



Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland  
OCW

ENGLISH

# WHAT'S NEW ...

IN CARIBBEAN NETHERLANDS EDUCATION



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# COLOPHON

This magazine is a publication of RCN/OCW and aims:

- to provide background information about education developments for education professionals in the Caribbean Netherlands
- and to promote the exchange of knowledge and experience between the islands.

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*Copy for the next edition should be sent in before March 31st 2017.*

Nolly Oleana

Department Head

RCN/OCW



# FOREWORD

At the end of 2016 we can confidently say that we in the field of education in the Caribbean Netherlands have another eventful year behind us. In the highlights overview, later in this magazine, we discuss the noteworthy projects and events. But without doubt, the most important process was actually the creation of the Second Education Agenda for the Caribbean Netherlands. It was an intensive process, to which everyone contributed. It all began in the spring with an evaluation of the first education agenda by policy consultants Ecorys. Their findings were reviewed per island during two sessions with all education stakeholders. Afterwards the process to write the text of the new education agenda began. During the four so-called "island sessions" held on each of the islands, the content and implementation of the third education agenda was thoroughly discussed. In one way or another all education stakeholders contributed. This approach has resulted in a product that was created with the cooperation of all schools and educational institutions.

It was a big job; together we all made a considerable effort. But the result is a blueprint for educational improvements for the period 2017 – 2020 that everyone agreed on. During the Third Education Conference, which was held in late November on St. Eustatius,

representatives from all education stakeholders signed the agenda together, along with Minister Jet Bussemaker from OCW (ed.: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science). As such all of us have committed once again to bring education in the Caribbean Netherlands a step further during the next four years, towards the ultimate goal: education that is of the same quality as in European Netherlands.

This brings us into a new phase. In the first Education Agenda, the focus was mainly on achieving the basic quality level. The Second Education Agenda is about continuing the achieved quality level and improving the educational results. The schools, but also other educational institutions, are now better equipped to fulfil their duties well and all parties are clear as to their own role and responsibilities. OCW continues to provide support, but is also taking a step back. That's how OCW gives educational institutions the opportunity to fully address their responsibilities and to make new progress in improving quality in the Caribbean Netherlands.

2017 now lies before us, the year in which we continue to work towards realising the Second Education Agenda with renewed energy and fresh courage. Together we're working for a better future.

On behalf of my colleagues at  
RCN/OCW, I wish all of you:

**"Merry Christmas and  
a Happy New Year!"**





# “TOGETHER WE TOOK CONCRETE STEPS FORWARD ...”

July 1 was Gérard Maas' last working day as director of the Ministry Education, Culture and Science's (OCW) Caribbean Netherlands Project Unit. This Project Unit was established in 2008, during preparations for the political transition in October 2010, when the islands of Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius were given the status of special municipalities of the Netherlands. The Project Unit was established with the aim of guiding the implementation of the necessary improvements in education on all three islands. This is based on the premise that education in the Caribbean Netherlands must be at a similar level to that in the European Netherlands. During his farewell interview with "What's New ...", Gérard speaks out about his experiences during the past eight years, during which he was closely involved in the educational developments in the Caribbean Netherlands.

Photo: Chiara Wooning

## How did the idea arise to use the Education Agenda to manage the improvements in education in the Caribbean Netherlands?

A "policy agenda" is a familiar concept in The Hague and it seemed to be the correct instrument to achieve the proper division of roles for the improvement process that education on Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius must progress through. Everyone involved was in favour of it, with the caveat that it should not be too much of a "The Hague" style document. There was also political support. I can still remember that everyone was excited and wanted to get to work. The Education Conference in 2011 was a great kick-off for the Education Agenda 2011-2016."

## What was your experience with the collaboration with RCN/OCW?

"Beforehand I had not expected that contact via the department head of the Rijksdienst Caribbean Netherlands (RCN)/OCW would be so direct and intense. That was true for all three department heads so far (ed.: Fleur Lagcher, Hans Kuilder and currently Nolly Oleana). There's always something happening in the Caribbean Netherlands! It has never happened that a meeting was cancelled due to a lack of things to discuss, each time there was always a list. Although we could not always look each other directly in the eyes, I have experienced these meetings as being very to the point and amicable. And that was a prerequisite for success, because for this partnership between the Project Unit in The Hague and RCN/OCW, two different worlds had to be brought together: the European Netherlands civil service world and the Caribbean Netherlands world, where everything was in flux following the political transition.



## Did the past eight years bring what you had hoped for, for education in the Caribbean Netherlands?

"The expectations were definitely met. We worked hard and well, and we achieved a lot. I tip my hat to what has been achieved in education in the Caribbean Netherlands and to the enormous efforts of everyone involved. They really deserve to be complimented! There's nowhere where we really missed the mark, we addressed the correct issues using the Education Agenda 2011-2016. Primary Education (PO) as a whole has achieved the basic quality level, something to which the school managements and administrative coaches have also contributed. I also saw that the Expertise Centres for Education Care (EOZs) themselves are good at development. Two of them have achieved the basic quality level, but on Bonaire some steps are still required. Also two of the total three Social Opportunity Pathways for Youth (SKJ) institutes have already achieved the basic quality level. The process appears to be more difficult for Secondary Education (VO)."

For various reasons the coaching in VO actually never really got off the ground, according to Gérard. "The Saba Comprehensive School was the first one to reach the basic quality milestone for VO and recently for the VET programs as well. The other two schools are currently still working on attaining basic quality for VO and the VET programs."

**“I TIP MY HAT TO WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED IN EDUCATION IN THE CARIBBEAN NETHERLANDS AND TO THE ENORMOUS EFFORT OF EVERYONE INVOLVED”**

According to Gérard there also were surprises, such as the transition to a new language on St. Eustatius. “That was not foreseen in the first Education Agenda. What certainly also contributed to the success in recent years is the fact that the RCN/OCW team consists of people who know the region well and can contribute greatly to what is needed to achieve the best possible results.”

### **What was the all-time high and low point in recent years?**

“An absolute highlight was the moment when all PO schools had achieved the basic quality level. At the time we here in The Hague also celebrated with a cake! A low point was surely the period with the troubles in the Bonaire School Board (SGB), including the problems with the MBO exams. What was a concern for me above all, was the effect that this must have had on the students.”

### **What do you remember most from your visits to the islands?**

“What has stayed with me the most is the warmth with which I was always received on the islands and the openness with which I was met. Everyone really goes all out for education. The facilities situation in 2008 was something that I experienced as being less positive: the situation could only be described as disastrous at some schools. Things that will always stay with me, among others, include the message I learned on Bonaire about why Papiamentu is so important for children on Bonaire. I experienced Saba as a very special island that is distinguished by its beautiful nature and Statia will always remain with me for the special way I was greeted by the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) school: the children standing neatly in a row and very disciplined, yet still very cheerful.”

### **What are you looking forward to in the period ahead?**

“I will continue to follow developments in education on the islands with great interest: it continues to captivate me! I am pleased that the Project Unit could be maintained, whereby the knowledge of and experience in education in the Caribbean Netherlands can be maintained within the ministry. Looking at the staffing in education on the islands, in The Hague, as well as in RCN/OCW, I can safely say that I have complete confidence in the further development of education in the Caribbean Netherlands.”

### **What message would you like to pass on to education stakeholders?**

“My retirement almost coincides precisely with the date that the Education Agenda 2011-2016 expires and it’s a logical time for me to hand the baton over to my successor Sander Piek. He will lead the Project Unit during the next phase. The Education Agenda 2017-2020 phase, during which the basic quality level must endure and improving the educational results should come first.”

“I want to thank all parties in the Caribbean Netherlands education system for their good and pleasant cooperation in recent years and I express my admiration and appreciation for their efforts and the results achieved: together we made a considerable effort and together we took some concrete steps forward. I experienced my work in education in the Caribbean Netherlands in recent years as a nice assignment and a very rewarding project. I am proud and grateful that I was able to play a role in this fascinating process, which is about the future of the children on the islands. As long as this remains a priority, education in the Caribbean Netherlands will be just fine.” ■

NIEUW

# CRAFT COURSES AT THE SGB

**vocational education (vmbo), adapted to meet local needs. That's the premise of the Craft Courses ("Vakcollege"), a new form of education that the Scholengemeenschap Bonaire (SGB) introduced this school year. The initial experiences have been positive.**

For years vmbo has been educating students in certain occupations (trades). If you want to become a baker, to do something in healthcare or if applied science is your 'thing', then it starts with the basic vocational oriented or the advanced vocational oriented vmbo education. After taking that exam, the students often continue on to middle-level vocational education (mbo), but vmbo is the basis.

"This type of education is basically already practically oriented, but it can be much better," was the thinking at the SGB. While politics has struggled for a long time with the content of education, to say nothing of vmbo's image, the idea of Craft Courses is a hit it seems. Meanwhile approximately 40 schools throughout the Netherlands are participating. Now also the SGB in the Caribbean Netherlands.

**"THE CHILDREN ON BONAIRE DESERVE CONTEXT-BASED LEARNING ADAPTED TO THEIR PERCEIVED WORLD"**

## Lots of freedom

Team leader Lennert Duindam explains: "Craft Courses are, so to speak, only a brand name, under which each school has a lot of freedom. We have completely adapted it to our own situation. We said: the children on Bonaire deserve context-based learning adapted to their perceived world." The number of hours of practical lessons in the 'old style' vmbo basic vocational oriented and advanced vocational oriented framework was relatively limited compared to the hours that were devoted to theoretical lessons. "The children had 38 hours of lessons including 4 hours of Dutch, 4 hours of Papiamentu, 4 hours of math and 2 hours of gym. They went from classroom to classroom, which were spread out over a large area." Every 45 minutes it was not only another classroom, but also another teacher. In order to establish its own Bonairian education programme, the SGB researched the students' needs. One of the outcomes was that for vmbo students, being engaged in practical ways fit much better with what the child wanted, Duindam says. "How it used to be in vocational school. So we said: we need to be more practical and contextual oriented. That's when Craft Courses presented itself."

It was decided by the SGB to institute a class schedule that includes 14 hours of practical oriented lessons: "They don't have physics, chemistry and applied science (NST), Dutch plus, visual arts or social studies anymore." At least it seems that way because those courses are combined together in those 14 hours. "We took a look: what are the similarities actually; how can we ensure that it corresponds." Craft Courses has already developed hand-outs that correspond to the Dutch criteria for core objectives. "This way we can precisely monitor what they learn from which course so that they receive the same subject material as if they had been taught the regular way."

The great advantage of the Craft Courses for seventh grade students is that the transition from primary to secondary education is easier, according to Duindam. "They're in a classroom with the same teacher 14 hours per week.







*The class regularly goes outdoors to do the assignments they receive.*

They have their own folders and there's much more social control and we transitioned to one school yard where all the classrooms are located." In the old situation it was possible that a mentor saw his/her class only two hours per week; now it's 14 hours for all classes.

### Mousepad

In practice the Craft Courses on Bonaire seem to be a hit. The new system provides much more calm, which is also apparent when visiting teacher Lucretia Leming's B1B class. The students are busy designing a mouse pad, that must also be sold afterwards. "There's a whole lot involved. Students don't only have to think about the design, but also the materials they need, what the sales price should be and what's the best way for them to sell the mousepad." The last thing is to think of a slogan. The class went to visit a store to find out what they need and what it costs to buy it all.



*The Craft Courses classes at the SGB are held in a wing of the school with 20 classrooms together.*

At the time of the visit, the last day before the 'regatta holiday' in October, their mouse pad is almost finished. They know exactly what they need and what they learned from this project. It's evident during the tour that the calculated prices are in the same range, starting at around \$20. Some designs are simple and business-like; others have beautiful artwork.

Leming is enthusiastic about the new system. A quick observation shows that the students are also having fun: "In other classes there's always a few that ask if they can go to the bathroom; here no one wants to go."

So in the Craft Courses students sit together for nearly half of their classes to follow a practical oriented program. This often occurs by doing assignments, in which several 'old' subjects are combined. At the end of the first year students must make their first choice: to continue in the Applied Science or in the People & Services trades path.

**"NEXT YEAR WE MUST BEGIN WITH THE DETAILS FOR THE UPPER GRADES, MAKING IT ALL FIT TOGETHER. THIS CREATES A VISIBLE, CLEAR PATH FROM THE FIRST GRADE TO THE FOURTH GRADE"**

### Continuous learning

Applied Science is focused on making things and/or design. People & Service involves healthcare, among other things, but also hospitality and leisure. "There is continuous learning," says the team leader. It's even still possible to switch in the second year, if your choice doesn't work out as expected. A profile must be selected at the end of the second year. That choice is then final, because the profiles are linked to the main path they've chosen.

Craft Courses started now with the seventh grade and will be expanded year after year. But the school has already pretty much developed the entire program for the four years. "Next year grade eight will also be Craft Courses", says Duindam. "It will be implemented annually. Next year we must begin with the details for the upper grades, making it all fit together. This creates a visible, clear path from the first grade to the fourth grade."



The B1B class students consult with each other for the assignment to design a mousepad.

## Craft Courses in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, there are now fifty Craft Courses. They have organized themselves into the National Association of Craft Courses. The group was founded in 2007 by 13 Craft Courses. The goal was to reduce early school dropout and to meet the demand for more skilled workers in the technical sector. The healthcare sector joined later. SGB is also a member of the association.

On the association's website it says: The Trades path is characterised by practical learning and orientation starting in grade 7 and is a close cooperation between vmbo, mbo and employers. This allows the Trades path to encourage practical talent, streams promising vmbo students into the labour market and employers are supplied with well-trained and motivated craftsmen." ■

THE INSPECTORATE'S  
NEW ASSESSMENT  
FRAMEWORKS:

## WHAT WILL CHANGE FOR THE SCHOOLS?

All primary education (PO) and one of the secondary education schools in the Caribbean Netherlands have already achieved the basic quality level. The two remaining secondary schools are still working hard to achieve this for secondary education and vocational education. Once the basic quality level has been reached or is within reach, it is warranted to look at additional and other important aspects of quality. That's why the Education Inspectorate is renewing its oversight and new assessment frameworks have been developed. What does that mean exactly and what will change for schools in the Caribbean Netherlands?

For more  
information,  
visit our website:

<http://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/onderwerpen/onderzoekskaders>



### What will change regarding oversight?

For the renewal of the oversight, the Inspectorate wants to evaluate the quality and finances of education more broadly than is now the case. The Inspectorate doesn't only want to determine if schools in the Caribbean Netherlands have achieved the basic quality level, but also whether the schools meet the quality standards for other important elements of good education.

### The new assessment frameworks

The assessment frameworks that the Inspectorate uses for oversight consist of standards that describe what the legal requirements are and what is important for the quality of education according to scientific insights. It is specified in each standard when the quality is inadequate, specifically if the legal requirements are not met.

### What does an assessment framework look like?

The assessment framework consists of standards that describe what the legal requirements are and what is important for the quality of education according to scientific insights. In the assessment framework, the Inspectorate defines five areas of quality for primary and secondary education. The assessment framework for middle-level vocational education (mbo) has an extra area of quality: Examination and certification:

1. Educational process
2. Examination and certification (mbo)
3. School environment
4. Educational results
5. Quality assurance and ambition
6. Financial management.

Using the assessment frameworks, the Inspectorate gains insight into the three basic questions regarding what education means for pupils and students:

- Do they learn enough? (Educational results)
- Are they taught well? (Educational process) and
- Are they safe? (School environment).

The standards in these three areas together represent the core of teaching as the student experiences it. The areas Quality assurance and ambition and Financial management are requisite for (maintaining) quality. The Inspectorate also defines the quality of education as the sum of the school's performance in these areas.

### Which schools does this new framework apply to?

#### Starting on August 1, 2017 to December 31, 2018:

- The framework applies to schools that have achieved the basic quality level (in accordance with the educational agenda) for the first time as of August 1, 2017 or thereafter. The Inspectorate will in principle visit these schools once every two years to assess their quality. During the years in between, a meeting will be held with the management of each school. If there were any deficiencies, regarding one or more of the standards, noted during the most recent assessment, the management indicates during this meeting which improvements have been realised. The Inspectorate can then carry out an investigation to verify the management's judgement.
- For schools that have not yet achieved the basic quality level, the framework to achieve the basic quality level remains in effect until December 31, 2018 at the latest. There will be no changes regarding the assessment of these schools. The Inspectorate closely monitors these schools and in any event, the Inspectorate visits them twice a year (once for a progress meeting, once to assess quality).

#### Starting on January 1, 2019:

For the Expertise Centres Education Care (EOZ) and Social Opportunity Pathways for young people (SKJ) the method and assessment framework remain as agreed upon in the basic quality level documents.

# STUDYING ON BONAIRE

THE LECTURE ROOMS ARE A BIT HIDDEN. BUT RIGHT IN THE CENTRE OF BONAIRE THE UNIVERSITY OF CURAÇAO (UOC) OFFERS A DIVERSE RANGE OF COURSES. ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION ON THEIR OWN ISLAND.



“THE LOFO TRAINING IS OFFERED AS A ‘BLEND’. THAT MEANS THAT STUDENTS TAKE CLASSES BOTH IN A CLASSROOM, AS WELL AS DO ASSIGNMENTS VIA AN ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT”

Desiree Manuel, acting dean of the University of Curaçao’s General Faculty, and Rosemary de Jong, coordinator of educational activities for Bonaire, tell how it all started in 2005. Small, with one course: level two Papiamentu teacher training.

And how it expanded slowly, when a year later, in 2006, lofo (ed.: elementary school teacher training - similar to Pabo in the Netherlands -) started. “At the time there were about 16 to 20 students”, says Manuel. “Since then we’ve actually offered courses continuously. Back then we waited until a “cohort” was finished and only then we started a new one. Today we no longer wait until a class is finished, but we see when the need is a big enough to start a new group. We have regular consultations with school boards and management from schools, to hear what the need will be in the coming years.”

## People with a family

Once again a new group of students recently started Lof training. What type of people are interested? Rosemary de Jong: “They’re actually very diverse. Some have recently graduated from higher general secondary education (havo), others have completed middle-level vocational education (mbo) via preparatory middle-level vocational education (vmbo) and now want to complete their post-secondary education (hbo). Others already have a job and want to continue their education. Or they want to do something different. These are often people with a family that can’t leave the island so easily. Actually this last group is the biggest.”

The Lof training is offered as a ‘blend’. That means that students take classes both in a classroom, as well as do assignments via an online learning environment. The lectures are given in the evenings so that people can follow the courses in addition to their work. At first most people need to get used to the ‘blended’ aspect, remarks De Jong: “People find it easier to sit in the lecture rooms with their writing pad, in order to then take an exam at the end

and they’re finished. In an online learning environment, they need to work more independently writing reports, developing projects together.”

For this they have to log into ‘Blackboard’, as the platform is called. There are documents there, there’s a forum where you can ask questions, there teachers can tell students to hand in something or to upload a video of their internship,

**"IF SOMEONE WANTS TO VIEW A LECTURE  
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, THAT'S FINE.  
IF SOMEONE IS DYSLEXIC AND WANTS TO  
WATCH IT TEN TIMES, THAT'S GREAT"**

for example. De Jong: "The advantage is that students themselves can choose when they want to learn. If someone wants to view a lecture in the middle of the night, that's fine. If someone is dyslexic and wants to watch it ten times, that's great."

The start of the study is particularly intensive, with lectures four evenings per week. "But that's over with quickly, because starting in the second year, there's a lot of internships. For people who are already working in education, that's a relief, because they can do an internship at their own school. But if you work outside the education system, then it's tough."

### **Master of Special Educational Needs**

In addition to the Lofo, bachelors and masters' programs are also offered on Bonaire: whoever wants to get their first or second level teaching qualification in one of the languages: English, Dutch, Papiamentu and Spanish, can also do so at UoC.

Manuel: "Students on Bonaire then follow lectures together with students in Curaçao. Via Internet. There is a lot of interest in Dutch in particular."

Most people who follow this type of teacher training are teachers already. We encourage them to do as many internships as possible at different levels. Because the approach in vmbo is different than in vwo. And mbo yet again requires a different method of teaching."

Due to the demand from the educational sector on Bonaire, a Master of Special Educational Needs was also created. It's a programme for people already working in education and who want additional 'tools' to be able to better deal with students who need extra attention because of behavioural or learning problems.

### **An alternative for school dropouts**

And there are plans for the future. "The University of Curaçao has five faculties, of which there's only one for Bonaire education at this time," says Manuel. "We would also like to offer courses from the faculty of law, the technical and socio-economic faculty and the faculty of behavioural and social sciences. We know that there's interest in these on Bonaire. Unfortunately, we're lacking staff at this moment. But we hope to be able to expand before too long. Because the intention is that in the future, UoC becomes a real alternative for school dropouts so that they can study on their own island." ■



**UNIVERSITY  
OF CURAÇAO**  
DR. MOISES DA COSTA GOMEZ

## **The UoC offers the following programmes and courses on Bonaire:**

- Elementary school teacher training (LOFO), primary education
- Master of Education in Papiamentu, Dutch, English and Spanish
- Master of Special Educational Needs
- Bachelor of Education in Applied Science
- Bachelor of Education in Papiamentu, Dutch, English and Spanish
- Pedagogical Course Certificate, for those have finished an HBO or university (WO) education who wish to work in education

The tuition for a bachelor's programme at UoC is \$2,835 per year. A master's programme costs \$3,955. Students enrolled in a programme may qualify for student financial aid. For whomever is a teacher already, there's teacher's financial aid. That means the cost of their education will be reimbursed; also a part of the programme can be done during working hours. The UoC's programmes are accredited by the Dutch-Flemish accreditation organisation.

For more  
information  
look at the website:

**WWW.UOC.CW**



# SABAN AND TURKISH STUDENTS IN YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAMME



*The Turkish group together on Saba for a "reflection session" at the end of the day.*

Thanks to a unique exchange programme, last spring Saban and Turkish students were able to meet each other and learn about each other's country and culture. The Turkish students visited Saba in April and in May it was Saba's turn to visit Turkey. Trips such as these are organised annually by the Saba Reach Foundation to provide their disadvantaged students with the opportunity to visit another (island) country, get to know a new culture and to use their social skills in a new environment.

Since 2013, the year that the Saba Reach Foundation launched this programme, Saban students have travelled to St. Maarten, Curaçao and the Dominican Republic. This year was the first exchange involving Erasmus+ where several students were able to participate and were able to travel all the way to Turkey. The overall aim of such Erasmus+ youth exchange programmes is to increase mobility throughout Europe for vulnerable or disadvantaged youths via a learning experience involving young people from another culture. "Turkey was quite a spectacular destination," confirms director La-Toya Charles of the Saba Reach Foundation. "We owe this exchange mainly to the contacts that psychologist/behavioural coach Jessie Voermans has with EC2. Jessie explains: "In the Netherlands I had been involved with youth exchange programmes in what is now called the Erasmus+ programme. Schools and other institutions are able to request funding for exchange programmes and internation-

al volunteer work from this fund." La-Toya adds: "Thanks to Jessie's efforts, she took care of the application and final report for us, we were actually able to receive a grant from Erasmus+ in order to be able to realize this programme."

Based on positive experiences with the Turkish Mustafa Kadikoy Anatolia High School, Jessie came up with a proposal to bring the Turkish and Saban schools in contact with other for an exchange. La-Toya adds: "and Turkey obviously fits very well with our wish to visit a country with a significantly different culture."

For Saba as well as Turkey, there were twelve students who participated and three group leaders. Saba's group consisted of six participants from the Saba Comprehensive School (SCS), three participants in the Social Opportunity Pathways for Youth (SKJ) programme and three youngsters who had recently completed the SKJ programme. Participants (graduates) from Saba joined in the SKJ programme. The condition for participating was to have either completed SKJ training or to have attended at least 75% of the time. In addition, it was all about young people who would benefit from continuing to practise their social skills. The Saban youths were accompanied by SKJ teacher Vincent Power, Practical Education (Pro) teacher Madelyn Johnson and La-Toya Charles. The Turkish group was headed by English teacher Mutlu Boz accompanied by twelve of her English students. For the Turkish participants this exchange was mainly all about improving

# THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

## AN IDEA FOR SCHOOLS IN THE CARIBBEAN NETHERLANDS

their ability to communicate in English. The main theme of the exchange was “Nature & Water”.

### Nature and Water

On Saba the focus during the first day was mainly on “bonding” activities (ed.: teambuilding activities) and getting to know each other. The rest of the programme consisted of many of informal educational outdoor nature activities. For example, under the supervision of the Saba Conservation Foundation, the group went snorkelling, where they were introduced to the underwater world. There were also various activities during which the students were divided into groups to start working together on a topic, such as the conservation of coral reefs, local vegetation or turtles. The programme further included a presentation on the “Recycle for Saba” campaign, followed by a clean-up activity in Cove Bay and a short history lesson at the Saba Archaeological Foundation. On April 27, the group participated in the Kingdom Games on the island, organized by the Centre for Youth and Family and they organized activities for the children together with the Child Focus foundation.

One of the highlights was a fair organized by SCS. The Turkish students participated with an informational booth to provide information on Turkey and they handed out a delicious Turkish dish. At the end of each day, there were so-called “reflection sessions” during which students shared with each other what they had learned that day. The specific objectives for both exchanges were: cultural sensitivity, conversing in your own language, conversing with someone who speaks another language, social awareness, digital literacy and learning how to learn. These objectives are in line with Youth Pass, a European certification programme that recognises non-formal and informal learning when working with youths.

### Dress normally

The trip to Turkey was an exciting and educational experience for the students participating from Saba. The group stayed in a youth hostel. They made trips to a carpet factory, a museum, a textile factory and the fourth largest lake in Turkey, among others. And they enjoyed Turkish cuisine. Every day the focus was on one of the aforementioned goals and also in Turkey there were brief daily discussions about what the students had learned. At the end of the programme the students submitted their reports and received Youth Pass certificates.

How do the students look back on it? Charles Ludwig (fifth year, vocational) said that this was his first trip to Europe: “I never realised that it could take so long to travel somewhere. Just the bus ride to the town of Antalya, where we stayed, took four hours.” The students also found it nice to meet youths their own age from a different country. After

Erasmus+ offers opportunities to study, work or teach abroad.

With a €14.7 billion budget, within Europe this programme funds internships abroad, as well as youth exchange programs.

Erasmus+ provides opportunities for everyone, regardless of their age, who wants to further develop themselves and who wishes to exchange knowledge and experiences with institutions and organisations in various countries.

Erasmus+ subsidises projects in European countries, but as special municipalities of the Netherlands, the islands of the Caribbean Netherlands may also apply for a grant.

For more information regarding this fund, the opportunities and the application process, visit:

[ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/)

the programme the students from Saba and Turkey stayed in contact via Facebook. Ludwig: “They basically dress normally, like us.” Leonardo Hassell (fifth year, vocational) especially liked having the students get to know Saba and showing them the island. “I think they got a good impression of Saba. The programme was very complete and varied.”



Group photo in Turkey during an excursion to the natural phenomenon Pamukkale (cotton castle) with its hot springs and terraces of carbonate minerals, which are left behind by the flowing water.

Photo: Kendrick Johnson

## “TURKEY FITS VERY WELL WITH OUR WISH TO VISIT A COUNTRY WITH A SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT CULTURE”

Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) student Rolland Levenstone says he learned a lot from this trip: “... especially about what it’s like to be in another country and to meet people who speak a language other than English at home. Besides, I can also speak a few words of Turkish now! I thought it was very interesting to see during one of the trips how Ebru art is made” (ed.: Ebru art is when colourful patterns are made by adding colour pigment to water with oil and transferring this pattern onto paper).

Overall this exchange was a fun and educational experience for everyone involved and the students are looking forward to the next youth exchange activity. ■



*"I look at what they can do, challenge them and provide support, in order to give them more self-confidence."*



*A selection from the remedial teaching toolbox: custom scissors for children who have difficulty learning cutting, screws and bolts for practicing motor skills, a "Pencil Grip" and "Wikistix".*



## INTERVIEW WITH HELEN HASSELL

### REMEDIAL/SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER

**Perhaps the most noticeable room in the Sacred Heart School on Saba is Remedial Teaching/Special Education classroom of Helen Hassell ("Teacher Helen"). The classroom is light and cheerfully coloured materials in all directions make it inviting. "Children love colour," says Helen. In her own passionate way, Helen explains what goes on in her classroom.**

Helen first discusses the difference between Remedial Teaching and Special Education. "Remedial teaching is intended for children who typically have average or even above average grades. But they have difficulty with a particular skill such as reading, speaking, writing, spelling or arithmetic, or with a specific subject". Unlike remedial teaching, special education is for children with limited intellectual abilities that can only progress through primary education with special support. Helen explains: "Because of the small scale, there's no separate special education school on Saba." Students with autism (ed.: or autism-like) behaviour or Down Syndrome, for example, mainly work a lot on their social skills. Some of them have motor skill issues or social-emotional issues.

#### Brushing up

When asked what type of children are eligible for Remedial Teaching and Special Education, Helen replies: "If a student has a lot of trouble with one of the subjects or with a particular skill, then upon request of the teacher, he or she is first referred to our "ib-er" (ed.:internal mentor) Jarmila Berkel". After observing and evaluating the child in and outside the classroom, Jarmila discusses her findings with the parents and, if necessary, the possibility to have the student test-

ed by EC2 (Expertise Centre Education Care, secondary care) is explored. Depending on the test results, Helen becomes involved to help the student brush up.

During remedial teaching or special education, you work one-on-one or in small groups of up to four students. The students come to Helen's classroom at the same time that their class is busy with the subject or activity that they're having difficulty with. "Some children come three times a week," says Helen. "Others with more serious or complex needs, come every day." The classes take 30 to 45 minutes. Here she teaches the same material as the other students in the class, but in a different way. "I look at what they can do, challenge them and provide support, in order to give them more self-confidence."

*"Calm down bottles"*





*“At an early age I already wanted to become a schoolteacher. Every day brings new challenges and no day is ever the same”*

We look at some of the many gadgets and teaching aids in Helen's class. She shows a bottle containing all kinds of coloured glitter that appear when you shake it: “If for a moment it's becomes too much for the children and they're unable to concentrate, I grab this “calm down bottle”. Looking at the patterns that emerge in this bottle, helps the children to calm down”. She also uses the “Wikkistix” a lot: coloured, flexible rods which can be bent into letters and actually into any kind of shape. “They're a favourite with the kids because they're not messy”. Another favourite is the “pencil grip”, which comes in different shapes and is attached to a pencil. These “pencil grips” help young children through different phases, to learn how to hold a pen or pencil correctly. The customized scissors are for children who have difficulty learning how to cut. There are screws and bolts for practicing motor skills and there are many more teaching aids in Helen's classroom.

A programme where not only Helen, but the whole Sacred Heart School benefit a lot from, is “conscious discipline”<sup>1</sup>. Helen explains: “This program is based on life skills where the teacher, parent as well as the student will benefit from for the rest of their lives: peace, encouragement, assertiveness, making choices, empathy, positive intention and consequences. I estimate that in

approximately two to three years, discipline will no longer be an issue at this school. That will be partly thanks to this programme.” The principles of Conscious Discipline are also applied by EC2. Helen shows a glove, the “greeting glove”, which is a part of the programme. The glove reinforces the “greeting procedure”. When students enter the classroom, they can choose how they want to greet the teacher. For example, with a “high five”, a hug or with a handshake.

### New York

Helen has now lived on Saba since 2010. She herself comes from Aruba, where she worked as a kindergarten teacher and was head of the “Mon Plaisir” pre-school. Helen lived in New York from 1985 to 2010. The move to Saba also involved major work related changes for Helen. She says that in New York there are also disadvantaged children, but that due to the larger scale, a wide range of specialized education is available. On a small island like Saba, it's different: “as a school team, it's a big challenge for us by ourselves to support children who need special education as much as possible, with the help of EC2. But this is totally my thing.” Helen loves to work with children: “at an early age I already wanted to become a schoolteacher. Every day brings new challenges and no day is ever the same.” ■



## Learning Chinese on St. Eustatius

Last summer a group of kids from the after school institution “Kids' Club Zeelandia” on St. Eustatius got a Chinese lesson from sinologist Marisa Bantjes.

Chinese is a so-called “tonal language”: the meaning of a word can change when spoken in a different tone. The children practiced with the tones of Chinese and got acquainted with a few characters and how to draw them. And they learned among others to say “Hello”, “Thank you” and “goodbye” in Chinese.

Aside from the Chinese language they learned about the country China and its inhabitants. The kids enjoyed the lesson and took the painted characters home as a present for their Moms.



### CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE

Conscious Discipline by Dr. Becky Bailey is a comprehensive and scientifically proven social and emotional intelligence classroom management programme that empowers both teachers and students. It leads the educators through a process that promotes permanent behaviour changes in both teachers and students.

The “School Family” is the core of the programme. The foundation is to understand the point of view of the student, offer safety, connection, trust and faith.

For more  
information  
look at the website:

[www.ConsciousDiscipline.com](http://www.ConsciousDiscipline.com)

# 2016 ... highlights to look back on with pride!

## MARCH APRIL



## JANUARY

Official opening and commissioning of the renovated Golden Rock School on St. Eustatius.

**All Primary Education (PO) schools in the Caribbean Netherlands have achieved the basic quality level! In addition to the primary schools**, two of the three Expertise Centres for Education Care (EOZs), one school for VO and two of the three SKJ institutes also achieved this milestone (ed.: SKJ stands for Social Opportunity Pathways for Youth).

## MAY



Official opening of the renovated Kolegio Strea Briante on Bonaire (formerly known as the Watapana school).

For primary education on St. Eustatius, **the new continuous learning pathways** are ready for Arithmetic and Mathematics, English and Dutch as a foreign language.



Farewell to Gérard Maas, Director of the Caribbean Netherlands Project Unit, due to his retirement. You can also read an interview with Gérard, elsewhere in this magazine. Gérard will be succeeded by Sander Piek.

## AUGUSTUS

**The 2016-2017 agreement regarding employment conditions** for education personnel in the Caribbean Netherlands is signed on all three islands.



## SEPTEMBER

Start of the renovation and construction of a renewed school complex in St. John's, Saba.



The Expertise Centre Education Care (ECE) on St. Eustatius celebrates its **fifth anniversary** with a successful conference: "Stepping stones to quality care in education".







## NOVEMBER

The **Saba Comprehensive School** now has basic quality, for VO as well as the VET programs!



The Second education agenda is finalised and signed by the stakeholders during the **third Education Conference** on November 28 in the presence of Minister Jet Bussemaker of Education and her delegation. The education agenda was developed with the cooperation of all education stakeholders on the islands.



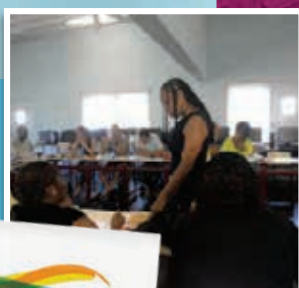
After completion of its renovation, the **Bethel Methodist School on St. Eustatius** was officially opened by Minister Jet Bussemaker.



Official opening by Minister Jet Bussemaker of the newly constructed **Skol Amplio Papa Cornes on Bonaire**.

## DECEMBER

English tutoring in the context of the language transition on St. Eustatius ends with a celebration: the vast majority of the teachers on St. Eustatius received their **"Cambridge Certificate of English"** with good marks.



**MARTIN VAN DEN OETELAAR**  
BOARD COACH PRIMARY EDUCATION (PO)

## RUWENDLY

For many years we have been working hard together to grow into another education system, including for example other sources of income or other oversight or other languages and tests. A lot of discussions concern these things, and rightly so. But in these conversations what touches me above all, is the school staff's enormous engagement with the students, the fact that everyone knows the story behind the children. Their everyday lives outside of school, the fun and the opportunities education offers them, but also the conditions causing many children to not have the future for themselves that they literally 'deserve', whereby they don't have equal opportunities. These are the stories that are less visible in 'the system'.

What has affected me the most are the examples of some education and healthcare professionals, described in Bonaire in 2014: Ruwendly, or the story of a traumatized boy who is fighting to be heard. In school Ruwendly (a fictitious name) comes across as "an unruly 'monster'" with almost psychopathic traits who terrorises his classmates and his teacher with death threats, profanities, strangling, beatings with sticks, kicking and dragging a classmate across the schoolyard by the hair. "It's tempting to characterise this in educational terms as behaviour for which the teacher should have an answer, or him as a "problem student". But Ruwendly's story also has another side. The following passage is only a small part of it; "Ruwendly regularly comes to school without having eaten breakfast, because there's no money for it. He has only one school shirt, which has holes and is often full of stains. He looks unkempt.

To escape from his mother, Ruwendly regularly wanders the streets alone, even though he's so young. The street is his second home. Ruwendly is regularly beaten with a belt or stick on his bare back and buttocks. Communication with him is almost exclusively by screaming. He takes care of his sister, the middle of three children, as best he can. In addition, he finds relative peace at his grandmother's, the mother of his mother, who takes pity on him, when she's not working. To make ends meet, his grandmother has two jobs that don't pay much and as a result she's not at home a lot."

The story of Ruwendly is not just the story of this one particular traumatised boy who is fighting to be heard, it's the story of several Ruwendlies and Ruwendlias that come to school every day. I encourage every policymaker and professional to read this story in its entirety. It grimly illustrates that the ambitions that we have together regarding education on the BES islands is not the implementation of a system, but a values-driven process. It's about the contribution we can make together to the welfare of every child and as such to our society, our 'village'. Let's continue, even with our busy schedules, to have a conversation about Ruwendly. ■





FRANS VAN EFFERINK PREFERS TO TALK ABOUT HIS VIEWS ON EDUCATION AND HIS PLANS FOR THE SCHOOL THAN ABOUT HIMSELF. SINCE APRIL 1, 2016 VAN EFFERINK HAS BEEN THE MANAGING DIRECTOR (AD) OF THE BONAIRE SCHOOL BOARD (SGB), WHICH HAS 1,500 STUDENTS. THERE ARE FOUR UNITS: PREPARATORY MIDDLE-LEVEL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (VMBO), PRACTICAL EDUCATION, HIGHER GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION/ PREPARATORY UNIVERSITY EDUCATION (HAVO/VWO) AND MIDDLE-LEVEL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (MBO), EACH WITH ITS OWN DIRECTOR. THE SGB IS THE UMBRELLA ABOVE THEM ALL WITH ONE AD (ED.: MANAGING DIRECTOR).

The SGB has recently experienced a turbulent period, but van Efferink doesn't want to dwell on that too much now. "The SGB is also just a school. The schedules are there, the lessons continue and the bell rings on time. I love activity. My last school in the Netherlands was declared to be excellent by the inspection authority. Which is fatal to a director, because actually then his job is finished."

### Pedagogy

He's brief regarding the recent problems at the SGB: "I started at zero and began to explore the school." He has read the inspection reports: "They weren't good." Additionally, the director is working towards the future. "We need to change the organisation. This organisation must be driven by pedagogy and that was lacking a bit."

Van Efferink caught the Caribbean bug five years ago during his three months as interim director on St. Eustatius (ed.: he was interim director of the Gwendoline van Putten School). "Then after I returned to the Netherlands, I continued to follow things in the Caribbean and then I saw this job opening." Bonaire suits him well, but he's happy to be able to work in air conditioning. "My wife has a little more trouble with the heat. But I came because of the school. Whether I'd now be sitting in The Hague or in Leiden or on Bonaire, to me it's all a bit the same. I have to Skype a bit more often with my children in the Netherlands. But this is my life now."

When asked about his background Frans says: "My father was a teacher in Tiel and later went on to work as a secondary school French teacher. I spent a few years in his class and thought, now is this the way you have to teach?" Frans studied pedagogy and didactics: "My entire life I have been driven by the question: 'how does a child learn?' and how is it that one child remembers something and the other doesn't?"

*"It's important to choose your goal for education well"*

Having thirty children sitting in a row listening to what the teacher says, is not the only way of teaching: "It's still my ambition to offer more differentiation in that. It's important to choose your goal for education well."

### Obsolete

Several times during the conversation the 21st Century Skills are discussed, skills such as critical thinking and creative thinking, but also ICT and collaboration. He points to the students who are sitting bent over their mobile phones during the lesson. "That's actually a small computer. In the past we were shown a picture to explain how the heart works. Now they've probably seen one beating on YouTube a long time ago. In class we're actually turning the clock back." One of the things that has already been realized by the SGB in a short time, is the introduction of the Craft Courses in vmbo, a modern way of teaching.

Van Efferink has been hired for three years and he's going to complete his term. Then there will be an evaluation. "My goal is to make myself obsolete." ■



IN EVERY EDITION OF "WHAT'S NEW" WE FOLLOW A DUTCH CARIBBEAN EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL DURING ONE DAY. FOR THIS ISSUE WE FOLLOWED DIANE WILSON. DIANE IS THE DIRECTOR OF THE SACRED HEART SCHOOL

Diane Wilson, Director of the Sacred Heart School (elementary school), likes to get up early: "this gives me the time to start the day by doing a little meditation and reading a passage from the Bible. If I'm not the one who opens the school gate at six o'clock, then I leave the house at a quarter to seven." The school is around the corner from Diane's, so it's only a five-minute walk. "But," says Diane, "I still take the time to enjoy the fresh air and nature around me."

## A DAY WITH DIANE WILSON



**07:50 AM >**

### Arrival at school

Upon arrival at school, she opens her office and the store room and reviews what's happening that day. When she's finished with that, the first students have usually already arrived. She explains: "Some working parents drop their kids off early at school and the school buses usually arrive here on time with the kids." Sometimes she helps children that need to take medication and she remains in and around the playground until the bell rings at seven thirty.



When the classes have started, she goes into her office again. "I go through my mail, often there are documents that need to be read; such as the new Education Agenda recently, which everyone contributed to. And yesterday, for example, I had the inspection authority visiting, so I quickly went through the latest documents." If Diane herself doesn't have to visit a classroom to assist a teacher, then she regularly visits a class and observes how the lesson is going. Sometimes there are also problems, as there was recently, with an aggressive student. "I was called in and then consulted with the "ib-er" (ed.: internal mentor ) and then discussed with the teacher what must be done."

Sometimes there are also meetings in the morning, as there was on October 5, when the Sacred Heart School had a meeting in the gym for the occasion of "Teacher's Day" to put the staff in the limelight. "That was a nice meeting", says Diane. "There was singing and poems were recited. Everyone received a present: both the teachers and the non-teaching staff, such as bus drivers and custodians. And a pie was delivered, from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW). I also made a short call to their office in Bonaire, to say thank you."

**09:30 till 10.00 AM > First break**

The first break is from 09:30 to 10:00 am, for children from groups 1 through 4. The second break, from 10:00 to 10:30, is for groups five through eight. The students go home at 1 pm, but Diane's day is far from over





### Till 14.00 PM > Homework under supervision

If she's not busy guiding a group of boys who remain at school until 14:00 to do their homework under her supervision, she usually has one or more meetings. "As such I have a lot of discussions with Jack, the bookkeeper, about our long-term budget, there are meetings with parents, with the Central Government Real Estate Agency about our buildings and once a month there's a director's meeting with director Anton Hermans from the Saba Comprehensive School. There are also regular workshops and courses, such as the most recent one, to instruct teachers on how to use the new math methodology, *Math in focus*. Or instructions for using the student monitoring system."

It's a busy job where she has a lot to do every day. It has happened that Diane wakes up in the middle of the night and thinks about everything that she still has to do. "But that's part of it and fortunately it doesn't happen too often," she says. "And if there's tension somewhere, it's up to me to solve that. It's a tough job, but I enjoy it and I'm proud that I can do this for the children of Saba, so every day I go to work with great pleasure." ■



"It's a tough job, but I enjoy it and I'm proud that I can do this for the children of Saba"

## EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS FOR EDUCATION PERSONNEL 2016-2017

At the end of August 2016, the commissioners of education, school boards, the delegation of representative of the personnel on Saba and St. Eustatius and the labour union on Bonaire, signed the new 2016-2017 employment conditions agreement for education personnel in the Caribbean Netherlands.



Signing of the agreement on Saba. Photo: Elvin Henriquez

### What was established in this agreement?

- A one-time US \$500 gross payment as compensation for 2015
- 3% wage increase starting January 1, 2016
- An increase in the vacation allowance to 8.33% starting June 1, 2016
- An increase in the gross end-of-year allowance to US \$1,250 starting in December 2016
- Harmonisation of the years-of-service bonus, whereby the accrued years-of-service for all civil servants in the Kingdom will count towards the base (for calculating the retirement sum) and will also count retroactively up to and including July 1, 2012.

Experience has been gained since 2010 using a new consultation system for establishing employment conditions for education personnel. Within this system, the employment conditions were established gradually: first the employment conditions of federal government personnel/civil servants in the Caribbean Netherlands were agreed upon. Then a translation for education personnel was established based on agreement focused consultation (OOGO).

During the duration of the current employment conditions agreement for education personnel, the partners in this consultation will examine how the system can be further professionalised.