

Dear Mr Roesen, Dear Mr Belien,

I am writing on behalf of the APEEE Board concerning the school's plan to decrease the number of Project Weeks from 2.5 weeks to 1.5 weeks or less, as suggested to the Secondary CE, most recently at its 12 September meeting.

In addition to the list of all planned study trips that management has agreed to present at the 3 December CE meeting, we would like to request that management also produce a written paper describing the proposed Project Week changes in more concrete terms. Specifically, we would be grateful to receive:

- **an analysis of the situation up to this point** – including trips, excursions and other projects taking place during project weeks (and also outside project weeks) over the past several years and identifying key problem areas;
- **a fleshed-out proposal** – describing the new regime (including its timing and structure) and suggesting how existing projects might be affected (i.e. continued or replaced) as well as how the school plans to foster project-based learning.

Ideally, this documentation could be circulated to members of the CE in advance of the 3 December meeting to allow for adequate consultation and feedback.

As the APEEE understands, the proposal to decrease the days is part of a broader rationalisation with the aim to create “all-on-all-out” Project Weeks—whereby ALL secondary students will take part in Project Week activities. In this regard, we see the rationalisation of the April Project Week, the source of the deepest disruption to normal courses, as an appropriate step. Nevertheless, concerns have been raised that the school may have already put the new Project Week regime in place with little or no consultation.

Parents believe that projects are fundamental to our children's education. And we are anxious that proposed changes may result in additional hurdles for our already overstretched teaching staff. This could adversely affect some of our cherished programmes and/or dissuade teachers from initiating new programmes. It should be underscored that teachers undertake these programmes outside of their normal teaching hours and have little time or resource to dedicate to these initiatives. Many may simply choose to forego the effort if it is perceived as too burdensome. **We would ask that the school management recognise and support the extra efforts made by our teachers to organise projects whether inside or outside the structure of scheduled projects.**

Here we also note that a recent analysis of our system entitled *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Schools* (Ref.: 2018-09-D-69-en-1, p. 17) states that: “...alongside classroom teaching, learning outside the classroom and appropriate activities outside the school can make a significant contribution to the development of the competences.” and that, “While much of the discussion thus far has been about the introduction of [the transversal or subject-related] project at S6 and S7, there is also potential to explore this idea for primary and lower secondary, with the possibility of introducing it in two or three phases.” (See Annex I for full text.) This reveals that the trend in the system is in fact toward more transversal, project-style learning.

Some parents have suggested that instead of decreasing the time scheduled for projects, the school might move one Project Week for secondary students to the final week of school, after the S4-S6 exams and during the Bacc Orals. This could be done in line with the December 2010 Board of Governors recommendation that each school should organise replacement activities (which would be optional days for students) during the Bacc Orals.

In closing, it is important that a new programme not be put in place without formally informing and consulting the Secondary CE and School Advisory Council. We believe that parents, students and teachers should have a say in the scope, content and quality of future project weeks.

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,
Kathryn Mathe

ANNEX I

There is evidence of other good practices that support the development of key competences such as cross-curricular projects, carried out during the project weeks in the schools, as well as participation in study trips and other programmes. This means that alongside classroom teaching, learning outside the classroom and appropriate activities outside the school can make a significant contribution to the development of the competences.

The idea of a Transversal or Subject-related school project has already been the subject of some discussion. Such a project would have significant potential for the development of most of the key competences, and particularly those that are not so visible in subjects, such as digital competence, personal, social and learning competence; civic competence; entrepreneurship competence; and cultural awareness and expression competence. While much of the discussion thus far has been about the introduction of this project at S6 and S7, there is also potential to explore this idea for primary and lower secondary, with the possibility of introducing it in two or three phases. It is recommended that the idea of a Transversal or Subject-related project be further investigated in the context of the development of the key competences.

—Taken from *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Schools* (Ref.: 2018-09-D-69-en-1) p. 17.