

## Brede School: All-day community school

The 'brede school' concept aptly illustrates the saying, "it takes a village to raise a child", as it involves the wider society in raising children. In the Netherlands, 'brede schools' gather a broad network of partners to support school aged children, youth, family and community. The 'brede schools' link education with other services that are important to children and parents, such as education support, childcare and health centres. By combining these services as a network or in one location, they become more accessible and the various services can be made more compatible with each another.



The governing principle of the Dutch 'brede school' is to offer *effective* education in an *affective* school climate. 'Brede schools' try to make use of the full capacities and capabilities of the children, teachers, parents and all organisations involved. A further key element to the concept is the cultivation of equal educational opportunities not only for children, but also for adolescents and adults.

### Becoming the dominant model

In the Netherlands, all schools – public and private – are fully subsidised by the state. 'Brede schools' do not receive extra funding. Rather, the 'brede school' policy is linked to local rather than national policy, also in relation to funding. Supporting policies do exist at national level, which stimulate the development of the 'brede school' concept. The activities and buildings are further organised and funded through the municipality, school boards and other bodies, such as social work, child day-care, and sport and art organisations.

'Brede schools' are open to children of all ages: from pre-school through primary and up to secondary level. There are now more than 1,200 'brede schools' in the Netherlands. In the 1990s, these schools were located in traditionally disadvantaged areas and particularly in those with high rates of migrant inhabitants. These community-centred schools were meant to enhance the chances of these groups and to help families better integrate into society. Nowadays, 'brede schools' are increasingly located in a wider variety of areas; not only in large cities in traditionally disadvantaged areas, but in order to maintain a certain level of facilities for children and their parents also in small villages.

### School models tailored to meet children's and parental needs

The Dutch national government does not dictate the exact formula for a 'brede school'. Rather, the local partners determine how their community school is organised and what services will be offered. In this way, 'brede schools' can be tailor-made to meet the needs of their surrounding communities and families by adding services. While the practical approach may differ from location to location, a number of the common principles benefit parents. For instance, in a community school context it is easier to adjust the institution's opening hours and personnel's working hours to the needs of the children and the parents. Furthermore, it seems natural to situate a variety of services within and/or in the immediate vicinity of the traditional school, since children attend school every day, but it is not necessary for every school to be a 'brede school'. There also are 'brede schools' that function as a so-called network construction in which each partner offers services from its own location.

An assortment of activities are organised through the 'brede schools' to improve the social participation and the welfare of children and youth and address talent development for children and youth. They include the organisation of participatory sports and cultural projects in which young people are actively involved, setting up a network of voluntary workers in the communities and the establishment of 'family-friendly learning': capacity training for both parents and youth to improve their capacity for caring for others.

'Brede schools' are a common feature throughout the Netherlands. However, in Rotterdam, one of the Netherlands' largest and most diverse cities, what started as a project is now embedded as an integrated policy and practice for schools in the city. It actively opens up schools to the community and seeks to make them a hub of educational and equal opportunities. People of 173 nationalities live in Rotterdam and 'brede schools' offer opportunities through language courses also for parents.

### For further information:

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