The difference between the three passing levels is expressed in the NZCSE marking scheme for each criteria that a task is intended to fulfill. For example, an **achieving** mark for the level 1 task above would mean that the pupil **identified and described** the social/environmental impact of using and/or developing a natural resource, including differing perspectives of people, an **achieving with merit** would mean they **described and explained** the social/environmental impact of using and/or developing a natural resource, including differing perspectives of people, and with **excellence** would be **discussed with supporting detail** the social/environmental impact of using and/or developing a natural resource, including differing perspectives of people.

Amanda underlines that if it was for her, she would rather not hand out any marks to her pupils and just concentrate on the written feedback, especially because it takes away so much of the pupils attention in the initial years, and automatically brings in a competitive element. She recognises, however, that the change in dynamics that marks bring does push pupils to do their best, and they enjoy the objectivity of the system. The downside with the marking system of the NZCSE is that it is not necessary to do huge amounts of work to achieve excellence, and the range within that mark is broad. Some pupils who just meet all the criteria receive the same mention as others who did a truly excellent piece, and that can generate frustration. Moreover, as the marking criteria are very clear, assignments need to fulfill them to succeed, which



sometimes means that a great piece of work that has not followed the instructions cannot receive a good mark.

When they first introduced the qualification, marks were handed out in the classroom, and everyone instantly knew what the others got which sometimes made those who often did not get an excellent mark feel bad. This has now changed as pupils receive everything by email. Important to note is that the results are communicated to the pupils themselves, and if everything is going well in their trajectory, it is up to them to communicate with their parents before the official reports. Parents meet the teachers once a term and can of course request extra meetings if necessary. Unless the teachers consider that there is something to be concerned about and feel they need to keep in closer contact with parents, pupils take responsibility for their own learning.



“Seminars are very similar to how we did main lessons, through discussion in small groups. I was surprised how rarely people spoke up when asked to share their thoughts on a subject. Seminar leaders seem to have a hard time getting students to discuss or speak at all, even in groups as small as five students. I was never afraid to discuss a concept with another student, as we did this often in school, so I felt very comfortable. The intimacy of the group and actually being able to interact with the seminar leader makes me feel like I am back in St Michael’s and tends to be where I feel I am learning the most. Similarly, when you get results and feedback for essays, it’s all on a digital platform and tends to be very abstract. People are often afraid to speak up if they have questions regarding their grade as we don’t really get to know the marker personally. In Steiner schools, students and teachers interact, and I feel this gave me the confidence at King’s to organise meetings to discuss my essays so that I could improve where needed.

I am also very grateful that we were taught how to reference and create bibliographies properly for the CSE, as I saw the stress this caused friends on my course who had never had to do it before. Universities don’t teach you how to reference but it is a requirement, and they expect you to work it out yourself. In Liberal Arts you have to use different referencing styles depending on which department you are writing an essay for. I was very relieved that I knew how to do this already.”

— *Maya Forster*



The St Michael Steiner School started working with the NZSCE in September 2013, and the first class of pupils graduated in 2016. In the first years, many voices from the UK Waldorf movement did not consider this to be a good choice, and the St Michael school mainly relied on the support from the movement in New Zealand, Germany, and colleagues from other schools that also took on the certificate. These relationships have continued to broaden and enrich their work. After seven years of practice with the NZSCE, it is safe to say that it has proven to positively contribute to pupils’ development as well as school development.

The main objective for the pupils was to give them the opportunity to pursue higher education, and so far all pupils who graduated and applied to university were accepted in at least two of their chosen institutions. Teachers always prepare a letter of introduction to the NZCSE to accompany the applications. In some cases, and especially for pupils applying for scientific subjects, further information on the qualification was requested, and two universities turned pupils down on the basis that it was not an acceptable qualification. This could have been argued against, as the Lisbon Recognition agreement means they must accept qualifications that are valid for university entrance in signatory countries, but the pupils in question had received offers from other universities they wanted to attend, so it was not necessary.

Feedback from alumni also clearly states that the skills they have learned through the NZCSE, such as writing essays regularly and throughout the year, or referencing correctly, have prepared them particularly well for university. In terms of school development, the qualification encourages good professional training for teachers, collegiality, ongoing mentoring, the development of good relationships with pupils, and quality teaching. Without those elements, the success of the qualification is lessened, and in that sense, the way it interferes with teaching highly depends on the teachers' capacity to implement it well.

Sources

Narrative by Ilona de Haas, based on:

- *An interview with Amanda Bell in December 2020*

As well as:

- *New Zealand Certificate of Steiner Education. UK website. nzcse.co.uk*
- *St Michael Steiner School. Our Ethos, stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk/our-ethos*
- *Additional material on the CSE sent by Amanda Bell*

Photographs courtesy of the St Michael Steiner School and Mercédész Skoda

20

Assessment for Life: A Second Chance for Early School Leavers (Hungary)

Traditional education and assessment may or may not work for a given student. If it doesn't, it usually results either in a self-compromising process of trying to fit in, in school failure with the students disconnecting from their peers and from education itself, or in a lengthy process of finding a new school that is more inclusive and fitting for them.

But what happens to those who have already gone through all these and dropped out of the system altogether? Those on whom not just education has given up but who have also given up on themselves. Is there a way to support them in getting back on track for employment through gaining a good education, and most importantly to prepare to face life with all its current challenges as resilient adults with relevant life skills and values? This is exactly what a small school in the heart of Budapest is committed to do.

The School

The Belvárosi Tanoda was founded in 1990 for early school leavers. It aims to give one last chance for those who are able and willing to learn, but whom traditional education has given up on. These are usually adolescents seen as “deviant”, struggling with difficulties, having gone through painful and tough experiences or traumas. It is a relatively small school, having some 135 pupils and 20 teachers.

From the beginning, the teachers have been well aware that they need a paradigm shift from traditional teaching and learning. These youngsters cannot be taught using the same methods that had been used in schools from which they dropped out. They need a special and customised method both for teaching and for assessing what has

been learnt. As a result, it was built upon special principles and practices, some of which have persisted, some of which have been fine-tuned through the years, to meet the needs of the youngsters. The school has always looked at itself as not just a plain school, but as a complex healing environment that helps these adolescents overcome the very difficulties that led them to leave school early, and equip them with skills needed for life. In their cases teaching in itself is not enough for learning: the teachers have to address the pupils' primary issues first.

A core value of Tanoda is partnership: partnership both among teachers and with pupils. All the spaces are shared with students, thus conveying the message that they are all equal and the teachers are approachable. The teachers form a team where decisions are made by consensus. Every one of them is involved in everything, they manage the school together, and assume shared responsibility for the pupils. Although each pupil has a mentor of their choice whom they can turn to with any issue (whether related to learning or to personal life), the teachers' team gather together as a whole once a week for three hours to discuss pupils and their development, gaining a good overview of every pupil and helping each other with their insights.

A main concept of the school is to make school life as close to everyday life as possible, as the efficiency of learning proves to be directly related to the degree this can be accomplished. Life together as a community sets up a holistic environment where one can grow and learn - learn history or math, but first and foremost, learn about themselves.

This holistic approach marks the place of assessment, which is an integral and organic part of education at Tanoda. Giving feedback (both on the learning process and on attitude and behaviour) is an everyday exercise, but there are also separate points of assessment. With new students they start by testing their pre-existing knowledge to gain a clear understanding of where each student is at in their learning. Based on that, or in the case of older students based on the previous term's achievements, they set learning goals and agree on a learning plan and schedule, which is incorporated into a contract between the school and the individual pupil. Although this contract is regularly assessed against the actual process and can be adapted accordingly to set realistic expectations, it has an important role in marking the learning journey and learning goals.

IDENTITY CARD #20

Name of practice Assessment for Life: A Second Chance for Early School Leavers

Type of Assessment

Ipsative: present performance is compared to prior performance, helping to identify successful attitudes and learning practices
Self: the pupils are encouraged to reflect on themselves, their attitudes and their learning processes on a continuing basis
Peer: pupils give feedback to and assess each other, based on their performance and group work.
Collaborative: groups of pupils also assess their own performance and learning together
Formative: the pupils get feedback and advice from several sources at several points of assessment
Summative: at the end of the project the audience gives rubric scores to assess project presentations

Category School-wide practice

Field The project themes are chosen in the fields of arts, science, social studies or self-awareness, which for grading purposes can be categorised under a school subject

Age group Secondary school, ISCED 3 Pupils in the 16-25 age range

School Belvárosi Tanoda Alapítványi Gimnázium beltanoda.hu

Country Hungary Budapest

Teacher Csilla Szebényi Secondary school teacher, teaching Hungarian and history

Values

Contextualised: assessment is done in a real-world scenario on topics that are relevant and valid for pupils of this age and useful for their adult life.

Individualised: the practice is personalised and individualised, designed to give valuable feedback for each pupil to help them develop healthy learning habits and build skills for life.

Participatory: pupils' involvement in their own learning process is a key element of the practice

Timeline and preparation

The presentation of the projects takes a day, and the project assessment another. However, assessment and giving feedback are constant elements of teaching.

Form of documentation

Oral and written

The formative assessment is made by the teachers and peers orally. However, it all translates into percentages which in turn are converted to grades.

Implementation of outcomes

Participation in two projects (including the day of assessment) per year is a prerequisite for completing the studies. The final grade is included in the official school report.



Csilla also recalls her practice she uses with new pupils. At the end of the class she gives them feedback forms to evaluate different aspects, i.e. whether they arrived on time; whether they could take an active role during the class; whether they could communicate with their peers; whether they could pay attention; and what they learned. As they do this at the end of every class, pupils start to adapt and respond to the expectations. Its aim is to help youngsters reflect on themselves, develop awareness of their learning processes and build healthy habits for learning and class participation.

Teachers also assess their own performance. A few years ago they hired a professional educational research company to do this, but they also do a self-assessment at the end of every school year. At this occasion they go through every pupil's achievements to assess whether they consider them a success or a failure from the perspective of their

own teaching efforts. A pupil is considered to be a “failure” if they leave school (even with a successful final exam) with the teachers considering that they couldn’t even “scratch the surface of them”, meaning they couldn’t have an impact on them in terms of building important human and life skills, e.g. adaptability, attitude or self-reflection.

One of the features of the school that was set up in the beginning and hasn’t changed since is the exam system. It was introduced because youngsters were stressed out by the daily testing and pressure that they experienced in traditional schools. To reduce pressure and focus on learning, the school year at the Tanoda is broken down into three terms. During this time they can immerse themselves into learning in an inspiring environment through diverse activities, vivid discussions and problem-solving. They process the learning material together, and the pupils are constantly encouraged to think for themselves, ask questions, ask for help, and work with others.

At the end of the term, they can sit the exams with confidence. As for the exams, for junior students the focus is on problem-based learning, building confidence and gaining routine in sitting tests, while the exams themselves are more important for senior pupils who are closer to the final exams. In both cases, after the exams, the first thing they are asked to do is self-assessment. The examiner teachers then reflect on the pupil’s insights and impressions, helping them to get a clearer and more realistic picture of themselves. It also includes an ipsative element, when they reflect on past performances of the pupil, helping them to understand the factors that contributed to a better or weaker result. After the teachers have given their own assessment, together they talk about and analyse the learning process that led the pupil there, and the teachers help them refine it. Beside self-assessment, a core feature of the system is the idea that failure is acceptable and a valuable element of the learning process. Success is nourishment for the soul but it is our mistakes and failures that help us grow - provided that we get feedback about them in an acceptable and constructive manner and also assistance to overcome them and learn from them.

One of the elements added recently to the system is problem-based learning, which is built around the values of collaboration, independent research and self-directed learning. The practice we identified as a good formative assessment practice relates to projects based on the above-mentioned problem-based learning.

The Teacher

Csilla always wanted to be an educator, she had felt this calling very early on. She recalls her school years being very difficult, filled with anxiety and stress. The school didn't care about the students, and humiliation was a common thing. She felt desperate.

Looking back, she thinks she learned a lot during this time. She is grateful now that she survived it without major damage. She experienced first-hand how stress and anxiety can cause children to underperform. However, secondary school was a more positive experience for her. She continued her studies at university, majoring in Hungarian and history. Around 1988-89, the time of political transition in Hungary, the teacher of pedagogy at the university gave a lecture about reform pedagogies and, among others, spoke about Waldorf pedagogy. The first few sentences about Waldorf education made a big impression on Csilla: she realised that this is what she was looking for.

After university, she started working in a school that had a good atmosphere and was determined to open up. Nevertheless, she felt the same anxiety there as she had as a pupil. She always felt comfortable among pupils and found it difficult to experience the separation between pupils and teachers. When her child was born, she stayed on maternity leave for three years. Through the Szabad Iskolák Egyesülete (Free Schools Association), she was introduced to alternative schools and completed a 30-hour training course on the theory and practice of Waldorf education. She sympathised with this approach to education very much but did not want to change careers. First, she had always felt close to adolescents rather than to younger children, and second, she felt that to become a Waldorf teacher, one needs a more mature and more complete personality than she had at that point in her life.

She started working at the Belvárosi Tanoda in 1996. She was very impressed by the partnership between teachers and students and the support the school offered to the students. In addition to teaching Hungarian and history, she has been deputy principal since 2001, and also provides mental health care for students with difficulties.

There was a moment in her career when she wanted to do something different, so she completed a university course in supervision. Supervision is a professional personal



development method that helps people in the helping professions, such as teachers, psychologists, social workers, to maintain and improve their own mental health and professional development. She has been doing this ever since, alongside teaching. She can also incorporate it into her teaching practice and even passes her knowledge on to colleagues. Being a self-learning organisation, the teachers' team can benefit from it in their own self-development work.

A few years ago Csilla started thinking of Waldorf education again and applied to the Waldorf teachers' training on an impulse. She completed the training in autumn 2020. She specialised to become a class teacher, not because she wanted to work with younger children, but because she felt that this was how she could learn the most about Waldorf education. During her training she realised that deep down she has always been a Waldorf teacher. She had always incorporated the Waldorf method into her teaching; but it was the training that made her aware of a lot of things and practices what she has been doing anyway.

She loves the school, the students and their system so much that she can't imagine doing anything else or teaching anywhere else. Her whole being radiates positivity and love for the young people she works with, as she closes the interview with the words "We are here in joy".

The Practice

Each student has to take part in two projects in every school year. The topics are chosen by teachers in the fields of arts, science, social studies or self-awareness. However, there aren't any set criteria for the topics, teachers are free to come up with their own ideas. For example, one year an art, a math and an English teacher suggested the topic "Home of our Dreams". During the project, pupils designed the house of their dreams with the instructions of the art teacher, while learning about architecture and art history. After that, with the guidance of the math teacher, they built the scale-model of the house, requiring calculation, geometry and a high level of accuracy. Moreover, the language of the project and the presentation was English.

At the initial project meeting pupils group around the topics of their choice, based on their interests, and start brainstorming and designing the work. After they have discussed how they will approach the issue, they divide up the work amongst themselves and assign different roles. Then they draft a written work plan and a project agreement. This is to teach pupils making plans and commitments, and also adhering to them. Midway through the project, they look at these documents and decide whether things are proceeding according to the plans or whether they need to be altered or adapted. Working on the project includes independent research, small and large group work and also classes in the school.

During the project, they need to gather information, for which they have to evaluate the sources in terms of the quality of the information provided within them. As they learn more effectively through this process than from lectures given by the teachers, it is of utmost importance that they work with reliable and accurate information.

It was a conscious choice to elevate these projects from the daily routine and give the end-of-project presentations a special place in the school's life. As a result, in each

term, a special day is dedicated to the presentations when the whole school community gathers and watches the end-products of the projects. These vary from drama plays and movies to exhibitions, experiments and verbal presentations. As an element of peer-assessment, the “school citizens” score the performance, based on criteria such as content and quality, and also on how interesting, creative and resourceful it was. It is to emphasise the importance of the art of presentation: it is not enough to work hard or have thorough research, it is equally important to present to others what you have learnt in an engaging way.

As shown above, working on the projects provides pupils with the opportunity to develop a range of skills, most of which are assessed in some form at the end. The assessment includes peer-assessment, self-assessment and assessment by the project leaders (teachers).

The project assessment with the teachers has a dedicated day in the exam week. Pupils’ participation is required for the final summative assessment that makes up the course grade. It also marks the highlight of the practice, as on this occasion pupils get extremely comprehensive and detailed feedback of themselves, making it a valuable good formative assessment practice.

First, the project leaders present the outcome of the audience’s evaluation, then peer- and self-assessment take place. As Csilla put it, everyone assesses everyone and everything. Pupils reflect on themselves and each other, individually and also as a small and large group. They tell about their own experiences, assess how it has been to work with them, whether they could count on them, whether they had good ideas and how they could realise their ideas. The peer-assessment done by the audience and the working groups, and also the self-assessment translate into percentages, which add to the final assessment. However, the true value of it is the discussion itself where they give and get honest and detailed feedback from each other.

The self-evaluation of the project is based on the following criteria:

1. Self-assessment of competences

Students are asked to rate the following statements on a scale of one to five

- I worked hard.
- I worked independently.
- I worked actively.
- I worked accurately.
- I worked creatively.
- I worked as a team-player.

2. Self-reflection

Students are asked to answer the following questions:

- What am I still unsure about?
- Why am I unsure?
- Which were my most time-consuming tasks?
- What are my new tasks that emerged as unplanned?
- Which tasks have I not completed on time?

Possible reasons for this?

- I worked with the following people other than the course participants on my tasks:

- I need additional help with the following tasks:

- Who can help me with this?

My Accomplishments:

How satisfied am I with my own performance?

After the group assessment, they have a personal and individual discussion with the project leaders. As always, it starts with self-reflection, followed by the teachers' insights, but this time the focus is on the pupil's participation in the project classes, activity and engagement during the project, adherence to the work plan and also factual knowledge demonstrated through the presentation. The percentages given on different stages add up to a grand total, which is converted by their bespoke software to a grade for the relevant subject.

The practice and especially the project assessment reflects on the learning process, in its broadest sense. It includes social skills, communication with the teachers and school-mates, work ethics, and also a sense of responsibility for themselves and others in the working group. As these young people tend to shut down and focus inwardly, forcing them to work with others helps them learn social skills that they otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to acquire.

Sources

Narrative by Cecilia Skarka, based on:

- *An online interview with Csilla Szabéni in February 2021*

Photographs courtesy of Belvárosi Tanoda Alapítványi Gimnázium; also the last photograph



The first and greatest thanks go to those wonderful teachers and school leaders out in the educational field who gave their time and energy to sharing their inspiring practices with us. They are all educational pioneers, giving their attention to the children and young people in their care to help them become who they are.

For this publication they are: Jázmin Balogh, Amanda Bell, Kath Bransby, Adriana Dobritoiu, Adrian Dow, Ferenc Erdész, Krisztián Freigang, Niko Ginter, Cormac Griffith, Henrike Grüber, Saskia Haas, Kilian Hattstein-Blumenthal, Iris Kirchbach-Sahabi, Patrick Kolb, Carmen Lica, Imre Nagy, Tom Oosterhuis, Elke Pohland, Eeva Raunela, Marianne Rongen, Ulrike Sievers, Marinka Špodnjak, Csilla Szebényi, Annette van Valkengoed, Sam Versweyveld, Naima Zeijpveld.

And the parents and pupils who took part in the interviews: Ana, Arend, Celeste, Christina Lærke Vilhelmsen, Esther, Ivana, Maya Forster, Nada, Sandra, Solbjørn and Thomas Uhrskov.

And to all other teachers and parents in the world: thank you for supporting children to become resilient adults.

Our experts, Detlef Hardop, Martyn Rawson, Luis Manuel Pinto and Linda O'Toole: your time and energy was of invaluable help to realise this collection.

We would also like to thank the people at the Tempus Public Foundation, the Erasmus+ National Agency for Hungary, for being open to our questions, giving the necessary extensions, and even for pushing us with their "preventive monitoring" - without you pushing our boundaries this publication might not have become so thorough.

To our publisher, for creating this wonderful lay-out and making our work more than a collection of practices.

To all our international friends and partners who helped us with dissemination, with finding the good practices, with asking the "right" questions.

A warm, heartfelt thanks goes to our wonderful team: during all the ups and downs of the project we have become more than partners - we have become friends. I would work with you any time - and hope to do so in the future!

And dear Richard, you have been with us all the time: even throughout your illness you kept up the interest for the topic, the project and us. This is a collection that you cannot enjoy with us - but you are here in every word of it. Have a good journey.

Márti Domokos, project coordinator

Assessment as Dialogue



Elements of Assessment as Dialogue - Towards Wholeness

1. Assessment for learning through the **engaged participation** of each pupil is vital to learning and development.
2. The learning being assessed takes the pupil's **unique potential** into account and includes appreciation of the development of the whole person.
3. Pupils are supported at **moments of transition** -- into primary school and secondary school, and beyond -- rather than 'selected' through tests. All pupils' rights to a full school education are affirmed.
4. **Relationships and processes** of cooperation and mutual appreciation are encouraged and students are motivated in terms of their own previous levels of attainment.
5. **Nested systems** of assessment include planning and review that provide teachers with important feedback.
6. Individual case reports by teachers are used to gain insight and understanding of the child's biographical development and **inner diversity**, to form a picture of what is emerging.
7. Assessment should be effective in terms of the previous six elements, unobtrusive, embedded in classroom practice, unbureaucratic yet also well documented, thereby **measuring what matters**.