

People children

Outside

Step outside, look inside



Nederlandse
Jenaplan
Vereniging

Magazine for and about jenaplan education

Inside out

We are going outside for this first issue of the new school year. To the Outdoor Classroom of The Small Planet. And pruning willows in the swampy osier with Hilde Paulsen. Off to camp at Terra Ultima. 'Stepping out', in the sense of: manifesting yourself, often also means 'looking inwards': considering yourself.

In this issue, school leaders and starting group leaders examine their own practice. They show us their school and in the process discover who they are and what they stand for. /GB

Colophon

Magazine for and about jenaplan education

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Jenaplan

beyond the whispering voice

The theme 'Outside' was heavily discussed during our first real meeting since the corona years. We sat inside, at the cozy kitchen table in the art and plant-filled home of book editor Berna van der Linden. It was March. Dark. Rainy. 'Outside' was mainly a desire. To warmth, to sun, to festivals.

Our editorial meeting afterwards was in Vierhouten, where NJPV director Edwin Solen gave us a tour of the Easter Hill, the place that will be the location of the JenaParade in May 2024. One hundred years of Jenaplan, at an equally old location. A place that, like Petersen's Jena in 1923, has traditionally been filled with great ideals, the pursuit of emancipation, elevation, and community.

Many of you will see it next year, that old social democratic location, where children have been immersed in culture and nature for a century. Our beloved circle takes physical shape in a spectacular way on the Easter Hill: there are two large outdoor theaters,

with stands of sleepers, stone and earth, now partly overgrown with young birches and other pioneer plants. In the middle of it, down there in the depths, editor Kees Groos stood on stage and sang to us, but the natural acoustics also worked wonderfully at a whisper.

With Kees' whispered words, 'Outside' became more than a theme about the world of sun, rain and wind at the

other side of the window glass. It also took on the metaphorical coloring of 'coming out', of making yourself heard. In this issue Bart, Josje and Ineke do that. During their minor in innovation education at teacher training college Stenden in Assen, they fell for the Jena plan and here, with their masterpiece, experience their 'coming out' as core group leaders.

In addition, three school leaders will take you into their school. They show developments that they are proud of and with that they also show something of themselves. The outdoor classroom in nature, where Jenaplan children in Deventer spend an entire school day every few weeks. Or the strength of the lower grades, which in Nijmegen is translated into middle and upper grades. In Ghent, Inge Willem shows how inclusivity takes shape in her school. Their 'coming out' is at the same time a 'looking in', because these school leaders used a century of Jenaplan tradition and their own life story to determine their course.

Finally, we look at the Czech Republic, where three Jenaplan schools are now making their mark specific enthusiasm that is released when you pioneer. School leader Stepan Kovar, his colleague Eva Polanová and eight of their children spent two weeks on Metameer. And while they watched us, we could enjoy their agile, energetic and profound choices to shape Jenaplan in 2023.

Geert Bors
Editor-in-chief Human Children

Naturally!

Kees starts his school year with a striking book: the newly discovered manuscript about an unknown continent. The senior class becomes fascinated. Where is Terra Ultima located? Somewhere in the Pacific Ocean, where the legend is printed over the map, someone believes. We practice with latitude and longitude. Climates are drawn and studied. And then it's school camp, also to Terra Ultima. As befits an expedition, there are hardships and friendships are created, which will benefit the group all year long.

Kees Groos



"There appears to be a new, unknown continent," I begin the circle, "It's in this book." I read a piece and show images in which the extensive archive of the explorer Raoul Deleo appears to have ended up in the hands of the biologist Noah J. Stern. It becomes quiet in the classroom. After looking at some pictures and reading the pieces, the questions burst out. The secret continent of Terra Ultima! Where is it then? How did Deleo get there? What other animals are there? Why is it secret?

It's the start of the school year and we're already in one in our class

different world. Fantasy animals are made for the birthday calendar. Children write down what they eat and how they live. We think about the climates on the continent and we want to know where exactly it is. Research is being done.

The boys lie on their stomachs above our world map. "Could it be here?", one asks. Then someone sees damage on the card, a piece of the printing layer has disappeared, making the white paper underneath visible - it looks like one of those 'white spots on the card', where carto-



Illustration: Stijn Ruijzenaars

what could be found there. "I think it's here, but they took that part away on purpose!" The other upperclassmen certainly see that as a possibility. "Or it's behind this," says the third, pointing to the legend placed in a box over a stretch of the Pacific Ocean. But then it is discovered that the book contains clues about a possible location. Longitude and latitude are flying around our ears. How exactly does that work? In the circle, bring the world map, compasses, a globe and an atlas and take a good look together

"Is this actually really?" asks a boy while we are busy for the strange continent map to bring. "Makes does that matter?", is my counter question.

”

oh, it's with those hemispheres and all the lines. Is this actually real?", someone asks me while we are busy mapping the continent's inadequacies. "Does that matter?" is my counter question. The boy smiles, shakes his head and continues working diligently.

It is the fourth week of the school year and we are going to camp. of course to Terra Ultima. On the etching. Once we arrive, the image appears to be eerily similar to the wet Dutch one. In the In a few days of our stay there is about as much rain as normal in six months. But like real ones We don't let ourselves be identified by expedition members. Use all dry moments to go outside. We kiss tracks in the forest. We use pallets to make shelters. We send messages with flags

and when the other team members come to visit, we go into the dark to listen to the animal songs of Terra Ultima. What sound belongs to those beautiful animals? That's a complicated one, because we've never heard them before. Armed with flashlights, we search through the kitchen, woodshed, dormitories, because it is now raining again. When you go on a working week with the children and on an expedition to such a continent, it may rain as much as you want, but you stay at camp. Lovely outside when possible and inside when necessary. Away from the normal, meeting each other in new ways - that is the aim. In my mind I am immediately back in our Terra Ultima. I see how

canvases were painted, their own animals were designed and expeditions were practiced for the colorful evening. The children were completely into it.

What we had not taken into account in any script is that we would also come into contact with unexpected germs on this strange continent. The first boy from group 6 in the bunk bed diagonally above me started throwing up the night after the pancakes. We ate a little too much, we thought. Not much later we were scrubbing mattresses and soaking sleeping bags with various camp parents and colleagues. In the morning there were at least eight expedition members sitting at the picnic tables with buckets and basins, and with gray-white faces. They could not complete the return journey by bicycle. Our three main groups cycled back with a thinned out superstructure. It stopped raining.

What an adventure. Started in class. Continued outside. And actually our joint expedition only ended around the summer holidays.

Editor Kees Groos is a tribe leader and deputy director in Boxmeer

Curious about Terra Ultima? On pages 40-44 Berna van der Linden writes a review about the book.

Our previous issue went completely away the research into 'the entrepreneurial attitude'. Narrative research, where stories were collected in jenaplan teams.

Every member of the JenaplanResearch Group (JOG), also told an own account of personal motivations and what the research had brought. This time Hilde Venema: "I know what the significance of returning practical stories to practice. It is more valuable than detached analyses."

The flying out child and teacher as holding space

Photography: Larissa Rand

Geert Bors

'Teacher, I wasn't nice to you anymore':

fragments from educational reality

"Around this time," says Hilde Venema in the weeks before the summer holidays of 2023, "eighth-year students can become very rebellious and quite irritating. From January onwards they can already exhibit insufferable behavior – tough, loud, they are the biggest and the oldest on the square, they have seen it all. But at the end of the year you suddenly see them becoming young children again. There are always tears, because they know what they are going to lose and do not yet know where they will jump to. When I said goodbye to De Zevensprong, I found that moment and the attention very uncomfortable. I was already given a toilet roll under my arm and indeed I couldn't keep it dry when parents wished me very nice things." But the best part was a boy from her group who came to her: "I wasn't nice to you anymore. And you don't always agree either. But you are the teacher who taught me a lot about myself. Thank you." For such an incident, such a moment from lived educational reality, Hilde says, there is the story and narrative research.

Very fanatic. Motivated to the core. That's how Hilde Venema describes herself and that's how she is known in the world of the Jenaplan, whether you find her in her role as a core group or workshop leader, as a coach or podcast maker. "What I do, I want to do well." And so Hilde immediately had some ideas when then NJPV director Jaap Meijer told her in 2018 that he had planned to conduct research together with the Innovative Education professorship at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. With the help of lecturer Patrick Sins, he looked for ways to deepen, enrich and legitimize Jenaplan education. "Jaap was visiting my school, the Zevensprong in Boskoop, and asked me to think along, because he knew that I had studied ecological pedagogy and had gained research experience."

The magic of the first-person poem

They continued the conversation in Zutphen. "If you want to do something that feels relevant to your members," Hilde had argued, "then you have to ensure that schools themselves are involved in the research. During every group discussion, we tell the children in our core groups that it is about 'learning from and with each other'. The same applies to core group leaders and directors: especially in the Jenaplan you can learn a lot from each other's practices." Hilde sees it, for example, in the popularity of 'De JenaWeek van' on Instagram, where a different group leader takes followers through the considerations and activities during a school week.

Hilde had experienced a way to stimulate this involvement when she did her practical scientific research for her study and reported the results back to her own team: "I had chosen a narrative approach, working with the power of stories. At my school I had watched, listened and questioned colleagues. This produced incidents, experiences and anecdotes from their practice, which I analyzed and presented to them as a collection of 'I-poems'. None of them remembered who had said what, but it caused quite a stir and an energetic conversation immediately started. All kinds of perspectives and layers of meaning emerged – very powerful, very beautiful, almost magical." In short, Hilde said to Patrick and Jaap: "I know what significance it has to give practical stories back to practice. It is more valuable than detached analyses. I mean: meticulous research with percentages and significance also has its value, but you cannot find the experience in that."

The Jenaplan position

With the first outlines set, a group of practitioners slowly formed under the name 'JenaplanOnderzoeksGroep' (JOG). Hilde initially interpreted the chosen research theme, 'the entrepreneurial attitude', rather narrowly: "I was

As I've come to see it, is entrepreneurial spirit the jenaplan position

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familiar with the Jenaplan essentials, including the essence of 'entrepreneurship'. I actually always interpreted this as 'letting children do things themselves'. Or play shop, earn money yourself, with cash management in the Klasse!Box.” As the research project progressed, reading the literature but especially during the group interviews and their analyses, it became much broader: “As I have come to see it, entrepreneurial spirit is 'the jenaplan attitude'. There is a power within each of us, which has a lot to do with self-realization, and which we want to awaken in our children. It is about getting to know yourself and learning to embrace it, in order to achieve something in the world yourself. That jenaplan attitude is tied to who you are as a person, to becoming who you want to be.

This requires a lot: courage, confidence, a safe place where you feel encouraged.”

Such a development actually stimulated Hilde

always in her children: “I've wondered out loud for years why I should come up with a craft lesson for the children. I let them do that themselves, but raised expectations during the process. Just a bit harder, more challenging. Just a push to come up with new solutions, to try things differently, to practice a new skill.”

The whole, lived educational reality

Hilde is enthusiastic about what the research group has found [read our previous issue, MK178, June 2023 via the NJPV site or the QR code]. About the joint work in the research group. About what the literature revealed – also the topical nature of hundred-year-old texts by Peter Petersen. About what we can expect and desire from children and how we socially postpone an adventurous, enterprising attitude in the Netherlands, and how Jenaplan practices this much earlier. About how close she came, in the group interviews at schools and the analyses, to the essence of the Jena Plan.

Yet she also felt that the research veered away from the complex, lived experience that lies in narrative research very early on. “Are we going to funnel now, already analog-

lyse?”, I thought. As far as I'm concerned, the stories could simmer for a while and reveal their meaning a little more slowly and organically. But in the process we moved towards a framework in effective aspects such as the role of the core group leader, of the group, of the working methods. And that is also valuable.” What then no longer comes up? Hilde immediately says the intuitive thing that living with a group of children requires: “The effort you have to make as a core group leader to create an atmosphere in which you can get to know yourself through an enterprising attitude. I wanted to talk much more about the courage to jump, to deviate from preconceived paths. About encouragement. There is that one child in your core group who you have to temper his enthusiasm a bit by letting him think a little longer. But also the child who needs to feel a lot of security from you to dare to manifest himself. I wanted every tribal group leader to feel that energy.”

This was always present in the interview conversations: sensing, the steering skills of the core group leader. Making estimates about who can handle what. And also: the considerations, the doubts you may have, says Hilde. “You inevitably confront yourself: have I been too careful with that child today? Too pushy with the other kid?

Shouldn't I have let those two have a conversation together at that exact moment? That is why it is so essential to regularly take time for a pedagogical conversation with your colleagues. That's where you grow, with your team, with your children.”

“I want to tell it myself,” said the girl

She has plenty of lively stories with a meaning that resonates deeply: “I was in the upper grades for the longest time, with grades 6, 7 and 8. If you have a 7-8 that is rock solid, then you have a solid group culture. on which you can build. I have had groups that included the youngest very nicely. But sometimes you also have sixth-year students who still find it very exciting among those big kids. I had many cups of tea with those children after school: 'do you know how it works and where everything is? What do you have questions about?’”

There was a new girl in Hilde's group, whose mother said she had a stomach ache from the tension and did not want to go to school. Teacher Hilde invited her new youngest for tea after school: 'We're going to see if it's really that bad.' “I made it clear to her that she could tell me anything, but that I had the impression that nothing was going on between us: 'You actually have difficulty with children in the group. If you want, I will say something about it in the circle. That this and this is going on, without me saying it's about you.’” But then, Hilde says, the girl took over. “‘It's me,' said the girl, 'I find it difficult. I want to tell it myself.' And she did, she took it all on herself, in the middle of the morning circle. Of course, the older children understood perfectly well what it is like to be a sixth year in a group with pre-pubescent big children, who can be very tough with each other. If you are sensitive to that, it is very exciting. And so this girl became a pillar of strength for many of the youngest children.” It was no longer her teacher, but the girl herself who became the 'holding space', the safe place, for group members. And yes, this is also a story about the enterprising attitude, says Hilde: “This girl went beyond her own discomfort, understood something new in herself and took such a step that it was seen and recognized by the entire group. I say: the jenaplan attitude.”

Hilde as a holding space for starting teachers

Hilde once moved from home and hearth in Groningen to become a tribe leader about 200 kilometers away in Boskoop, South Holland. After sixteen growing years at De Zevensprong, it was time to look further. “It is that same moment when an adolescent starts to feel that he has to spread his wings. A warm, safe nest can also become too warm.” Her search brought her to a school in a deprived area in Gouda. The school organization's view of humanity may be different, but Hilde is in the right place: “It takes a village, and in the school as an educational village it is about which role suits you best.” The administrative office saw more than a teacher in Hilde. As a teacher-coach, she supports others – especially starting teachers – in getting to know themselves as teachers. Hilde sees her strength in providing an encouraging, safe 'holding space', in which colleagues can internalize and ask themselves what it takes to become the teacher they want to be. Hilde is also a member of NJPV Jong and regularly hosts the Jenaplan podcast [see QR code].



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QR code MK178 The enterprising
attitude

1 School leader speaking: Yno Hendriks

How to learn outdoors was given a permanent place in our education

Text and photography: Yno Hendriks

World enough in Deventer. You have the IJssel with its floodplains, the old streets the time of the Hanseatic League and Erasmus. Yet De Kleine Planet noticed that many children barely left their neighborhood. Is your 'The world is your classroom' correct? School leader Yno Hendriks explains how the school came up with the 'Outdoor Class' – a structural day of outdoor education for all build. Supplies? A portion of luck, vision and NPO funds.

Beyond the boundaries of the schoolyard

"The world is your classroom" – that is the slogan of your naplan school De Kleine Planet. A slogan that would apply perfectly to many Jenaplan schools. A jenaplan school is by definition world-oriented and meaningful. Many jenaplan schools

have green schoolyards, vegetable gardens and use tribal group work to bring in the world. Very nice, keep doing it. But we noticed that for many children at our school their world was not much bigger than the neighborhood and the school grounds. Although Deventer is located in a rural area, many children rarely or never spend time in nature. A playground with artificial grass and a petting zoo are the greenest experiences for many children.

If that limited environment is the experience space of our children, then we are only bringing into a very small world of The Small Planet. And so we wanted to think beyond the boundaries of the schoolyard, because other places, other spaces provide new stimulation and unforeseen experiences. Arousing wonder and curiosity is the starting point of jenaplan education, from there learning and development begins. Or as Peter Petersen put it: "We must create opportunities in which the child meets the world and offers opportunities to challenge the child to think along, to participate and to learn."

No bears and wolves, but vision and courage

Like many beautiful things, it started in the 2018-2019 school year with a happy coincidence - something that came our way and in which opportunities were seen and seized. The ingredients that come with

came together: a student with a research assignment, a group leader with a heart for nature education and a school leader with vision and courage. Contact was made with a scouting association on the outskirts of Deventer and what started with a day of outdoor education for a lower grade group quickly resulted in a pilot to structurally organize these 'forest days' for the lower grades. Maybe that sounds very easy and energetic. As every school leader knows, changes never happen without a struggle. Many parents had concerns and questions. How can safety be guaranteed? Is there a fence around the forest? Are there wolves around? What if children don't want to? How is transport arranged? And: what is actually the added value of this? And so we held information evenings for parents and anyone who wanted to could come and watch and participate. The experiences surrounding these forest days were regularly discussed with a group of involved parents and team members.

Positive aspects

Slowly the positive aspects started to become more visible. Tribal group leaders delved further into outdoor education and the possibilities it offered. Parents noticed that after days in the woods, the school stories at dinner were extra enthusiastic. At the end of that school year we wrote down our conclusions:



- Children are active on forest days and learn in different ways;
- Children develop an investigative attitude;
- Children have intensive experiences with nature and expand their world;
- Children are active, their motor skills are challenged;
- Children talk a lot about their (new) experiences at home;
- Tribal group work/world orientation takes on a broader and deeper meaning;
- Parental involvement (parents present) has increased;
- Talents of children, parents and team members are addressed;
- Situations for social-emotional development and group dynamics have been expanded.

Tapping into other talents

A day of outdoor education is nice, but what we noticed was that more happened through repetition and the rhythm of a biweekly outdoor day: a deepening of (learning) experiences was created. Tribal group leaders and children became accustomed to interacting with the world and learning material differently: it became more sensory, more meaningful, more practical. What was learned outside the physical and experiential environment was processed in depth at school and was connected to the teaching material. In addition, core group leaders got a better picture of the children, literally and figuratively, including their way of picking things up and the bumps in their learning process.

They took these insights back to the school situation: the way you see children largely determines the way you interact with them. The possibilities,

Children's talents and interests are so broad and diverse. For example, they can be incredibly sporty, handy, smart, creative, helpful or persistent. Everyone has their own qualities. But due to the current educational offer, which is often based on the grand average, not all children achieve their full potential and are absorbed into the bigger picture.

Every child, every person, is unique and has their own ways, their own preferences, their own pace of development. A boy who was always struggling with language and arithmetic assignments in class suddenly turned out to excel on the outdoor lesson day: when it came to woodworking jobs, he was on top of things, quickly understood what the intention was and easily picked up the necessary techniques. on. You will see a child like that with different eyes. It is not only about gaining knowledge about nature, their environment or food, but above all about discovering in new ways what you are good at and what you like. For many children, the outdoor day contributes to their learning pleasure, their self-knowledge and therefore their self-confidence.

Kees Both already knew it

Kees Both already told us that you don't just learn in your classroom. In an article in Mensenkinderen from 2007, he explains that many important learning experiences are gained in the outdoors. The 'outside classroom' can be a source for learning, in principle in all subjects and areas of education: developing a sense of wonder, estimating and measuring, asking questions and researching, writing texts, drawing and painting, taking photos, processing data on the computer, and so on. Being outside challenges you to move: indoors

climbing trees, digging, building. Nature offers unexpected variations, so you have to pay close attention and learn to respond quickly to changes. Like on a staircase made of tree branches, which is very irregular in terms of distances. Stimulating children's exercise (combating lack of exercise) is usually sought in organized sports, but can also be done through spontaneous, informal learning in a natural setting. And nature is not just 'green'. This also includes elements such as water, ground, fire, air/wind (the weather). Nature must be seen, experienced and felt. Experiencing nature with their senses awakens children's amazement and amazement – Peter Petersen's 'pedagogical situation' at its best. The 'edge of your seat feeling', but on a tree stump. You then help the children to express their sense of wonder by asking them to search for more knowledge, by doing research, asking questions and consulting books. The logical step that follows is that they also develop respect for everything that lives.

The next step

From the 2019-2020 school year, outdoor education was given a permanent place in our educational offering. Each junior group went to our Outdoor Classroom for one day every other week. What started as a pilot became routine. And perhaps it would have stayed there if the corona pandemic had not broken out. In particular, the NPO funds made available enabled us to continue organizing and expanding the Buitenlokaal.

The Small Planet maintained its own course and started to focus even more on sustainable development/



innovation of our education. We wanted the resources to be used for the broad development of children. At the same time, we thought it was important to prioritize professionalization: learning from and with each other. Space for collegial consultation and research. Because we wanted to give all children the experiences of outdoor education, we chose to also realize outdoor education for the middle and upper grades. However, we realized that it required something different from us for middle and upper grades than for toddlers. And that we had to investigate what works and what needed to be developed. Using the NPO resources, we were able to free up a core group leader and a teaching assistant for two days, who went to our Outdoor classroom on two days every week with a middle or upper group group and provided the activities. During the outdoor education days, the regular group leader was exempt from group tasks and had

time for professionalization. This way we killed two birds with one stone. The middle grades knew outdoor education from their junior years and were immediately enthusiastic. For some upperclassmen it was quite a step out of their comfort zone. But we have noticed that the initial unfamiliarity and associated feelings of indifference, fear or disinterest have turned into engagement and curiosity about nature in many children

– simply by doing and experiencing it.

And what now?

From January 2023, the tribal group leaders went to the Buitenlokaal for part of the day. They were also included in the preparations, because from the 2023-24 school year they will provide the outdoor lesson days themselves, with the help of an (outdoor) teaching assistant.

Some tribal group leaders were immediately looking forward to it and thinking about it

in advance: outdoor education in a museum, theater, factory or port. Suitable for tribal group work. Other group leaders also find it exciting: although there is support from a teaching assistant and there are helpful parents, it again requires courage. Courage to take on an adventure where you don't know exactly what it will bring you and courage to show resilience when things don't turn out the way you thought. Peter Petersen compared a tribal group leader to a helmsman on a ship. You need to know the direction, but you don't know exactly how the day will go. It requires openness to the situation. No rigid attention, but a flexible attentiveness to respond to situations with an open mind. Our outdoor education was created from that idea and we literally ensure that we expand the world for the children. We are still The Small Planet, but the children's world has become a bit bigger.

Frog chicken



Judith Knapp

The outdoors is always in full swing on and around Judith Knapp's Limburg farm. Well, until Zaza, her youngest son's favorite chicken, lies quietly in the coop. Judith knows from regular group discussions about deceased pets that emotions surrounding death are fathomlessly deep. But her six-year-old son is especially fascinated.

Judith Knapp

Somewhere I expected a tear. At least a moment of surprise, of silence, when my youngest son ran to me and told me that his chicken, Zaza, was lying quietly in the chicken coop. "He's dead," he concluded decisively.

That same week a child said

during a circle moment with fits and starts about her deceased guinea pig. Big tears streamed down her cheeks when she talked about her Caafje. The emotions surrounding Caafje soon turned out to be taken over, when another girl also started to sob because of what had surfaced

memories of her deceased dog.

The finality of death. Of having to let go. From 'never again'. As a teacher, it is special to be able to experience the diversity of emotions with your group. Intense grief can bring back everything that has ever been in children.

Flowers on the grave

But death can just as easily evoke a strange fascination. My son could hardly hide his enthusiasm, it seemed. He pulled my arm and ordered me to come immediately. As befits a mother, I dropped everything and followed him outside. And yes, there lay Zaza. Her eyes are closed and her legs are both in an extended position. As if she were Super Chicken in full flight. Only her cape was still missing. It was warm, so we decided to put Zaza to rest as soon as possible. As we gathered all the materials together, my youngest bombarded me with questions. He wanted to know everything, discover everything. He wanted to feel for a while, save a feather and see if the beak could move. A real pathologist.



I followed his hands, his eyes, his thoughts and theories with the same fascination. I did my best to answer his questions. With his six springs, he did not find death a nasty or exciting phenomenon at all. He wanted to discover, contemplate and learn.

"I'm going to miss Zaza," he said after we had cared for and buried her. I nodded and gave him a hug. "But," he continued his thought, "I also think it's sweet that Zaza is now taking care of the little tickles." "That's true," I agreed, "Zaza has enjoyed little tickle creatures and now she allows them

to enjoy." He seemed satisfied with my answers, the life Zaza had led and her contribution to the natural cycle. To conclude our ritual, he placed flowers on her grave.

Frog in the bin

We both glanced at the coop as we got into the car on the way to school the next day – the memory of yesterday was still fresh. Even though the alarm went off early, we ended up back in the well-known morning rush. With a bit of luck, I hoped to be able to deliver everything and everyone to their destination on time.

Zaza has enjoyed small creepy crawlies and now let her to enjoy

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In good spirits, I put the car in reverse and drove out of the garage. But my breath caught when we felt we drove over a bump. My youngest and I looked at each other. He unclipped himself and jumped out of the car. "Oh dear," I heard, "it doesn't work anymore, mom." I stood next to him and looked at what he was crouching down at: a frog, tragically killed. "No, honey, I actually don't think he does it anymore. Even his tongue sticks out. Ochermkies!" I quickly grabbed a steel can and slid the flat frog onto it with a light scratching motion. I strode to the wheelie bin, harboring the illusion that we might still make it on time. My world-exploring son joined us. I felt his eyes following my actions and with some hesitation I opened the wheelie bin and brought our flat friend to his final resting place. My son looked at me. We walked back to the car and left for school.

After a few minutes he broke the silence. "So a chicken can go in the ground, a flat frog in the bin," he said resolutely. There was no cynicism, no irony, no reproach in his voice. Earlier it sounded somewhat analytical. Perhaps proud too: he had once again managed to unravel a piece of life's mystery.



My masterpiece, my Jena plan



Photography: Joop Luimes

It's a great interview

Ineke, Josje and Bart

As a teacher training teacher in Assen, Edwin Solen taught the minor 'Innovative education' last year. His students Ineke Siebring, Josje Doornbos and Bart Kruizinga chose fully in favor of Jenaplan. Their masterpieces not only deepened their knowledge of jenaplan, but also provided them with a constructive impulse

internship schools.

Geert Bors

Wednesday evening June 7, 2023. For an academic year, Edwin Solen worked with a group of fourteen teacher training students. Together with Natasja de Kroon, he provided the minor 'Innovative education' at NHL Stenden in Assen. Seasoned jena planners know that this is hallowed ground: this teacher training college was previously called 'de Eekhorst' and it was not only

the place where many new tribal group leaders were trained, but also the college from which prominent jena planners such as Ad Boes and Freek Velthausz made their contributions to concept development. Josje Doornbos, Ineke Siebring and Bart Kruizinga appear in the Teams meeting. After a broad exploration of traditional and modern innovation schools, five of the participating students turned out to be the most charmed by jenaplan education. Josje, Ineke and Bart are well on their way to completing their masterpiece. Tonight there is room to receive feedback for the last time, from their teacher and from each other.

"We have been on an adventure this year," says Edwin. He lists the many visits to schools, from Jenaplan to Freinet, from democratic education and EGO to even newer concept schools such as De Pit in Groningen. In each case it was the students who did a preliminary study of a concept and prepared the visit. "But guys, what impressed you most was your response to that interim director."

What happened? During a school visit to a Jenaplan school, Edwin and the students met an interim school leader who had reservations about the pedagogical-didactic organization of Jenaplan education. According to him, the three-year core group hindered the quality of education. "He was a bit haughty," Edwin remembers: "He wanted to size you up. And you responded substantively, very relaxed, very stoic."

"That's right," says Bart Kruizinga. "That director did not see it happening that good education was possible in a middle grade group, because how do you teach a third year to read and do arithmetic if you are also teaching fourth and fourth year students at the same time?"

fifth-year children should be busy?" "While," adds Josje Doornbos, "you can use the strength of the core group. Everyone has their role. The oldest help the youngest. You can unleash so much positive."

What an elder can express better than the master

All three now know the jenaplan practice from extensive internship periods, from which they also derived the research questions for their masterpieces. As an example of the strength of the core group, Bart mentions the school camp at the beginning of the year: "Many youngest people find that exciting. And then I can talk like Brugman, but for that child of 9 or 10, such a camp remains a big step: two days away from home, with children you have only just met. The middle and eldest children noticed this: they sat down with the children who found it exciting. 'We're going to do this and that, because we did that last year. It looks like this and this.'" Also at the camp itself, the would-be tribe leader saw how the older children were still there for the insecure youngest ones. "If you are just a year group where no one has ever been to camp, then you don't have that. Now the youngest always learn how to tackle something together and next year they will be the experienced experts who help new children. It's precisely because of moments like that that we had a fantastic year."

"A good example is good to follow," says Ineke Siebring. "I have also seen the elders take on that role: for some of the youngest, staying the night was a bridge too far. When the youngest returned on the second morning, the elders welcomed them very nicely and it happened that the youngest still stayed the second night."

dared to stay." And it's not just something for the upper grades, she continues: she also sees middle-class or eldest people who care in the lower grades, when children come to get a cloth for a child who has fallen. Or when they show a new child around the classroom. "In the circle I heard an elder say: 'When we talk, one child speaks at a time.' Then I am very proud of them."

Balance between pedagogy and learning content

But what if the interim school leader was not so much concerned with the pedagogical atmosphere, but was mainly concerned about didactics and 'returns'? Edwin believes that it takes a lot of craftsmanship to be a good tribal group leader and that education is of course about the balance between content and atmosphere, between group formation and individual development, between character development and acquiring thorough knowledge of your world. The students confirm this. They are convinced that a core group is a good organizational form for this - both to be able to take a little more time when a child needs it, and to progress faster and develop more broadly, when that suits you. Bart: "I regularly give seniors responsibilities: 'Can you give this instruction to the youngest, then I will...' I remain ultimately responsible, but they can handle such a request very well." "And in middle school there are always children who want to flash letters to children who still have difficulty reading," says Josje. "It happens in every group. From lower to upper level."

What is needed is to consciously establish the structure and culture in the school as a team."

Ineke's masterpiece: rich text discussions

How did you arrive at the topic of 'text discussion'?

Ineke Siebring: "My school had found that the text discussion could be improved, with more involvement from the children. Because text discussions always took place on days when I was not there, I had no idea how they worked. What I saw was quite something *basic* activity: a child read the text as he or she had written it. Some questions came from the group, which were incorporated into the text. A title was also chosen and then the text was read again. That's it."

A new working method for you, with the advantage that you could look with fresh eyes.

"Yes. When I looked critically, she saw that many children were quite passive. They were not motivated to ask a question, were busy with other things, looked vacant. I wondered: how can the children get more excited about writing and reciting their text, but also: how is the rest 'managed'? When I started reading in the Freinet literature about free texts and the school printing press, I felt an energetic activity that was supported jointly. I also wanted that for our school."

You had observed and you had started reading. What did you do next?

"Small interventions, to invite the children to participate. I did not want only the children to have their turn with their fingers in the air and I did not make a predictable circle around the circle, but for example let the children work in pairs to do a few

come up with questions about the text, which they then asked the writer in the circle. I also stimulated the group with games involving vocabulary and text structure."

And what did you notice?

"Freinet writes about it, but of course you notice it immediately: how nice is it, when you have been writing for a week, that your text is central? How important is it that everyone handles your writing with care? Printing your text is possible at our school and makes a lasting memory. What also worked well and what I started introducing is drama, acting with texts."

How did that turn out?

"I had already noticed that the children enjoyed playing out events. Now we were going to do that with text. If you let others act out your text, you can see whether it is understandable and whether your text flows. Our rule became that the writer was not allowed to say anything during the play – no 'yes, but that's not how it happened'. Then it should have been clearer in the text. That was very educational, because children then wanted to express their stories and ideas as best as possible, as clearly as possible. Three-line composition assignments grew into real, proud texts."

Is it mainly Freinet or do you also see Jenaplan power emerging?

"I think that the aspect of 'learning together' is further enhanced by the Jena plan. Freinet's underlying pedagogical intentions fit



Ineke: 'Al means writing an individual activity, you learn together in the text discussion.'

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one-on-one on Jenaplan. Every text is different, just as every child is different. Even though writing is an individual activity, we learn from and with each other in the text discussion. I hope the group will feel that way too. I already saw beautiful interactions: 'Oh, I want to help,

because I get it'. These are rewarding moments when I only have to watch them explain something to each other. I would like them to dare to ask for help and offer each other help in their later lives. On your own you are not a society."

Josje's masterpiece: the weekly closure as a joint celebration

What is your masterpiece about? Josje Doornbos:

"About the week celebration. I chose the topic because I sometimes heard the sound: 'Guys, it's Thursday again. Tomorrow celebration. What do we do?' Sometimes the involvement was high, other times less. It was also often noisy and people wanted to make clearer behavioral agreements with the children about this, but I started to wonder: what do we show during the weekly celebration? Is it interesting and fun enough to watch and listen to? That seemed like the first step to me."

And was it interesting enough? How did you go about figuring that out?

"I started asking children, colleagues and parents about what they thought of the weekly celebration and what they would like to see different. There was quite a bit of agreement in their answers: no one thought the playroom was an ideal place. People ideally wanted a theater stage with curtains and good light. The celebration itself was found monotonous: many of the same types of presentations. Nice basic group work in itself then led to another lapbook or a poster, which never came across very well on stage."

Were you able to move forward with it?

"Certainly. Quite concrete action points emerged. We started – with the children – to create a permanent stage in the playroom. If we changed the setup, there was still enough space left to play in the room outside of the celebrations – no longer the width of the room, but the length. We have also introduced fixed, recognizable rituals: we always sing the school song and for the birthday children. For the celebration itself, I have made suggestions to bring more variety, which makes it more fun – even for the youngest children – to keep watching. Recite a poem, sing a song, read a free text, make a puppet show from what you have learned. The text discussion plays from Ineke's group are also performed on stage."

Did it have the effect you hoped for?

"You can see some concrete changes: more different forms of presentation. Many more parents come. And if you all feel that things are getting better, it will also be easy to send a reminder in Social Schools on Friday morning. We are proud

Josje: 'We are

to be proud of

the week celebration:

"Parents, we see
you later
again?"

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at the weekly celebration: 'Parents, will we see you again later?' The involvement of the children is of course more difficult to demonstrate, but in the middle grades it was only said: 'Josje really listened to us'. And immediately afterwards new tips came: 'You could also do this'. During the process you come up with more and more things."

Was there also literature that helped you? "Yes, mainly to underline the importance, the why, of the weekly celebration. Peter Petersen writes that celebrating is part of life. Celebrated in all cultures, it is one of the essential things we do together as people. Also liked

I am happy to read how the Jenaplan thinks about the school as a mini-society, in which you not only want to show each other what you have learned, but also want to share a sense of solidarity with each other."

And while we Dutch often skip 'celebrating' and 'reflecting on'. It is also good as a team to end the week together. What does your attention to celebration mean to them?

"It's about it again. Of course it is always turbulent and at a school there are always things that can and should be improved, but together we also started to pay attention to the weekly celebration. My supervisor Edwin says that you can see the quality of a school in the weekly closure. I think that's right: you complete your learning, your theme project, your activities with care and attention. It ensures that you don't feel tired, but go into the weekend recharged. I feel very responsible that things continue to go well with the weekly celebration next year, but I increasingly notice that we carry it together."

Bart's masterpiece: Involvement in tribal group work

Why does 'involvement' interest you?

Bart Kruizinga: "During core group work – we had been working on a new theme for less than three days – a few children came to me and asked: 'Can I do something else?' I started wondering how that was possible. We started off so committed and active and after three days you're already fed up? When I asked what they wanted, they had no answer.

word. Something like that happened to me a few times. If core group work is the beating heart of your education, in which all basic activities are involved, what happened here? I came to the conclusion that I had to do research into involvement."

Unlike the weekly celebration or the text discussion, this is quite an abstract subject. Where did you start? "Well-being and involvement are

two core concepts from Experience-Oriented Education, but also in the Jena Plan they are well-known terms that are highly valued. I started observing in other groups, during block periods and circles, to see what involvement I saw there. With those observations and the theory, I came to the realization that although you do a lot of work together in jenaplan education, you have to monitor and question individual children to increase the involvement of the individual and therefore the group."

Bart: 'Together
get on your way
means to me
also dwell on
all individuals
in my group.'

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How did you proceed?

"I zoomed in on a group or a person for a while. I looked at their interests, their needs, what kept them busy. I saw how some children

didn't start or got stuck. I went to talk to those children. Then I heard, for example, that they did not know enough about a subject, but due to a lack of interest they could not muster the motivation to do research into it. That made me realize that I had to spend much more time on getting the core group work off to a good start. I really had to sit down and ask deep, broad questions and listen carefully. I am convinced that in every subject there is a sub-question that arouses the interest of that one child. This is how I helped those stagnant children on their way: we will probably find something that really fascinates you, that fits within our theme and that the group wants to know everything about, if you can tell us about it later."

More support, more preparation time, more good questions, before you give the group the freedom to get started.

"Yes. I came across a nice quote from Marcel van Herpen: 'You can only start calculating when everyone counts'. For me, traveling together also means thinking about all the individuals in my group."

How did it continue?

"I discovered that I also want to take more observation time. I don't work at school on Wednesdays, but in recent weeks I have joined my colleague's group to look around. I have now made it a habit to mainly observe during the first fifteen minutes of my own block period. That yields so much. It is an observation without immediately wanting to intervene. Afterwards I ask a group: 'I saw this. What made you do this or that?' I heard on Monday

in the middle of a group chat during the quiet period. I have now learned not to say anything immediately, but first to determine exactly what I observe. In this case, a middle was giving an elder an explanation. They were having a great time: when the eldest also understood it, there was euphoria. They celebrated together – a little too loudly – that they now both knew. My intervention would only have disrupted their involvement."

Does that mean you know enough to promote involvement?

"If you have time and attention, you discover what the children's hobbies are and how they work. But then I become interested in the 'why' and I want to be able to respond to that: why does that girl do something that way, why does that boy think that is a nice place to work? If I have first observed and made a note, and then talk to a child or a group, I notice that my antennae are turned on more. Then my questions go deeper: what have you been doing, how did you approach it, how did you consult. But at the end I ask why questions. Sometimes the answer is: 'it happened to us, it happened like this'. Or such a boy in a different place than normal then says: 'It's not my favorite place, but I finally have peace here. There's no chatter here.' That is a wonderful answer, also with a view to involvement and well-being: a boy who now chooses not to socialize with his friends, but to learn something. Through those kinds of conversations, we literally talk together about involvement, about focus and how you practice creating space and taking responsibility for your own learning."





Hilde in de praktijk
Remko Fijbes

Cut Well!

Hilde Paulsen

A ribbon of children is snaking across the dike. Miss Hilde looks at her group and enjoys it. On to the willows, the wet fields outside the dike full of willows, which form the backyard of the town. Hilde will see how the nature education worker's prior knowledge sticks. One person goes into the swamp in white sneakers, the other immediately gets to grips with the willow pruning knife.

Ahead of me, a group of children on bicycles meanders through the polder. Mothers in brightly colored vests try to keep everything together from the side. I let it all happen quietly, the narrow country road is rarely used by other traffic.

Jens keeps losing his boots. They are way too big. He sits on the back of Mo, because his bike is broken. Every twenty meters he jumps off the luggage rack to pick up a boot and then sprints back to his friend. One of the girls is wearing white sneakers and very light jeans. I try not to think about what she will look like later.

Preparation: practice with razor-sharp tools

We are on our way to the pilot whales that stretch for miles on the edge of our town. Once there, the children will help the willow workers cut down willow trees. They first had a lesson about it last week. An employee of NME (Nature and Environmental Education) told the children

why the pilot whale is so important and what the toes will be used for. We live in a wetland area and the children have discovered that the pilot whales

– areas of moist land outside the dikes – play an important role in this. A pilot whale worker with a strong regional dialect instructed the children about what is and is not allowed, how to use the razor-sharp tools and what flora and fauna can be seen in the nature reserve. I have known the great man for years and know how to decipher what he is trying to explain to the children. I now also know that at the end of his explanation the children are on the edge of their seats and, because of his enthusiasm and fantastic stories about his youth, when he was still a little pilot, they can't wait to get started themselves.

Getting started: willow wicker and white sneakers

Armed with saws, jackknives and a sheet of pictures (you can cut this and not this), the children disappear half an hour later in good spirits between the willow trees that at that moment still tower high above them. They probably didn't hear the part of the explanation about being gentle in nature. They shout to each other, proudly show the enormous willow branches they have cut down and drag the bunches of wood as if they have never done anything else. The white sneakers are now pitch black and Jens' boot is stuck somewhere in the mud. Jindra has lost her jackknife and the old willow worker patiently tries to explain once again how exactly to cut a willow toe. That remains to be seen

quite difficult, many children find. The otherwise quiet Bas turns out to be a natural talent and a little later, in a clear voice that is clearly audible to his fellow group members, he explains step by step what is expected of them.

Result: knowledge, skills and a kettle of chocolate milk

The mountain of toes is growing. The layer of mud under the children's boots and on their clothes too. They get tired, but they soldier on. They spot a sparrowhawk (how did they remember that name?) and during the break they drink hot chocolate that hangs in a heavy kettle above a home-brewed fire. They discuss how best to tie the bunches together (answer: also with such a flexible willow wicker) and brag about who can pull down the longest branch (...from below!). The NME employee strolls along the waterfront with a few children in search of wild plants and small animals. Judging by the high-pitched screams, he has just pulled a long pier out of the ground.

When the old willow worker is satisfied with the amount of branches cut, I call the group together. They look at the result with pride. When asked whether the children still know what the toes will be used for today, they nod in the affirmative. The workers weave mats from these toes, which will be used to strengthen the dikes. Of course they also know what the willow branches were mainly used for in the past. They remember the woven baskets and fences from the NME classroom. Before we head back to school, the search for Jindra's knife resumes and the cleanup needs to be done. We can wet-

We leave ourselves 'outdoor classroom' and swing back on the country road. Still dangling from Jens' legs a boot.

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Leaving nothing in the willow for hours is very bad for everything that lives there. The children take responsibility. Every square meter is meticulously checked. There's a loud 'Yes, here!' Jindra is relieved. The pilot whale worker too because the knife is almost as old as he is.

Silence: first humming, then reflecting

"Best day ever," I hear Bas mutter softly next to me. He repeats it again, just to make sure I heard it. There is a murmur of approval next to him. "Learned a lot too," he adds. We'll talk about it tomorrow. For now I will let them enjoy this experience in peace and quiet.

We leave our 'outside classroom' and meander back along the road. One boot still dangles from Jens' legs. The way back takes much longer than the way there, but that doesn't matter. Despite the fatigue, the children see the nature around them much more than on the way there.

Hilde Paulsen was a core group leader and is a trainer at Het Kan! For her, silence and internalization are important themes in Jenaplan education.

'I think all of us feel that we Europeans are'

Report: Czech visit to Metameer

Geert Bors
Photography: Edubbaa

In the dry month of June 2023, the Czech school Edubbaa was in Boxmeer for two weeks. With eight students who followed the English-language curriculum. They learned a lot, about coaster brakes and Dutch 'hills', but also what Jenaplan looks like on Metameer. For the Dutch Jenaplan, the ambitious school team is a reflection of our own pioneering years and their questions throw us back to the deepest 'purpose' of our education.

Boxmeer, Monday June 5, 2023. With eight students and two accompanying teachers, a delegation from the Czech jenaplan school Edubbaa arrived in Boxmeer last week. Their home-away-from-home classroom at the Metameer secondary school has been closed this

tending to a dovecote: most students have just left for their lessons, two girls are hunched over their math assignments. Štěpán Kovář, school leader, teacher and founder of Edubbaa, looks over their shoulder for a moment and jokes with them. His colleague Eva

Polanová must also be walking around somewhere. Then three Metameer girls appear at the door to take their brand new Czech friends to the next lesson. A conversation, a giggle. Backpacks thrown loosely over the shoulder. And they're gone.



Submerged on Metameer

Edubbaa is a young, ambitious school and Štěpán Kovář is a man with a mission, as it quickly becomes apparent. "About seven-eight years ago, the first Czech jenaplan school, Hučák, started and came to take training courses in the Netherlands. The Czech Republic now has three. We have been around for five years and are the newest jenaplan school. Our students are completely immersed here for two weeks."

While the Netherlands uses the much criticized selection moment at the end of primary school, when children are about twelve years old, Czech education postpones the selection in outflow profiles by a few years: Edubbaa is represented here with eight of its oldest and most language-proficient students. So they are about fourteen years old. In the Netherlands they are between tablecloth and napkin: formally still primary school students, but at the age and level of class 2

of secondary education. That is why Metameer is an ideal partner: the Boxmeer jenaplan school does not approach the Petersenian ideal of the heterogeneous core group by mixing ages, but through an extended first year period in which the thinker learns from the doer and vice versa. Only after three years will the distinction in the exit profiles from pre-vocational secondary education to pre-university education be fully implemented.

Political space for Jenaplan

Now that the last girls have gone to their lessons, Stepan takes the time to talk about his school in a small but special village, about the opportunities that the political educational climate in his country offers and how he found the Jena Plan to have a contemporary impact on the ideals of the Czech patriarch of modern European pedagogy, Jan Amos Komenský, better known by his Latin name: Comenius.

"In the Czech Republic there has been a movement for fifteen years to establish new private and innovative primary schools. There are small growing schools, like ours with about forty students, but there are also larger initiatives with 100 to 150 children. Everything comes along, from traditional innovators such as Steiner and Montessori to very free democratic schools based on the Sudbury Valley concept."

The boom in new schools arose because parents were dissatisfied with the classic state school system and because the government wanted to provide room for experimentation, says Stepan: "For the government it is an accessible way of seeing how things can be done differently. For example, the government is slowly starting to think differently about how you...

evaluate children and their growth. Under the influence of these new schools, this does not have to be done exclusively through tests and grades, but can also be done with written evaluations from the teacher."

Freedom is there, but it is not without obligation: a number of years after its establishment, a major inspection of every private school takes place and if you do not meet the set national standards, the state-funded part of your budget will be severely cut. "That political space sounds very flexible, but when I look at the Netherlands as an outsider, I find the policy here pleasantly consistent. There are often rumblings in the Ministry of Education: every year a minister resigns, the political course changes and all developments come to a standstill. Ministers literally do not have the time to put anything in place and consolidate. It all feels very hesitant."

As an example, Stepan mentions the Jenaplan ideal of the tribal group and 'mixed ability classes': "That is an essence of Peter Petersen's work: the heterogeneous group in which you can organize different social interactions. Legally, mixing ages can and may be done in our country, but it is made very complicated – especially from the higher groups of our primary school. Something like that takes time and political trust."

'If I if outsider to Netherlands look, find I education policy nice and consistent here

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Patriarch of pedagogy

Stepan Kovar takes a sip of his coffee. “And that,” he continues his thought with a quip, “while we had such a great mentor in the field of education.” So Comenius. The pedagogical thinker (1592-1670) who had such a great influence on Peter Petersen and the other traditional innovators* with his comprehensive ideas about peace education and universal education for all.

Comenius saw building a shared knowledge base and thus understanding among all Europeans as an answer to the horrors of the Thirty Years' War - years of hard fighting and religious persecution, in which he also had to face many personal challenges. He lost his wife and two children to the plague and was forced to flee several times and leave home and hearth. His book collection and important educational manuscripts were lost.

“Every Czech will tell you: 'Ah yes, Comenius, our *great scholar*,' but then it usually stops. He is only known superficially. Take his concept 'school as a game' (*Schola Ludus*). This is often understood as: education should be fun,

nice and free, not too hard work. But that is a misunderstanding. Comenius gained his insights into play during a stay in Hungary, where he developed a pedagogical approach to theater and role-playing. That was unprecedented at the time. What he wanted to mean by this is that you learn in interaction with others and by taking on different roles in your life, by experiencing other people's perspectives. That is also very Jenaplan.”

The core of Comenius' ideas? “*He was a true humanist*”, says Stepan. “That's the central point: he saw child development in a complete and complex way. Nowadays you would talk about *'whole child development'*. He looked at people's possibilities with an open mind and favored everyone

Comenius was a true humanist. He saw the development of children in a complete and complex way.

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its development.” For mothers he wrote about the early education of children; for children he wrote the first encyclopedia based on images. He developed didactics and ensured that the then language of science, Latin, became easily accessible to everyone.”

Comenius and Petersen

For Stepan, Comenius is the basis and looking at the Jenaplan initiatives already started in the Czech Republic, it quickly became clear: “For me it was a *easy decision*: Jenaplan largely coincides with Comenius' view on the development of the child as a whole person, while at the same time meeting the requirements of the Czech curriculum. Jenaplan is a balance between giving children space, but also offering them sufficient learning material. Personally, I am not a big fan of the very free Sudbury Valley schools - you can probably do that well, but it does not fit in with the Czech mentality for the time being. I believe that children need adults to be a guide, a guide and a supporter for them so that they can grow into self-responsible learners. Jenaplan is practicing freedom and responsibility, individual growth and social interaction, but also: offering a good substantive curriculum.”

In the meantime, some of the Czech students have returned to their home classroom. They listened with half an ear. “I think the children here at Metameer receive less material than at ours,” says one girl. “But the atmosphere is very good, just like their English. No one finds it a problem to speak to strangers.”

A return visit?
'You arrive with a rented van and a full tank

like that in Řepice.'

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European connection

What makes the Czech Republic and the Netherlands different seems to lie mainly in: *'the little differences'*: when host Jan Vermunt was just making tea for his guests, the Czech math teacher Eva Polanová subtly requested that the bag be steeped a little longer, but with Dutch diligence, Jan had thrown the bag back in the waste bin after three dips.

In his office it soon becomes clear that a European feeling is shared. Recognizable, visible, because the walls of the team leader and historian breathe Europe. At the round conference table, Stepan and Eva look out at a poster of the French general Napoleon. “I only knew the general facts about Napoleon,” Jan explains, “But some time ago I read a book by the Belgian writer Johan Op de Beeck, in which he links incidents from Napoleon's career to modern management.



ment insights about leadership, such as that it is important – in the army and in an organization such as a school – to be close to the people you lead.

Then such a historical figure will live a very different life.” A map of Berlin on the eve of the Second World War also evokes recognition. “*Berlin is my city*”, Jan says, “Every time I am there, I try to look at one of the places on that old map and see what visible signs are still there of those drastic years.” But now business. Edubbaa wants to hit the nail on the head: they are pleased with the collaboration with Metammeer and would very much like to invite a delegation of five students and a few supervisors for a return visit: “For example, that girls' club that has become so good friends with our girls.” The next half hour is about the possibilities of Erasmus funds, about no-budget accommodation with host families. There will also be brainstorming about digitally entering into a joint theme project, for example around Europe and climate, which the students can then complete and present together during the visit. And something like that might be possible twice a year. Sure,

There is bureaucratic hassle with scheduling and budgets, but Stepan says, thinking from his young, small and agile organization: “With a rented van and a full tank you can get to Řepice in no time.” It is a prospect that makes those at the table enthusiastic.

Boxmeer, Thursday June 8, 2023. The Czech students have a lunch break and are outside with their Dutch friends. Štěpán Kovář and Eva Polanová are in the staff room in an evaluation meeting with Jan Vermunt, whom they will not meet again after this afternoon. Soon there will be another drama lesson for all students, tomorrow another few hours and then the visit to the Netherlands will come to an end.

'The emphasis here is less on instruction and transfer. But I see more feedback and reflection.'

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How do you do that?

Stepan returns to the observation of one of his students: “I think she has clearly seen that there is less emphasis here on formal learning, on instruction and transfer. But I do see much more attention to collaboration, feedback and reflection.” Yes, his colleague adds: “I wondered that too: where exactly does learning happen here?” Jan Vermunt nods: “The lessons often start with a short instruction. And then the children get to work in their table group or individually.” “Exactly, we saw that,” says Eva, she explains



that she is used to more teacher-student interaction. Instruction, but then also ask a lot of questions to the group. Seek their understanding. Have the material paraphrased in your own words. "Learning a lot, in short, in interaction." Jan believes that this differs from teacher to teacher at Metameer. "I am a history teacher and they are known for their love to tell stories. I love giving explanations, delving into causes and reasons behind visible historical shifts. We talk together a lot in my classes. But other teachers here, perhaps most of them, emphasize individual work. Their focus is on the transfer of a limited amount of knowledge, linked to a clear learning objective. And with that, the children can get to work themselves." Nodding understanding to the other

"Getting the kids less learning material here than with us," says a girl. 'But the atmosphere is very good'.

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side of the table, but also a follow-up question: "How do you differentiate? Some of your students need more explanation or want to delve into more material." Jan explains that he regularly does this by keeping the group together: in world-oriented subjects such as history and geography it is nice to have a dialogue together. "I then ask different questions to other children. One person gets the surface question, when I ask a follow-up question to another person I dig deeper. The children who are less likely to keep up are at least listening to their group mates."

It continues with the basic explanation to the entire group and with smaller instruction groups - sometimes with a repetition, other times with an in-depth explanation. The Czechs also want to know how the school deals with the outflow profile that the primary school has already provided, while Metameer will be making a hard selection for two or three years. Jan Vermunt explains that children are monitored after six months to see whether they are at the CITO level - some exceed it, others fall below it. But they stay together as a group.

There will be one in the second year *slight changee*, says Jan: "Then we work in heterogeneous groups if necessary and as a homogeneous core group if possible." In the third year there are level groups, where for the bilingual stream of Metameer the level of your English also counts. The buzzer interrupts the conversation and thus the contact with Jan during this stay: "Guys, we are going to talk about our exchange soon!"

It always rains on Venus

Following his students, Stepan also walks into the drama room. The Czechs and their Dutch classmates sit mixed in the circle. In the large hall there is piano playing that comes through the glass wall and serves as a soundtrack to the teacher's explanation. She says that her group can still practice their presentation today and that it is the role of the Czech guests to provide final feedback. The assignment is loosely formulated: you

plays a scene from an existing or self-written play. Your own or existing dance choreography is also possible. "You are judged on whether you know your text or dance by heart and whether you deliver it with credible emotions." Then the groups separate and practice. It's Thursday afternoon - not the easiest time of the week for concentration. The fact that children occasionally disappear or come in because they are being vaccinated against HPV today makes the drama hour even more dynamic. The pieces are somewhat loosely rehearsed, although sometimes quite poignant dialogues have been put on paper in the different groups, for example around discrimination and exclusion. Czech student Luke has finished his feedback, sits on the floor in the middle of the room and reflects on the theme of group formation and exclusion. "We also do these kinds of creative subjects in the Czech Republic. This year we have *All Summer in a Day* by Ray Bradbury read together and to

edited a piece. That is also about exclusion." He explains the plot: In the short story there is a school class of children of astronauts and scientists who have migrated to Venus to build a new colony. The sun shines on Venus for a few hours once every seven years, but the planet is also showered with rain and thunderstorms. The children are nine and none of them can remember the last time the sun shone. Everyone, except Margot, because she has only been on Venus for four years and her parents are even planning to make the expensive and difficult journey back to Earth next year. *"It's about bullying"*, Luke analyzes: "Margot is never believed, as she is

talking about the sun. They think she's strange and, when the teacher is gone, they decide to lock her in a cupboard - exactly on the day that the scientists have predicted that the sun will shine. Then the sun breaks through and the children notice that all the beautiful language Margot used is correct. They have a wonderful hour outside - the light, the colours, the warmth. Only when another storm breaks out and they know that they will have to wait another seven years for this moment, do they think of Margot and let her go. - all completely silent - out of the closet again." The teacher brings the group back into the circle with a guessing game and ends the hour together.



Štěpán Kovář: 'Originally I was not meant to be a teacher'

Being a teacher runs like a common thread through Štěpán Kovář's family history: his father was a teacher, just like his grandmother. In addition to being a teacher, Grandpa was also a philosopher. His grandparents taught in small village schools with so few children that, just like in Peter Petersen's own childhood, classes with several years gradually emerged. Stepan initially opted for a career as a researcher. He specialized in the history of the Middle East, but did not see himself spending a lifetime deciphering clay tablets in a museum. Hence he continued his studies in the direction of Czech and English language and literature. He did a minor in pedagogy at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, during which he completed internships in the international learning route at the Berlage Lyceum: "That is how I first came into contact with the Dutch system. I taught in a special program for integrating migrants, and there I saw how a group of very diverse composition can have a lot of rich interaction and quality." Back in the Czech Republic he became a teacher at a secondary school, then at an international secondary school. He has been the initiator of his own primary school, Edubbaa, for five years. Stepan's entire career to date is reflected in that name: "It is a word from ancient Mesopotamia and means 'House where clay tablets are kept', a place where copyists learned to write in ancient times. In other words: a school."



The best thing were the three girls who took care of us,” says Anna.

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Coaster brakes and capybaras

None of the Czechs have felt left out these two weeks. *“The best thing were the three girls who took care of us”,* says Anna. She was also happy with the bell that always indicated that you could go to your next class. “Yes, walking from class to class. By the end of the day I had taken 20,000 steps,” someone adds. Ella had to get used to the coaster brake on her bike. Someone else mentions exercising outside. Luke is talking about the *‘monkey zootin* Apeldoorn and the capybaras he saw there. Going to the pool together, says another. Children swear a lot here, someone noticed. But most of all it is about the friendship they felt. “People here are pretty much like us, just quiet. I think we all feel that we are Europeans.”



* This QR code takes you to the article from MK170 (October 2020) about the exhibition 'Comenius and Reform Pedagogy' in the Comenius Museum in Naarden, where books by Comenius from Peter Petersen's own collection were located with Petersen's notes in the margins .

Edubbaa: a great school in a small village

The newest Jenaplan school in the Czech Republic is located in Řepice, a village of 250 inhabitants, about two kilometers from the city of Strakonice. Although all city conveniences are nearby, such as a gymnasium, the first thing you notice is that the school is located in the middle of greenery. In five minutes you can be at lakes or in the forest, where the groups are often found. The town has a mayor with a big heart for children: she makes way for sports facilities, summer camps and other activities. Also worth noting, for the historian in Stepan, is that little Řepice was the cultural and intellectual center of Czech humanism half a century before Comenius's birth. At that time, there was religious tolerance in the region and a member of the Bohemian judiciary, Jan Hodejovsky, moved into a castle in which he had an extensive library furnished with many

humanistic works and Latin poetry. Poets and thinkers found their way to Řepice to write, read books and hold debates.

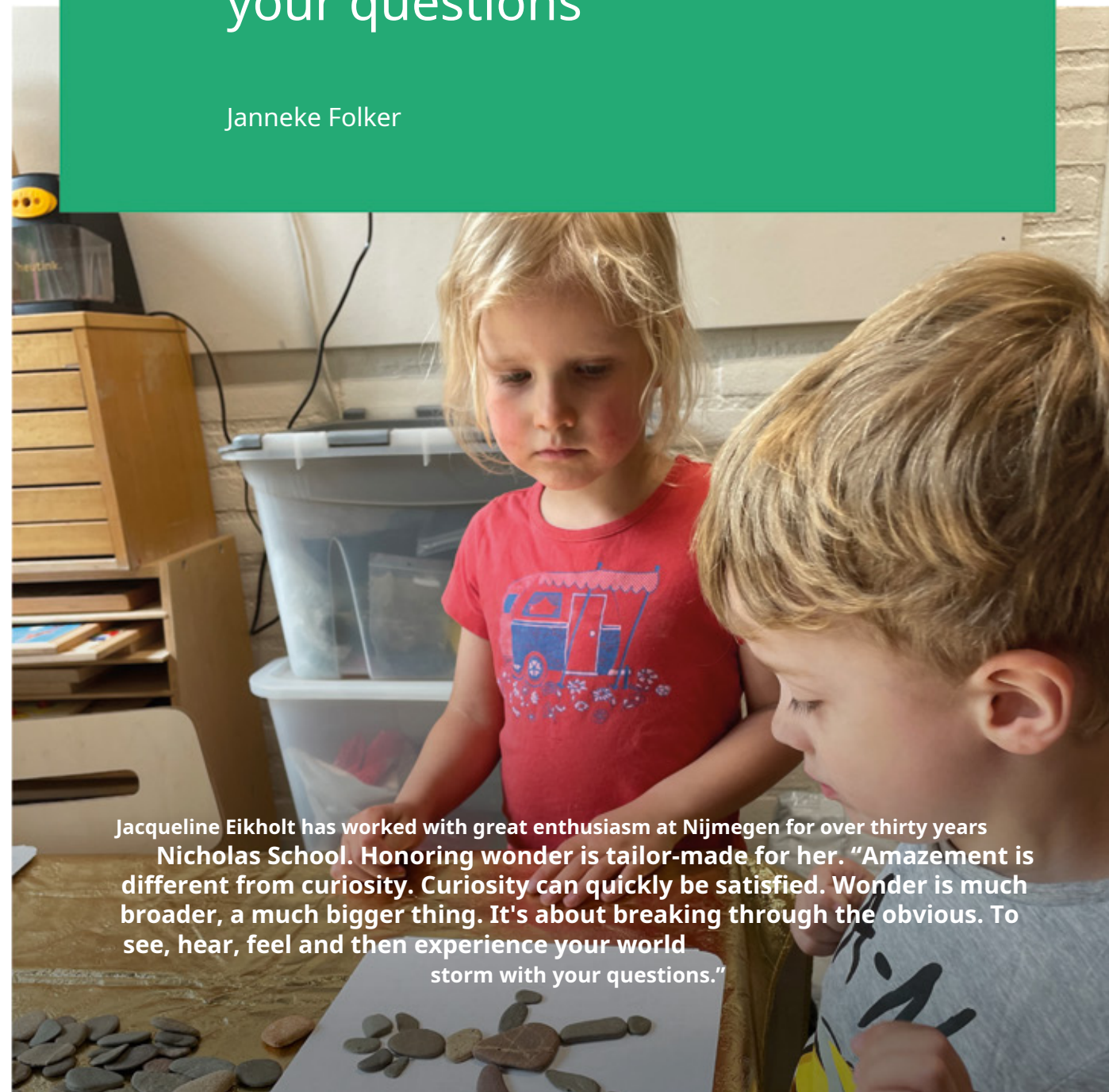
Edubbaa is starting to fulfill such a central function in its own way: the school may still be modest in size with 43 students in three groups, but its reputation already resonates quite far. Children come from twenty kilometers away to receive jenaplan education. “Many parents think it is ideal: they recognize a strong content offering and at the same time we also meet the wish to let children practice taking responsibility, working together and asking their own learning questions.”

Many Jenaplan features can already be found at the school. While the other two schools emphasize entrepreneurship and self-evaluation, Edubbaa focuses heavily on languages. The status of private education is a necessary evil at this stage of development, says school leader Stepan: partly state-funded and partly by parents, forty percent of the children receive social discounts, so that education is accessible to everyone. Politically, it will take some time before Jenaplan can also be offered as public education. In the meantime, Edubbaa is in consultation with other small innovation schools to jointly gain a greater voice in the educational policy landscape.

2 School leaders speak: Janneke Folker

Janneke speaks to Jacqueline Eikholt: “Storm the world with your questions”

Janneke Folker



Jacqueline Eikholt has worked with great enthusiasm at Nijmegen for over thirty years Nicholas School. Honoring wonder is tailor-made for her. “Amazement is different from curiosity. Curiosity can quickly be satisfied. Wonder is much broader, a much bigger thing. It's about breaking through the obvious. To see, hear, feel and then experience your world storm with your questions.”



What you need to know in advance:

Janneke Folker, school leader of the Nicolaasschool in Nijmegen, followed the new NJPV school leader module last year. She has over 25 years of teaching experience. She was a mainstream teacher for eleven years and taught almost every year group twice – all ages except the toddlers. She has been leading the Nicolaas School for five years, where she notices how much her experience as a teacher helps her. She feels the group dynamics of the middle and upper grades from within: “But I miss that deep experiential knowledge for the lower grades. If a colleague goes home sick and I have to help with the toddlers, I can manage, but I feel less competent. I quickly have the feeling that I am failing the children.”

And it was precisely that lower grade that aroused her interest at the Nicolaas School: among the youngest, the hunger to discover your world is so all-encompassing. “It is exactly that sense of wonder that you need as the basis for all your jenaplan education. We wanted to start from the strength of the foundation and ensure that

children did not unlearn their curiosity or allow it to extinguish in later years.” Before she came to the Nicolaas School, it was already a strong school, says Janneke, “But it could matter which group you ended up in. Now there is much more cooperation, so that expertise is used much more throughout the construction process and also between constructions.” With the desire to make the beautiful natural environment around the school and other meaningful learning situations more part of education, the team from the lower grades started to strengthen the entire school. The continuous learning path, the polished child monitoring system, the attention to project work, sometimes a guest speaker in the group and a supported school vision testify to this.

The book ‘I want to play’ by Anite van Oijen and Ingrid Nagtzaam became a basis for drawing up the new vision. And all the while, Janneke saw junior tribe group leader Jacqueline Eikholt busy: “Dynamic, driven, active – in her thirty years of experience she has been with many

waves moved along in how Dutch education policy views our youngest.” From play-learning classes to preschool attention to numeracy and literacy. Jacqueline is pleased to see that there is more attention for play again. For the development of Janneke’s leadership and the school, Jacqueline was the ideal person for an in-depth interview. (GB)

Jacqueline, how come you are such a teaching animal?

“I come from a real educational family. As a two-year-old, my mother took me to different schools, where she worked as a substitute. I already felt then what I thought was a nice way to deal with children: connecting with their interests and above all not imposing tasks. When, as a teacher, I prepared themes myself, my own children regularly became the test panel: is this fun, is this exciting, are you curious? I still share my teaching stories with my father.

He also helps me to collect interesting materials that I can use in my group.”

The proverbial spoon, then? “Yes! I am very proud and happy with how my parents taught me to look broadly and openly at the world. There was classical music, philosophy and creative thinking. Creativity is really my strength.”

Have you always worked in jenaplan education?

“I started in the fortified town of Ravenstein on Het Raveleijn. That was a school that worked based on Experience-Oriented Education, which was very close to my educational vision: we worked based on the needs and interests of a child, not based on an imposed curriculum. After that I worked briefly at the Octaaf in Neerbosch-Oost, near Nijmegen, where things were very different. And then the Nicolaas School, which was just becoming a Jenaplan School. I was given plenty of space to start and furnish the lower school with eight children. The director said: ‘I don’t know anything about toddlers, so just do what you want and order what you want’.”

What I always did a lot suddenly got a name and a pedagogical one substantiation.

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What freedom!

“Enormous. I have always had a lot of conversations with children and from the Jenaplan concept it suddenly got a name and a pedagogical basis: ‘the circle conversation’. It became slow

the school expanded and grew into three lower groups. At that time, these were still separate islands: the Bees, the Butterflies and the Ladybugs. There was hardly any consultation and coordination, everyone interpreted education in their own way.” At a certain point there was a change: in the lower grades, goals had to be achieved with work and this also had to be registered. The method *Substantiated* was introduced. All children had to do work with development materials with the teacher. There was hardly any room for creativity and problem solving, which went against Jacqueline’s beliefs. She was looking for a way to be faithful to the agreements within the school, but also to stay close to herself. On the first day of the week she had the children do the obligatory work, on the other days she matched the interests and needs of the children as much as possible, including by creating corners that matched the theme.

The children appreciated that new corners were added. Their parents too: when you walked in you immediately saw what the theme was. At that time there were many parents in the classroom to do all kinds of things with the children such as mosaics and knitting. Everyone could do whatever their interests lay: “If a child wanted to knit, he didn’t have to wait for me, because there was someone there.”

It sounds like you were able to hold your core well. How did you connect with the children?

“If there was anything to see outside, for example pavers busy with sand and clinkers and hammers or a buzzard in the forest around the school, then we went

towards that together. Let’s just take a look first. And then find out how a buzzard lives and how many eggs the female lays. Or talk to the pavers, see how stones are laid, how many stones are needed. It is real, it moves, it is alive, also for the children. Therein lies the wonder. Children want to know more about such situations. Then the questions will come naturally.”

So, wonder as a driving force?

“Yes, exactly. Wonder is often confused with curiosity. But it is much more than that. Amazement is seeing, hearing, feeling and more, more, more of all that! Curiosity can quickly be satisfied. Wonder is much broader, a much bigger thing. And when I see that in children, I get such strength within myself and so much desire to join in. My enthusiasm in turn infects the children. You get an interaction: oh, the teacher likes this too, what else is possible? This way you create a pedagogical climate in which you know that you all want to learn. When children notice that they can be there, they really are there. And I am often just as amazed myself. I really enjoy it when children tell me things I don’t know yet.”

Jacqueline can associate easily. If the goal is ‘teaching numbers’, she offers this, for example, by placing nature books (from her father). The children can cut it out and make their own nature book. Jacqueline invites the children to write in the page numbers. According to her, this works better than ‘Sit down for a moment, let’s practice the numbers’.

As an educational objective such as ‘counting to

20' does not immediately connect, she comes up with detours, via an activity or a subject in which the children are already very involved. Take building huts: "Now there are so many huts, how do you know who lives where? What house number do you have? Then you work from a context that a child is enthusiastic about. And in the meantime, the children are busy working on construction: how do you build a sturdy hut? What new solutions do you come up with when your hut collapses?"

Jacqueline believes it is important that children meet certain goals in order to progress to group 3. She came to know those goals through experience and through working with *Substantiated*, but they were always part of her offer... in a natural, self-evident way.

From the Jena Plan

you look broadly at children. That's where it belongs also education.

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What appeals to you most about the Jena plan?
“It is an open, non-static concept. I can, exactly when it suits, offer a game or certain materials that make children enthusiastic. As a core group leader, I can link the goals to this without a child realizing it. The Jenaplan takes a broad view of children. You are learning together and that also includes education: behavior and rules, how do you interact with each other and materials? I spend a lot of time caring and paying attention to each other. The hand of 5 and meetings also fit very well into the

build. It is special what children can already do and what they come up with.”
How do you share that with your colleagues? “I notice that they are increasingly paying attention to what small details can bring about. They are interested in how I approach it. Language and vocabulary, spatial awareness, arithmetic, you can achieve ten to fifteen goals with games and inviting materials. Everything goes with everything in terms of materials, which stimulates children's creativity. All colleagues in the lower grades want to work based on playful learning. We struggled for a while, but ultimately a beautiful vision was created two years ago. That provides so much clarity about our working method. There is also room for personal interpretation, but the agreements we adhere to are clear.”

Do you have an example? “From our vision, for example, we started looking at the renovation of the sub-groups. The wish was to be able to quickly sit in the circle and easily switch to workplaces. Places to store things, but in such a way that children and group leaders can quickly grab everything. Fixed and flexible corners. We have furnished the rooms based on these principles.

We then entered into the following process: how are we going to monitor children? We looked at different instruments. *My Preschool Group* came out clearly. This monitoring system can be used at different times and in different ways: after school, during school time, observing children individually to check whether they have mastered a goal. I personally get the most out of observation and play. What I register has

a clear function: it forces me to look carefully at the goals. It also helps to keep an overview, because you cannot know everything about thirty children by heart.”

In association with *It's possible* the substructure has furnished the corners. There are basic corners (house corner, discovery corner, sand corner, craft corner, construction site) and there is a changing corner and a viewing table, both of which tie in with the theme. Jacqueline sees how it excites the children, how they join in with someone else's game or are led to their own ideas. Children take other children with them in their enthusiasm, which leads to conversations and deepening of the game. The corners issue an open invitation to do something. And if something doesn't work, it might work out at another time or in another situation.

Jacqueline is currently taking care of the corners for the three sub-groups. What she takes with her is used. With her partner she drives around town and country looking for all kinds of materials. She hopes that colleagues will develop the same eye for materials and the possibilities of using them in different ways. “If you talk about it together, if you look at each other, it will grow.” She herself has many ideas about materials such as *'loose parts'*, open materials that can be used for multiple purposes. She effortlessly masters three working methods and links them to goals such as mirroring, patterns, colors and spatial orientation. Jacqueline indicates in conversations with her colleagues that it is important to introduce the materials: “Make it clear what children are and are not allowed to do with them.”

These loose parts are now also slowly trickling down to the middle grades. How did that go?
“Beats. During a study day, the lower-level team showed how they work with it and two middle-level colleagues became so enthusiastic that they continued to use it. We can do a lot more with playful learning in the middle and upper grades, if you understand how it works. You can use what children come up with in your education. You can easily create themes and link goals to them that you already wanted to offer.”

What do you see as the effect of this?
“The learning effect and intrinsic motivation increase enormously. You have to see the opportunities and have courage. If you stick too closely to the strict lines of a method, there is no room for learning through play. If you dare to give space to chance and wonder in your day, it may require more thinking and creativity from you as a core group leader, but you will get that energy back in return.

when you see how much involvement there is among the children.”

My knowledge of the learning paths and objectives is so deeply rooted that I keep them at hand for everything that happens have.

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You need experiential knowledge for this, which often remains personal and implicit. How do you transfer that to colleagues who are newer to the Jena Plan?
“That's true. Methods have become of secondary importance to me. I will immediately say that it has been a process that has taken years. From gaining experience, from getting into a routine and learning to look and see through things carefully. Gradually my knowledge of the learning paths has increased - goals have become so deeply rooted that I have them at hand for everything that happens. The same applies to the materials: if you have a lot at hand



and you can use and offer your materials widely, then that helps enormously. It ensures that every arithmetic or language goal can be linked flawlessly to world orientation, to the wonder about an object or an event with which the children walk into the classroom. It is true that you have to gain that experience yourself, but regularly having a pedagogical-didactic conversation with each other and coming to see each other - also across building layers - makes you learn faster and increasingly awakens the jena planner in yourself.”

Vision of the young child

In the lower grades we work according to the principles of Experience-Oriented Education (EGO). Three pillars are very important there:

- **The free toddler initiative:**the children can choose from a range of options, depending on what the child needs. It is based on the natural growth urge of children, the belief that children want to continue to develop.
- **Environmental enrichment:**the space must look attractive, so that children are challenged to undertake all kinds of activities.
- **The experiential dialogue:**By observing carefully and talking to the children, they are stimulated in their development.

A lot of attention is paid to social-emotional development. It is important that children feel good about themselves and feel safe, because only then will children go to school in a positive way and learn. In addition, a lot of attention is paid to aspects such as learning from and with each other, independence, creativity, problem solving and working at your own pace. The lower grades do this with a rhythmic weekly plan that is recognizable to the children.

3 School leaders: Inge Willem

Equal and yet different

Is our Jenaplan education equal educational opportunities proof?

Inge Willem

School leader Inge Willem would like to take you to Hippo's Hof, her school in Ghent: "As a team, we are thinking hard about our approach to children in poverty. Do we offer them equal educational opportunities? How do we make that happen?" Through the 'School Leader in the Jenaplan Concept' training, Inge made the connections between her school in a metropolitan context, the Jenaplan concept and how it relates to children in poverty.

How it started...

In 2002, the Equal Educational Opportunities Decree was voted in Flanders. With the policy for equal educational opportunities (GOK policy), the government wants to offer all children the same optimal opportunities to learn and develop. Together with the decree, the concept of social economic status (SES) was created. Research showed that some factors from the home context had a demonstrable relationship with children's learning at school. SES includes four aspects:

- the mother's level of education;
 - receiving a study grant;
 - the neighbourhood;
 - the home language.
- When children come from a family where the mother is poorly educated or where the home language is non-Dutch or where the family income is low, this is an indication that children are more likely to experience unqualified outflow, retention, referral to special education and other negative developments. The families were given the label of 'indica-

tor family'. Schools were given extra hours to ensure that these children, like the children without an indication, can develop optimally. In 2013, the so-called 'double quota' was introduced (yes, Flemish education policy has as much bureaucratic jargon as Dutch!). A central registration system was introduced for compulsory education for registration in a school where a balanced social mix was aimed for. This ensured that enrollments in the school reflected the social relations of the neighborhood in which the school was located

school is located. It was hoped to get rid of the 'concentration schools' and the 'white schools'. In the same year of the double quota, Hippo's Court was founded. Ghent had a capacity problem in those years: there were too few school seats. This is how our school for 240 children from the neighborhood was born. Traditional schools like to organize their school operations on the basis of homogeneity and averages. As a jenaplan school, we focus on differences. The diversity that arises from different ages, levels and cultures provides a rich range of development opportunities. The school is a reflection of the world in which the children live.

How it went next...

In recent decades, students in Flanders, just like in the Netherlands, have been performing less and less well and we are declining in the PISA ranking in terms of reading comprehension and mathematics. Education has been in crisis in recent years. In addition to the increasingly poor learning outcomes, the intake level of students in teacher training is too low, the education debate in the media is polarizing and there is a lot of absenteeism and burnout among teachers. We also have a rapidly increasing teacher shortage. The current minister took measures to turn the tide by abolishing double quotas, wage increases for teachers, entrance tests for teacher training, central tests for children and finally the obligation for every school to provide extra resources for the GOK policy. accountable from 2021 onwards.

This last measure caused a lot of doubts in our team. We wondered how we could leave

see that we implement an equal educational opportunities policy in our school, without being able to provide hard, demonstrable evidence for this. And besides, is that true? And what are SES characteristics? Which children have those SES characteristics? What exactly is the relationship between deprivation and learning difficulties? And how can you as a teacher work on this? How can we know that what we do is done well? Are we taking advantage of all the opportunities for those children? Can we do more in our tribal groups? How can we demonstrate to the Education Inspectorate that the resources received are spent properly and carefully on children with SES characteristics?



Fig.1 Offering equal opportunities through a differentiated approach tailored to everyone.

Where we are now...

There was a need for answers and explanation. Are the GOK resources intended for the SES teacher (also called 'care teacher', which can cause some confusion)? What can the tribal group leader mean in this story? In October 2022, our pedagogical study day focused on the GOK policy. We wanted to gain insight into the concepts, we wanted to find out what is already happening in our school and we looked for our blind spots. Finally, we wanted to look for opportunities in the core group.

After clarifying the concept

pen and framing the decree in Flanders, we delved into the figures of our school. The previous school year we received 20 teaching hours for preschoolers and an additional 18 teaching hours at primary school for children with SES characteristics. This was based on the three indicators: 40 children (out of a total of 220) have a poorly educated mother. 52 children speak another language at home and 105 children receive a study allowance. From these figures we could conclude that there is a lot of poverty in our school. Multiple children tap on multiple indications. In those cases we see very vulnerable families. But what should we do with that knowledge? And what should we do differently, more or less, with these children, in addition to children with learning needs such as ADHD, ASD, DCD, dyslexia?

On the study day we also looked at advice from our pedagogical study service about what works for these children. This concerns effective didactics, within-class differentiation, effective language pathways, cognitive functions in relation to executive functions and metacognition.



Fig. 2 executive functions

After a few brainstorming and consultation moments, we came to the following conclusions: *As a school we already do a lot about poverty, especially at school level. But we need one*

policy, to work from a vision. There still appear to be some blind spots in the core group.

We realized that, working from our pedagogical project and the jenaplan concept, we were unconsciously able to include children from disadvantaged backgrounds in our educational practice:

- We often activate relevant prior knowledge;
- The instructions are clear, structured and challenging;
- We combine words and images as much as possible;
- The learning material is often actively processed;
- We provide support with difficult assignments and we spread exercises over time;
- We provide variety in exercise types;
- We provide feedback that makes children think;
- As within-class differentiation, we use pre-teaching, reteaching and corner work;
- Since the two-year priority

further training our team on reading comprehension, we have also started to focus even more on language, from the age of two and a half;

- Our core group work offers learning opportunities to our children in thinking skills such as planning, organizing, thinking and in behavior such as response inhibition, emotion regulation, sustained attention, task initiation, flexibility, goal orientation.

In short, we did and are already doing a lot. But often too unconscious and often too little systematic, with insufficient attention to a vertical learning path. We also saw in practice that our children in poverty often have a more difficult time than other children. They more often drop out of school subjects. They do not reach the bar that other children do, despite more care than basic care for the entire group and the efforts of the entire team to offer them equal opportunities in the school. When, with that urgent conclusion,

terings, when we took the basic principles of the jenaplan concept and refreshed them, we were struck again by the second principle that says that “every person has the right to develop their own identity. This is characterized as much as possible by independence, critical awareness, creativity and focus on social justice. Race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, social environment, religion, philosophy of life or disability should make no difference.” In addition, basic principle 12 states that “the adults in the school have the task of making the basic principles about people and society the (ped)agogical starting point for their actions.” The concept is clear and guiding. It is our job to strive for a school where social inequality has no place. In this way we realize the view of humanity, the world and education from the jenaplan concept.

Where we want to go...

After that day, policy support

Bram and I started working with the materials that the team had provided us. Something had to be written out, the team was later allowed to supplement and comment on the death text (a nicer term for the Dutch 'draft text').

And we wanted to give teachers even more tools to consciously help their children from vulnerable families.

While looking for interesting literature we came across a book by Albert Janssens, *That's how it works*. After a theoretical part about the vision on education and learning and the learning problems of children in poverty, the author gives ten practical tips for teachers, based on experimental experience. We drew inspiration from the book to formulate our ambition and to make a start on a vision text. Fortunately, it fits in very well with our school vision and our pedagogical project:

Ambition Hippo's Court

Taking into account the indicators that lead to inequality in education, we want to develop the personality and talents of children and prepare children for an active life as an adult. All children have every opportunity to grow up into people who, when they enter adult life, have developed the right knowledge, insights, skills and attitudes

to tackle life itself. You would almost believe that this piece of text is from *The little jena plan* comes from Peter Petersen.

And our vision text on equal opportunities also fits in well with the jenaplan concept and the vision of our school:

Same and yet different

We opt for development-oriented education where the development of the child is the starting point. We start from where the child is now to guide him/her in his/her learning and development processes, from high expectations and perspectives.

Our GOK policy focuses on actions within the school walls that produce results within the school. Themes such as nutrition, hygiene, housing, etc. are included by the entire school team. The quality of education for children in poverty is greatly influenced by the teacher. The teacher really makes the difference here. The GOK policy therefore also and especially focuses on the teacher and the group. The teacher strengthens his/her teaching qualities in order to raise awareness, systematically use and improve the already existing actions within his/her own pedagogical project. As teachers, we are aware of how children learn. We recognize the general and specific problems that children in poverty experience in learning and offer solutions for these.

We base this on literature, experts, internal and external training and feedback.

From this framework we want to strengthen the core group leaders in their practice. We want to make them more aware of their approach and focus even more on a number of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills. Albert Janssens' ten practical tips are a source of inspiration and encouragement.

In August 2023 we started a kick-off for a school year where we focus on our equal opportunity education. Since we provide ten months of education, we focus on one practical tip every month. We make a monthly opening with the tips, focused on Jenaplan and our school. We visualize the tips both in the school (general) and the groups (at construction level). Parents are informed and involved through our weekly newsletter. Inequality of opportunity is a major, society-pervading theme. We are ready to realize our part of the solution as best as possible. Will we succeed in finding answers to our questions in order to move one step closer to the quality education that we grant every child, regardless of their context?



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Now go outside, later with a book by the stove



Berna van der Linden's sub-group knew the way out. To the ditch with the frogs and the skating insects. To the forest and the old orchard. If this autumn really gets too wet, she has a series of tips that will allow your mind and spirit to play outside.

Bringing the outside in. The world as your classroom. Up the paths, into the avenues. Or simply call it 'the outdoor classroom'. It has always been a favorite of mine as a group leader and no less of the children, who greatly enjoyed everything there was to experience in the immediate area. We were fortunate enough to have a small ditch next to the school and, a ten-minute walk away, also a forest. Not overly maintained or cleaned, just as it should be. A forest that smelled of undergrowth and damp earth. Such places are ideal for almost any topic that interests children. Conversely, a natural place also reveals its own treasures to those who look, feel and listen carefully. New worlds to study, first in the natural habitat and later in the home classroom, under the magnifying glass, with your pencil firmly in your hand.

Outside we found mysterious crawl-through paths, a pond with inky black water, useful for Annie MG Schmidt's song and poem about 'The Fairytale Writer'. There was a patch of old orchard and a hill with grass to roll around on. The ditch was full of life, frogs and frogspawn, water fleas and leeches.



And always that fascination for the insect creatures that could walk around on the surface of the water: the scribes – those 'trinkling winkling water things' from Guido Gezelle's poem. In the fall, a trip around the apartment block was enough to discover the most beautiful cross spiders in the midst of their drip-drenched wagon wheels of webs. Thanks to the moles, we have been able to provide many projects with a golden edge, up to and including a state funeral, on a red cushion with the death march included. There were also the tile gardens in which, for those who stood still and paid attention, there was a lot to study. The worm hotels, the herbaria and the snails that could draw on black paper, coloring fabric with plants and onion peels, there was always an incentive to convert everything that grew and blossomed into creativity.

Give a child nature in his backpack and he will never be bored again. For when you are back in the classroom, I have four book recommendations. Can't choose? Make it a big project and buy them all!



Terra Ultima
Raoul Deleo (text and illustrations)
(Lannoo 2021, 80 pages, € 29.99, from 10 years)

Terra Ultima, land of ultimate wonder

Speaking of imagination: the first 'outdoor book' I read this time was a direct hit. A large size with beautiful drawings of all kinds of animals in their natural pose on a twig or on the water's edge slid out of the cardboard mailing package. Many details, worth extensive study.

The wonderful composition of the drawn animals was immediately noticeable. A swan's neck that turned into a snake's body, a bird of prey with a unicorn in the middle of its head, a turtle with a slippery jellyfish body instead of its hard shell. Curiosity compels you to browse. The full page

illustrations are beautifully colored and each animal depicted is stranger than the previous one. The old-looking notes, notebooks and fully drawn sketchbooks give the impression of an old logbook from the time of Darwin's voyages of discovery. The 'Introduction to Terra Ultima by Dr. Noah. J. Stern, biologist' confirms that atmosphere: this distinguished natural scientist introduces us to a certain Raoul Deleo, the man who literally and figuratively mapped a yet unknown continent and whose archives were sent to Stern.

The biologist has gradually struggled with whether he should publish Deleo's work: if people are already willing to spend millions on a trip to our dead moon, how many adventurers will want to embark on a voyage of discovery to Terra Ultima? Not to mention mass tourism and all-expenses-paid trips that will then trample the last unspoiled areas? But Stern does not want to break his promise and has also shed 'blood, sweat and tears' to convert the archive into something publishable.

It soon becomes clear that there will be no mass tourism, because even after all Stern's research work, no one knows where Terra Ultima is located. The one time Stern is allowed to visit Raoul Deleo, he leaves after one cup of coffee and exactly zero questions answered. And in a public lecture that Deleo once gave about his travels, the geographical remains

interpretation completely vague: "Set course from the Chukchi Sea to the Beaufort Sea and then head for the Delta Wave. From there it is self-explanatory." But yes: there is that archive. With extensive accounts of Deleo's three voyages of discovery. The many notes, hastily scribbled on a piece of paper or sent via a postcard. Deleo's watercolors of the species he encountered there. You understand: my curiosity was aroused. And how I would have liked to have included my group - you can read about how that could have gone on pages 4-5 with Kees Groos.

The large nature plates with loosely traceable Latin names and their Dutch translations are worth additional study, as are the maps at the back. Moreover, the book invites action. Who wouldn't want to make such a great diorama when reading Deleo's diary entry on his third expedition: "It was as if I entered a diorama. As if someone had cut mountains out of green cardboard and stuck them diagonally one after the other into a clear blue sea."

The afterword provides a plausible explanation for the creator of all this beauty and his imagination and that is the power of that first seed that was ever planted, one incident, one encounter, one discovery, which arouses wonder and makes nature an exciting world. will be full of adventure.



From Honeybee to Sprinkles

About all the good things that come from plants

Joël Broekaert

Illustrations: Marieke van Ditshuizen

(Ploegsma 2021, 128 pages, € 22.99, from 9 years)

Did you know that gumball trees are real? to exist?

You would think that a book made with three colors must be boring. The opposite is true. With bright pink, lemon yellow and bright blue, Marieke van Ditshuizen knows how to create all the colors in the world. In this book she brings the infectious stories of culinary journalist Joël Broekaert to life. Together they manage to arouse curiosity in such a way that you immediately want to walk to the store or to a vegetable, allotment or picking garden nearby to see with your own eyes the wonder of all those different things.

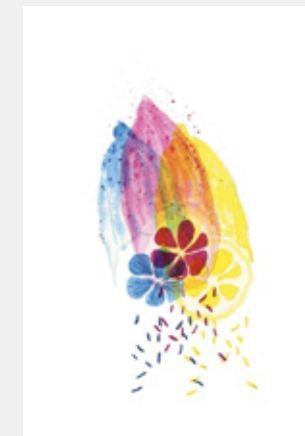
to see, investigate and discover the properties of plants with your own eyes. This book is about vegetables, fruits and plants that you encounter almost every day. If not outside, then in your vegetable drawer or pantry. And it is precisely the everyday that Broekaert knows how to make special. So many stories, so many adventures about things that you have never asked yourself very deep questions about. Lemons, for example, are man-made, just like oranges, grapefruits and limes. Only three types of citrus fruit occurred in nature: the cedar (finally I now know where the candied peel comes from), the pomelo and the mandarin orange. By making crosses over and over again on the basis

We squeeze our 'just' from these three 'primeval fruits' on Sunday morning and add a slice of lemon to your cocktail. Alleged truths are being overturned. A peanut is not a nut at all but a seed that the plant hides in the ground.

Ellie Nieman and Rikkert Zuiderveld's gumball tree really exists, you just have to walk a little further than your old crazy uncle's garden. They hang from acacia trees in North Africa and the Middle East and it is the thick viscous resin in their bark that flows out as small balls after a cut.

Capers and the turrets of the romanesco are actually small ones

flower buds. And did you know that bee vomit is very tasty and is often eaten by us? It is honey. You can read in detail how the entire process works. In fact, every page is an invitation to go all out with your core group. Get them ready: the magnifying glasses and microscopes, the tweezers and the Petri dishes, to discover the unknown everyday in our food with searching eyes. Writing in such a way that you almost smell and taste, that you feel hungry, is an art that Joël has mastered. The beautiful illustrations do the rest. A feast for all the senses, this fascinatingly designed book, and an ode to wonder and the true researcher spirit.



Green Planet/ The Green Planet

Leisa Stewart Sharpe

Illustrations: Kim Smith

Translation: Jesse Goossens

(Ploegsma 2022, 64 pages,

€16.99)

Games, lesson suggestions and more:

www.lemniscaat.nl



Miraculous green world

A completely different book than the other four. This is for ages 10+, but definitely an experience for everyone, young and old. The writer's imagination leads us into the world of imagination and takes us to Cato, her father, the neighbor and the big rabbit. Cato loves Bruce Lee and his films. She finds the neighbor who cooks for her and her father and cleans the house

is very stupid and her father is also slow, she thinks. Her mother left the world when Cato was born. Almost at the same time, she says at the beginning. It perhaps explains the atmosphere, her own behavior and that of her father. The neighbor also has a reason for not going through life happily.

When Cato finds a ticket for the opening of a cinema where 'films are shown that are not shown anywhere', she becomes curious. It's an old abandoned movie theater

closed a long time ago. The entrance is closed, but an old lady with her dog shows her to an alley with a back entrance. Once inside, she is sucked into the world of Mrs. Kano. A wonderful, imaginative world of time and memories, time travel and strange encounters. Who is who and where is Cato himself? Who is that strange Mrs. Kano, who always disappears? And who is that old lady with her dog, who runs like a common thread through everything?

The rabbit plays its own role, just

as Bruce Lee who already knows how to imitate Cato when she feels pushed into a corner by the bullying boys at school. A story full of beautiful philosophical images about what time is, how it works with memories, but also about understanding everyone around you and about cause and effect, which are so intertwined and that no one is too old to let go and start again. A book that flies above time.



Brilliant Plants

About handsome buds, angry bulbs and other brilliant greenery
Geert-Jan Roebbers
Illustrations: Margot Westermann
 (Gottmer 2022, 144 pages, € 25.99, from 10 years)

Plants stand still, but are now oh so smart

A book called 'Brilliant Plants' has something to be true: brilliant? Exciting, let's see! From the beginning the word is addressed to the reader. You are bombarded with questions. And not long after with answers. Who lead again

to new questions. And even more answers. It looks like the Jenaplan observation circle. Plants are easy to study. They are firmly rooted in the ground and do not run away when you approach them. Use it to your advantage. Besides that, the plant usually cherishes its secrets, often well kept underground. Writer Geert-Jan Roebbers tests your curiosity by stating that you don't want to know what they are doing there. And with that he – biologist and maker of children's magazines and TV programs – strikes the right chord: bring on that science.

A crash course in chemistry follows in a slimmed down form. Information from secretly green and fresh farts to tough food. Then we travel back in time 3.5 billion years to the creation of the first – brilliant – bacterium, and how from that time on the lively things on earth as we find it today could arise. With plants, animals and humans and their eternal struggle and cooperation to survive.

You will read how plant life is much more dynamic than being rooted in one place would suggest: over time, plants have actively formed partnerships with other species to help each other survive and reproduce. With color, shape, scent and other smart properties, they know exactly the right friend.

to attract. A world opens up, not only to nourish the edge of your seat feeling in your core group, but you also cannot avoid being deeply impressed by how intelligent and sensitive the living world around us is. Plants may not have brains, but they still solve problems efficiently and elegantly: there are fly-patchers, listening flowers and screaming leaves. There are poisoners, strangling figs and green poisoners. The most agile types include the seed spitting champions, the seed throwers and the fastest guzzlers. For our latest technologies, the most creative scientists and inventors often apply solutions borrowed from the plant kingdom. Nature had solar panels, high-tech safes with a time lock and Velcro long before we came up with the idea.

This book brings home the deep realization that forests and ditches are not decor pieces in our hectic lives. You become aware of the plant world as versatile co-inhabitants of our planet – meaningful in themselves and of inestimable value to our lives. With its masterful texts, thoughtful questions, clear photos, striking drawings and wonderful comparisons, the book provides all the answers you need. Brilliant plants cast in a brilliant shape.

Inside and outside inside-out turn

Sabine Wassenberg



The philosophy circle

A growing person explores the world around him from the inside out, further and further, and then back again. The philosophical picture book *The Son of the Gazelle* shows this beautifully when you follow the life of the main character Hayy, from youngster to old man. To top it all off, Hayy experiences a real mystical experience, a unity between everything - also between inside and outside.

The outside world in...

A newborn baby is guided by its own sensations, impulses, drives and needs within it. His attention slowly shifts outside. The first visual impressions from outside become sharper and so the child shifts attention to mom and dad and things in the world itself.

In toddler, preschool and primary school, it is mainly tangible things that play a role in life. Tangible, close, reasonably graspable. Gradually the child's attention reaches further and further, also to less tangible forms. Around puberty comes the awareness that the world is big and an idea of how big it is. The young person can empathize with strangers and can ask questions

questions about more abstract themes: the meaning of life, the fairness of factory farming, the why behind everything.

... and back to your inner world

Even small children can ask these big life questions, but in teenagers their consciousness extends so far that they can let their impact penetrate more deeply. There may be an interest, already in primary school, in planets and aliens. You can think about previous lives or reincarnation. World peace, the climate crisis or the fate of victimized minorities are abstract themes, outside yourself and largely outside your sphere of influence, that can overwhelm and occupy many teenagers. As adults we usually choose



a direction in which to refine our interests. And sometimes adults, with or without the guidance of a therapist, have to find their way back inside. Many have lost this path, they have, in a nice word, been 'dissociated' from their inner world, due to the eternal outward-focus that the world seems to demand of us. Then we must 'learn to feel again' or 'give the inner child space'. Self-reflection (why am I doing this? What do I really want?) and meaning (what is meaningful? What do I want to contribute to the world?) is also a return inward.

Mother's warmth and why questions

In my latest book *The Son of the Gazelle*, a retelling of a twelfth-century philosophical story, you follow how the main character Hayy focuses his gaze further and further 'outside'. He ended up on an island as a baby –

uninhabited by humans, but full of animals. It is because of a gazelle, which gives him warmth and mother's milk, that he stays alive. Slowly he begins to look around – at his gazelle mother, the things and the animals nearby. *Is she my mother? Where do I come from? What is life? What is an animal? What am I?*

Like the Greek philosopher Aristotle, Hayy works empirically. Direct observations and experiences form the basis for his knowledge. He even begins, without knowing it, to conduct scientific research: in twelfth-century Moorish Spain, it was considered modern science to cut open dead bodies and study the internal organs. Hayy does the same.

Where thinking stops

As Hayy grows older, he, like any child, broadens his perspective. He becomes aware

of the starry sky and asks important questions: *why am I here, what should I do with this life? How does all this get here? What's behind the stars?*

Philosophizing with himself, within himself, Hayy reasons a logical way to certain insights about what he knows as his world, his existence – the existence into which we are all 'thrown'. But thinking and logic appear to have their limits. He encounters limits, questions to which he cannot find a conclusive answer: *why, how, why does all this exist?* He suspects an incomprehensible explanation and he calls the whole of things that are beyond his understanding 'the Mystery'.

Why do these questions keep arising? Why does he keep reaching for possible explanations? Why does it keep bothering him? Hayy reasons that he didn't just get a ghost

has: after all, he can think with it and experience the world with it. He suspects that trying to unravel the Mystery is his life's mission.

Unity experience

Hayy wants to philosophize, think. Even meditate. He searches for ways to connect with the Mystery. And that does happen. One day, in a cave on the island, he has an insight. You could call it a mystical insight. There are people all over the world who have experienced something similar, intense or fleeting, consciously or unconsciously. No matter what religion and culture they come from, what language they speak or what time they live in, people experience such a special sense of unity. Some people try to actively seek it out, others it happens to them: a feeling that everything that exists is connected in a 'magical' way.

What all things visible to the naked eye have in common is the fact 'that they exist' and that alone can be experienced as extremely special. The unity in everything, between everything and with your self (which is not separate at that moment) is the bridging of the above and below, a fusion of the outside and inside. During Hayy's unity experience, he experiences that the Mystery is present all around him and within himself. By disappearing, fading, dissolving the conceptual boundaries in his own experiential apparatus, his conscious mind, no boundaries are projected into the world, no distinctions, no frameworks.

The only quality that matters is the being of things, which connects things together. Hayy himself is not just a spectator of the world outside him, but is part of everything: he experiences himself as part of the bigger picture.

Of course, there is a physical boundary between his body and the sky, where 'outside' begins, but his mind feels the connection on a different level. Outside and inside as an indivisible one.

Our wonderful mind

Back to the children in your group. They too will expand their field of vision over the years, increasingly outward. Up to and including the moment when the most abstract and philosophical view brings them to the limits of their knowledge. That can happen after just a second of thinking about an apparently simple philosophical question. You can sometimes see it in their eyes: "But... that's actually very strange, teacher!"

Then, even without such a special unity experience in a cave, they will notice that their object of research is slipping away from them. That it just doesn't make itself known. That their investigative cognitive apparatus falters and is thrown back like a boomerang with new, deeper questions. Their outward gaze is turned inward. The mind is turned inside out for a brief moment. Even if only for a moment, they can realize that they have a wonderful mind with which they can discover the world and experience themselves.

And how wonderful that you, as a tribal group leader, can witness this

moments like these: that ancient discovery of the world and of the self that makes us human.

'The Son of the Gazelle', retold by Sabine Wassenberg and Kamel Essabane, received attention before its publication in *Mensenkinderen* (see MK174, November 2021) and has been praised in the national quality press. Karuna Wirjosemito made the special illustrations.

Would you like to learn philosophy in class with your team using the book 'The Son of the Gazelle'? Read more and download a free lesson letter at: www.sabinewassenberg.com/dezoonvandegazelle



Sabine Wassenberg is a philosopher and trains teachers in children's philosophy in the classroom. www.opleidingkinderphilosophy.nl



Out and about

Arjen Tabak

Of course go outside. Live. Children are no more wired to upload details (d/dt/t) into their brains while sitting still, any more than adults are. Of course go outside. Sprinkle the words from the word package over the square. Have the children find them and write them down. Of course go outside. Draw the area around the school. Point out what they have drawn: let them look deeper. Of course go outside. Take identification cards with you. Find beetles, flowers, trees. Let them smell, tickle and be creepy outside.

As long as it is not just another method of working solely on the new pillars of education: arithmetic, reading comprehension and spelling*. If only it is not to participate in the strange race of the Ministry of Education: the Netherlands is dropping in the international lists when it comes to instrumental subjects (or are other countries rising?) If only it is not to disguise the fact that we no longer can compete with all those beautiful videos on the digital board. As long as it isn't because education should always be fun.

As long as it's because we see the child. Wanting to see the child resilient and worldly wise. As long as it is because the child always has to go outside again. Every day. Back home. Entering society, after so many years of education. Outside. Where poetry taught you to appreciate scents. Where clouds, trees and rivers move. Where medieval gates tell about other people

sen, with different problems, with special solutions. Whispers of life. Echoes of life. Outside.

Outside. Outside the bubble. Where you can enjoy others. Where you need others to be yourself again or to know how you want to be. Think of philosophers like Buber and Levinas: I and the other, seeing yourself in the face of the other. Outside. Where children and adults, student and teacher experience that they are all needed to let others experience who they are at their core, as Maslow said. Already. Live every day. Give life. Let life be given to you. Outside.

** We must teach children to count, spell and read very well. But with the child as a starting point and from the context of WO/ BV/ CV/ GS/ FO and their total human development.*

Arjen is a teacher,
educationalist and owner of
Education is done together.



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