

Report 2017-2018 Belgium

1. Description of the school

Buitenschool De Bergop is a pre-primary and primary school, with about 150 pupils. It has a staff of 10 teachers, and 1 head-teacher, who teaches on a regular basis. Two years ago, Buitenschool De Bergop integrated Outdoor Learning as a pillar in its pedagogical vision. The school is in a process of redesigning its practical organization and schoolgrounds to optimize possibilities for curriculum-based outdoor learning.

- The motivation for being an outdoor school is:
- To increase learning capacity and concentration
- To train social skills
- To develop a sense of sustainability and citizenship
- To increase wellbeing
- To promote a healthy life

This way, De Buitenschool wants to contribute to the "50 things to do before you're 11^{3/4}" of the UK National Trust.

For the last two years Buitenschool De Bergop have focused on curricular outdoor activities within the nearby environment/school grounds. The methods used for outdoor learning are : Learning in/about the environment (e.g. by bringing the children in contact with the forest, a garden, a street, monuments, the shops, an artist, a dentist, ...), outdoor classrooms, nature classes (journeys), free outdoor play, ... Since they started this reform only 2 years ago, the school's experience in outdoor learning is growing. All primary teachers in this school had training on Outdoor Learning and will be involved in the project. Based on their hands-on expertise in outdoor learning, De Bergop collaborates with CEGO-Leuven in organizing CPD sessions.

2. Description of the teacher

Door Ruth of An: *aantal Jaren ervaring in lesgeven, ervaring in outdoor learning, M/V, lefetijsd, etc*

3. Context of outdoor learning

De Bergop is a rural school, located in a small village. There is a large playground, partly green, partly concrete (50/50). Both parts are provided with playground

equipment and loose parts, useful for outdoor learning activities. The most important **elements** on this playground are:

- Balance course
- Willow huts
- Working tables and bancs
- Vegetable garden
- Fruit garden
- Small pets
- Paintings on the playground for all kinds of excercises
- Area for buildings camps
- Open lawn (= space for outdoor games)
- Play set with slide
- Climb frame

Hier 1 foto

More pictures of the schoolground are shown in **Annex 1**.

4. Outdoor learning practice in De Bergop

The teachers of De Bergop try to go outside the classroom as much as possible on a daily base. Going outside is considered as an added and complementary value to inside learning. Well-defined curricular subjects of all kind are taken outside (like maths, language, nature education, ...).

A general overview of the outdoor learning activities throughout the year in De Bergop (all classes) is put in **annex 2**.

Besides daily based curricular activities, each class of De Bergop works on an own longterm project. More specific, class 3 of Miss Ruth focused on bees. **Activities** linking back to the bee project are:

- Brain storm: what is already present at our school?
- Perimeter planting flower boxes
- Preparing flower boxes
- Making flower boxes in wood
- Sow flowers
- Children make a sensibilisation film
- Week of the bee: visiting a beekeeper

The **projects** of the other classes are:

- Fruit
- Small pets
- Vegetables
- Waste recycling
- Birds
- Water
- Energy

5. Evaluation

Aims

There were 2 aims:

- A. Collecting "good practices" on outdoor learning which can be shared with other teachers, and on which other teachers can give feedback
- B. Observing involvement of inside and outside outdoor learning activities

Methods

- A. For this project, a format was developed in which all teachers (involved in the EU project) can formalize their outdoor learning activities in a similar way. This is a basis for a common understanding. All formats were filled in in English.

SUBJECT: <i>(fill in the curricular subject of your activity)</i>	
CONTEXT <u>WHERE ?</u> <i>(any information about where you did this activity)</i> Distance: Click here Place-relatedness: Click here	PUPILS <u>NUMBER</u> <i>(how many pupils in your activity ?)</i>
<u>TIMING</u> <i>(how much time did you spend at this activity)</i>	<u>AGE</u> <i>(age of pupils)</i>
<u>PLANNED ?</u> (CLICK HERE)	
AIMS	
APPROACH	
INVOLVEMENT SCORE: <i>(if you scanned involvement, write the score here)</i>	
MATERIALS	
TEACHER'S VOICE <i>(How was your experience ? personal comments)</i>	

FEEDFORWARD

(Do you have tips for other users of this format ?)

FEEDBACK

(Any user of this format can write feedback on the activity)

Person 1: *(write your name)*

Feedback:

(Write your feedback)

Person 2: *(write your name)*

Feedback:

(write your feedback)

Person 3: *(write your name)*

Feedback:

(write your feedback)

B. To use involvement as an indicator of learning, the “Leuven scales of involvement” of CEGO (Leuven) were used. A training day by a CEGO professional was organized for all project partners during the kick-off meeting in Tonsberg, Norway. (https://vorming.cego.be/images/downloads/BO_DP_Deep-levelLearning.pdf)

Gorik and Danielle spent 4 distinct days throughout the year in De Bergop for observation, scanning and discussions. (24/10/2017 – 14/11/2017 – 29/01/2018 – 26/04/2018).

6. Results

Miss Ruth formalized the observed outdoor activities in the format and shared them with the other teachers of the project through the online project platform. Scores of wellbeing were added to the format.

The different formats are listed in **Annex 3**.

7. Interpretation & Reflections

Concerning the format:

The standardized formats are a useful tool to share activities in a way which is comprehensive for all users. These formats are appreciated by the teachers. On the other hand, feedback of teachers is that it demands a lot of extra work especially for non-native English speakers.

The format includes a reference to 'pupils voice'. We remark that there is a different understanding of what this means. We need a discussion with the teachers on the relevance of including this topic in the format.

Besides that, we consider pupils voice as an important input. But it needs a more profound way of measuring and evaluation for the coming period.

The format mentions an involvement score. This gives us a quantitative number. At this moment we should reflect on how we can use this number in relation to the other project partners (e.g. compare involvement in the same activity but in a different country/context, ...)

Concerning the involvement score:

By practically observing children, even without officially scanning involvement, we noticed that:

- Children are generally more active and involved when they go outside. They become mentally more alert and awake. This mental alertness is not measured in a score.
- Measuring involvement scores is done while children are task oriented. The scores of this do not always reflect the general mental modus observed. Moreover, the involvement scores are determined/influenced by individual differences between children, and by the phase of the lesson (instruction, activity, reflection, ...)

In order to capture the aspect of mental alertness during outdoor learning activities, we think that it is important to give more attention to pupil's voice. We have to work out a 'standardized way' of recording before-and-after outdoor learning, and as well during inside activities.

Discussion item

An important reflection we make, is that we assess children after outdoor learning in a strictly curricular-oriented way inside the classroom. Is it really possible to measure the effect of an outdoor approach on learning? Thusfar, we do not have the context to validate the effect of outdoor learning on learning of children from a curricular-based point of view. The next best we can do, is to quantify the learning process by focusing on the task-orientated approach. In that case the scales of involvement can be considered as a valuable tool to measure the task-orientedness of children. This scaling gives a quantifiable number which can be a basis to compare between countries.

Besides that, children work at 21st Century skills throughout the approach of outdoor learning. These skills are not validated, though they are important to children's

development. Again here, we stress the importance of recording children's voice as an indicator.