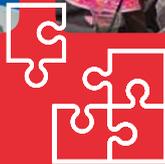


Esprit Schools Education Manifesto 2013-2017



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Education in an international context with local colour



This education manifesto explains how **Esprit Schools will be positioning itself strategically in the years to come. It describes what kind of educational organisation we want to be, what we value, what we want to achieve, and what makes us unique. It provides direction and focus and serves as a link connecting our schools. It also substantiates choices and decisions. We also use our educational manifesto as a guideline for conducting a dialogue – internally, externally and with others involved in our activities – about good education.**

EDUCATION MANIFESTO 2008-2012: LOOKING BACK

Esprit Schools issued its first education manifesto in 2008. In it, we clarified the values that would form the basis for designing the kind of education we wanted to provide within the context of an international, dynamic and multicultural global city like Amsterdam.

All assessments made of the 2008-2012 period show that our educational manifesto is serving as a guideline for what we are doing in our various schools and for the decisions we are making, good examples being the decisions regarding the training institute and internationalisation. Local implementation – what the education being provided in each of the various schools looks like – is a top priority in this regard. The basic principle involves responding to the developments taking place in the school and allowing each school to implement the education manifesto in a way that will emphasise certain aspects appropriate to its own students and environment.

EDUCATION ON A SMALL SCALE WITHIN A LARGER CONTEXT: IT'S HAPPENING IN THE SCHOOLS!

In the years to come, Esprit Schools will continue on the pathway delineated by first education manifesto. We will also be expanding on implementing these ideas at the level of the schools and their environments for even more local colour for every Esprit School – along with attention devoted to interrelationships and the greater ties that make our educational organisation stronger and that offer scope for innovation. With this in mind, we developed the following motto for this manifesto: ***Education on a small scale within a larger context: it's happening in the schools!***

The purpose of this education manifesto is to provide clearly defined frameworks, interrelationships and inspiration. It also stresses the importance of the individual qualities and development capacity of each school and the professionals who work there. This education manifesto does not address the implementation of its frameworks. We are convinced that this is the domain of the teacher. In other words, this education manifesto is not about what goes on in the classroom but is intended to provide a basis for this.

Mission, vision and integrity

MISSION

The starting point for everything that Esprit Schools does and decides is how it will affect what we do for our students. We see it as our responsibility to provide excellent education in the best possible learning environments so that we will be preparing young people for continuing education and helping them become citizens fully capable of participating in society.

VISION

Learning takes place in various ways and happens everywhere: at home and outside the home – and especially at school. Learning does not stop after leaving school but continues throughout life. Every student is different; every student learns differently and learns different things. The guiding principle in creating learning environments is, firstly, that students actively acquire knowledge and insight by means of interacting with their environment.

Esprit Schools believes in the importance of having learning take place within a context derived as closely as possible from real-life situations. Teachers in the classroom bear a great responsibility in directing this process. Implementing, developing and researching an educational programme occurs where learning takes place: where the interaction between student and teacher takes place and where the quality of our education is determined. We seek a learning and working environment that is attractive, attainable and meaningful for all people involved. The strongest organisation and the best results are created by developing people's talents to the highest level.

INTEGRITY

We do our work with integrity and care. We conduct ourselves in compliance with the laws and regulations that apply to our educational sector, and we do our very best to be a credit to our profession and sector. Our six cornerstones serve as a motivating and moral basis for understanding and accepting our responsibility for our role and for making our contribution to Amsterdam society.



Esprit Schools: the 6 cornerstones

FOR AUTONOMY AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS

Everything that Esprit Schools does and all the decisions it makes are always based on what they will mean for our students.

We see it as our social responsibility to provide young people with an excellent education that will prepare them to be responsible citizens who will be fully capable of participating in society. This goal will be achieved only with the involvement of capable teachers, students and parents.

The board and management team of Esprit Schools place great value on the autonomy of the schools that make up Esprit and thus offer them a high level of professional autonomy. After all, teaching – education – takes place in the schools.

Our basic assumption is that teachers are professionals who deserve autonomy. Even so, there still have to be parameters within which these professionals can excel; having no boundaries at all provides no structure. In addition to the autonomy of our schools, we are also

in favour of interrelationships: operating within a small scale within a larger context. This makes our organisation strong and stable and provides opportunities for innovation.

Our strategic policy has been used as the basis for defining six cornerstones. By means of these cornerstones, we reveal what we see as important, how we arrive at decisions, and how we distinguish ourselves.

THE 6 CORNERSTONES

- 1 Excellent education
- 2 Internationalisation
- 3 Coordinating school and home environments
- 4 Roles of employer and employee
- 5 Educational leadership
- 6 Accountability and integrity



Excellent education

1

At Esprit Schools, everything revolves around what our students are learning. In everything we do, we ask ourselves if what we are doing is helping to achieve this goal or not. Esprit Schools wants to provide excellent education based on our values and to do so in a way appreciated by our students. The Netherlands want to be among the leading knowledge economies of the world. There is much to learn in such a knowledge society, so students have much to learn. Learning takes place in various ways and it happens everywhere: at home and outside the home – and especially at school. Learning continues throughout life. Every student is different; every student learns differently and learns different things.

Our students' world is undergoing major changes. This is particularly true within the international context of the City of Amsterdam where our students and their parents are making different demands of education. This has consequences for teaching and the schools. Esprit Schools assumes a responsibility to society for providing a curriculum that responds to the educational needs prevalent within Amsterdam. We offer educational opportunities not only for the most talented but also for the most vulnerable students: we offer both attractive and differentiated

primary education as well as pre-university programmes. On the other hand, we made a conscious decision to offer a strong programme of employment-oriented training and pre-vocational secondary education by creating the 'Beroepscollege West' and by making international education available to the City of Amsterdam.

Esprit Schools creates learning environments that appreciate the differences between students and their different cultures, languages, levels of intelligence, learning styles and orientations. When creating learning environments, our point of departure is that students should actively acquire knowledge and insight by means of interacting with their environment. Learning should take place within a context derived as closely as possible from real-life situations. We believe it is necessary to create conditions that will allow our students to participate in society, both now and in the future.

We see information technology, including the use of social media, as an important way of maximising our uniqueness and making education an enjoyable experience – particularly in order to give our students an opportunity to participate in society, which is one of our goals in the first place.

For Esprit Schools, making education attractive also means having attractive school buildings, giving form to the concept of sustainability, and providing a healthy learning and work environment to promote effective learning and working. Whenever possible, we use sustainable materials that will have the least impact on the environment. School lunchrooms provide healthy products. We encourage our students and staff to engage in sports and exercise.

Esprit Schools believes that the relationship between teacher and student is of crucial importance for providing an excellent education. We let students know that we have confidence in their development and talents. Teachers know their students well, support them, and display a sincere interest in their lives. The result is a student-teacher relationship.

To meet students' needs for competency, Esprit Schools offers them challenges, autonomy within limits, and support in experimenting and trying new things. In offering autonomy, we respect the fact that every student is taking an active part in working on his/her own development, and we have respect for the uniqueness and individuality of every student.

In many schools, working on the quality of education has a somewhat implicit character. Esprit Schools believes that the quality of education is not embodied only in official written policy and data; written information may be tangible but for this very reason it often provides a false sense of security. The schools and classrooms are the places in which staff actually put words into action, and this is what ultimately determines behaviour and what happens in the classroom.

In developing its educational quality, Esprit Schools wants to create a vital relationship between official policy and teaching practice, between observable behaviours and their underlying motivations. Teachers in the classroom bear a great responsibility in this regard. Implementing, developing and researching an educational programme occurs where learning takes place: where the interaction between student and teacher takes place. This is where the quality of our education is determined. Our teachers guide this process and are thus accountable for the results.



Internationalisation

2

The Amsterdam student of today is the world citizen of tomorrow. Esprit Schools thus aims to use the richness of cultural diversity to enhance social cohesion and active world citizenship. Internationalising offers many opportunities for the future, distinguishes us, and makes Esprit Schools attractive to students and parents alike.

Esprit Schools is thus utilising and responding to Amsterdam's multicultural dimension. We are responding actively to globalisation and influences from other countries by adapting our educational programmes. Our internationalisation programme shows how we are using these goals to define our educational practices. Esprit Schools' unique combination of schools and kinds of students provides many possibilities for internationalising its education: early language instruction in our primary schools, educating newcomers to Amsterdam, bilingual instruction in pre-university classes, reinforced foreign language instruction in employment-oriented classes and pre-vocational secondary classes, and a growing international school.

All of our students are now involved in the increasing internationalisation of Amsterdam – or will be when they

continue their education or start to work. We are aligning our educational programmes accordingly; we are reading our students for this in our teaching provided in an international class and school environment with reinforced English and international programmes. We assign students competencies and observable behaviours. We create interrelationships between our schools, students, Amsterdam and the world. We pursue sustainable partnerships, even cross-border partnerships. To do so, we make intensive use of social media.

Internationalisation as a cornerstone also has a great impact on teachers: Esprit Schools has to make use of diversity and have an HR policy that reinforces internationalisation. Esprit Schools is preparing its staff by means including the provision of English courses and training activities in their centre of expertise in order to increase the levels of knowledge and experience at the schools and to reinforce cooperation between schools.



Coordinating school and home environments

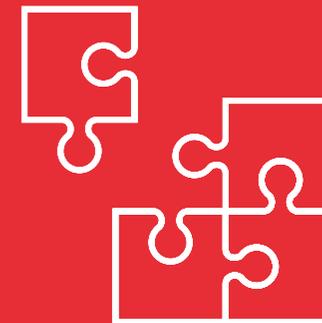
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For the development of our students, Esprit Schools believes in the importance of recognising students and challenging them. They need to be asked how they feel and what they want. They need to be corrected, cared for and assisted, or sometimes simply left to themselves. By whom, where and when all of this takes place are basic questions. For students, the professional discipline, organisation or funding flow behind the person involved with them is of little importance. What is important is that action is taken when necessary.

It is also nicer and easier for students when there are not too many adults who are professionally involved with them. We believe, therefore, that contributions to the development of students are most effective when they are integrated and coordinated. Together with our partners, we accept responsibility for appropriate education. We feel very strongly that no child should fall by the wayside.

Esprit Schools believes that school and home should not be separate worlds: that there should be a connection between a child's life at school and his/her life in the

neighbourhood or community. Also important is that the school and other parties and organisations who focus their activities on students and young people should be working as a team. This is why we work closely with other organisations; this makes it possible for us not only to do a good job of fulfilling our tasks as educators but also to fulfil our broader social duty.



Roles of employer and employee

4

The opinion that the strongest partnerships in a knowledge economy are based on a **win-win situation for both parties** is gaining ground. After all, a partnership only lasts as long as both partners see it as being beneficial. A staff member is seen as valuable by an organisation as long as the staff member is doing a good job for the organisation.

An organisation is seen as valuable by a staff member as long as the organisation is providing meaningful work, interesting professional contacts, and opportunities for developing and using his/her talents.

Esprit Schools works on partnerships that are not based merely on authority or contracts but also on having mutual objectives that are found to be beneficial, comprehensible and meaningful by the employees and organisation alike. **We work in teams.** We are convinced that working in teams promotes the development of our educational programmes, the academic supervision of students, and the professional development of staff. This approach leads to the strongest organisation.

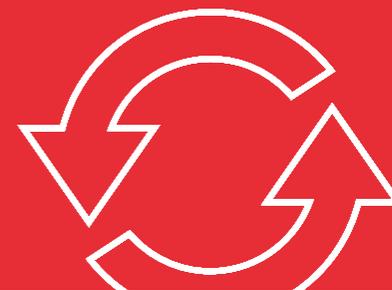
Esprit Schools believes in its professionals and thus expects a great deal of them. **Standards are high.** Since the quality

of an educational system can never exceed the quality of its teachers, we think that the ongoing **professional development** of staff is essential, particularly because of the immense influence that teachers have on the educational achievements of their students. We thus appreciate the importance and necessity of encouraging professionalism in education. We need not only experienced professionals, but also – and perhaps even more so – we need professionals who frequently reflect upon their experiences in the classroom. **Reflection** means asking questions and looking for answers. In our educational practices, we allow the time and autonomy for this reflection.

Esprit Schools benefits from staff who develop themselves professionally. Yet learning and developing has to be voluntary and not done because someone else values it. It only succeeds when it concerns a **topic that staff think is interesting** – something that fascinates them, tickles their curiosity, is relevant, is something they can identify with, and is something they can use. This is why we provide our staff with an environment where work and learning can go together, an environment in which staff can be involved in issues that captivate their interest and that

stimulate the application of new knowledge and technologies. This kind of beneficial environment encourages staff to develop and employ their qualities to best advantage.

It is against this background that we regularly evaluate our mutual benefits from the viewpoints of staff and organisation and then adjust our HRM policy accordingly. **This is why we also attribute great value to the training institute and the academic training institute.** It appears that having students who acquire practical experience during their enrolment in school stimulates educational innovation and school development. And the academic training institute helps teachers to develop the research skills they need for reflecting on their educational practices.



Educational leadership

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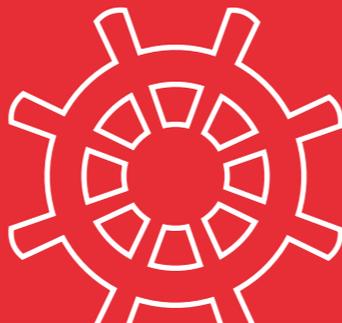
At Esprit Schools, **exemplary school leadership** plays an important role. Not because these leaders 'know better' but because they are able to activate the knowledge, passion and experience of their professionals and to encourage and challenge them to perform at the very highest level.

We believe that the best leaders are, above all, **courageous people**. Not only are they courageous themselves, but they can also bring out the courageousness in others. This courage is derived from the realisation that full justice is not being done to the talents of young people enrolled in the prevailing educational system and that this is a waste of all the costly time and energy being invested in these efforts. Thanks to the courage of leaders daring to diverge from existing practices, to see beyond existing levels of achievement, and to discourage any lack of commitment, we can **make the difference and provide better education**.

With this philosophy, we expect educational leadership in our schools. Those with positions of leadership challenge staff to grow and accept their own responsibility. They ensure the sharing and distribution of leadership within

the organisation and the creation of a collective approach to teaching. Successful leaders know how to increase the involvement and participation of students, parents, staff and other stakeholders.

These are educational leaders who encourage cooperation between teachers leading to better compatibility and more correlation within the educational process. They also share their vision of what excellent education should be, **bring about an effective and efficient organisation, and encourage goal-oriented working**.



Accountability and integrity

6

Esprit Schools believes that transparency and accountability are prerequisites for the effective use of **public funding** and that the context of the school is where it all starts. This is why we place accountability primarily on the individual schools when it comes to the analyses and decisions made, the efforts invested, the results attained, and the costs incurred.

We define these objectives during the standard cycle of accountability at our schools. We monitor the progress of attaining these objectives on a regular basis. We record the results and make this information openly available.

Esprit Schools places responsibility on those holding lower positions of authority within the organisation. School leaders and teachers are responsible for results. This requires **staff who operate independently and assertively** and are familiar with their professional degree of autonomy within which they should achieve the expected results. As part of this policy, **strict rules would be inappropriate** as they would tend to lead towards pushing the boundaries of acceptability rather than to protecting them.

Esprit Schools is pursuing a culture in which the importance of the students and the school automatically takes precedence over the personal importance attached to working hours. We believe that a culture in which you give yourself or others an advantage to be improper. **We admonish each other** – top-down, bottom-up and, of course, between peers – when it comes to matters relating to integrity. Openness and transparency are of primary importance in making integrity what it should be: an aspect simply taken for granted by anyone working at Esprit Schools.

Working and learning at Esprit Schools means teaching and learning in an international context with local colour: **Education on a small scale within a larger context: it's happening in the schools!**



Esprit Schools Central Offices

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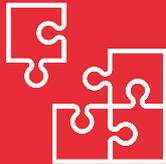
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