

Building Partnerships for the Future of International Education

Spotlight on the Benelux

Great places of learning are like great companies or organizations in that they are built upon a small number of fundamental principles: vision, people, discipline and sustainability. Of course, each principle impacts upon the other. After all, there is no point in having a clear and bright vision for the future of a learning institution if you don't have the people, discipline and other resources needed to sustain your ideas over an extended period of time.

In his recent work, *Leadership and Sustainability: Systems Thinkers in Action*, Michael Fullan (Corwin Press, 2005) adds another perspective to this now common debate: 'lateral capacity building'. Simply, Fullan argues that effective, sustainable schools have often learned the art of interdependence and purposeful exchange with other schools, organisations and networks.

Set against this context, at the International School of Brussels (ISB), we have begun to learn a valuable lesson. By looking beyond our own resources to other organisations, companies and individuals, who share our core values, we have seen a tangible and significant impact. In short, by actively searching out would-be travelling companions or 'vision partners' as we call them, we have discovered that we can go much further than we otherwise could on our own.

A 'Benelux' example will illustrate the point.

While an international education offers a wonderful, enriching experience, there is always the concern that students may lose their strong sense of personal, cultural identity. Similar to many international schools, ISB believes it is vital to appreciate one's own culture if one is to appreciate the cultures of others. We also know that a strong mother-tongue is extremely important in helping students acquire other languages.

For these reasons we offer a range of mother-tongue programmes, now including Dutch. It was about three years ago that the school first identified the opportunity for a new kind of collaboration between the school, a group of parents, the Dutch

embassy to Belgium and the Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad (Stichting NOB). At the time, the school was home to about 50 students from the Netherlands. Today, there are nearly 120, most of whom are part of De Kattenberg, the ISB Dutch School. The Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad supports the initiative and the programme is regularly assessed by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Throughout the year, students of all ages are engaged in a range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, including several field trips and the not-to-be-missed annual sintfeest celebration.

The ISB Dutch School project, of course, is not unique. It simply illustrates a simple point: learning gets better when schools look outside themselves and find like-minded individuals, organizations and companies who share their values. Certainly, in this case at least, the partnerships we built took us further than we could have gone on our own.

David Willows
Director of External Relations, International School of Brussels

The Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad (Stichting NOB) subsidizes, supports and advises all Dutch education abroad, and is sole intermediary between the Ministry of Education and Dutch education abroad. This includes Dutch departments of international schools as well as independent schools for Dutch language and culture and schools for full Dutch primary and secondary education. Of these, there are over 200 worldwide. Apart from to the schools themselves, Stichting NOB also offers support and advice to parents, students and employers. Summer courses for teachers, heads and governors are also provided.

For more information visit: www.stichtingnob.nl

In partnership with 

ISB Houdt Nederlands Op Niveau Eén School, Eén Missie

Choosing the right school for your child is one of the most important decisions you as a parent will ever take. ISB is very proud of its cultural diversity and our students thrive in this truly international context. However, while an international education offers a wonderful, enriching experience, we also strongly believe that it is important to understand and celebrate one's own culture if one is to appreciate the culture of others. We also know that a strong mother-tongue is vital in helping students acquire other languages.

For these reasons we offer a range of mother-tongue (language and culture) programmes, one of which is the highly successful Dutch programme: Dutch in a truly international environment.

For more information about our Dutch programme, visit: www.isb.be/dutchschool

ISB
 The INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL of BRUSSELS

Kattenberg 19, 1170 Brussels - Tel. (+32) 2 661 42 11 - Fax (+32) 2 661 42 00 - Email admissions@isb.be