



Introduction

Presentation

Stepping Stones is a bilingual French/English pre-school neighbouring the Bois de La Cambre in Brussels. It is located in a typical 19th century townhouse with its own terraced garden.

Animated by her passion for children's education and many years of teaching French as a foreign language, in 2014 Hélène Nabokoff developed a new teaching method inspired by the principles of active teaching but using a traditional preschool curriculum, including a vertical teaching method for 3 to 6-year-olds. Our project is "tailor made", creating stepping stones to primary school where our principal goal is the well being of child.

Each child has a unique background, potential and knowledge.

Our educational project is based on two fundamental principles:

- meeting each child's needs
- creating a happy environment of general wellbeing and so enabling the child to learn well

A bilingual staff takes care of a maximum of 22 children per class (2 classes: one of 22 children, the other one of 12 children), in a newly renovated environnement,

Project introduction

The project aims to create a bilingual (French/English) educational environment for children aged 3-6 years using the vertical teaching method. This method involves combining the three years of pre-school in one class, with the idea that age does not restrict learning and that a mix of ages is an added value.

The younger children have not yet adjusted to a school environment which can create difficulties that come from imposing a new routine too quickly or from rushing them into learning. Welcoming younger children requires time and adjustment for all those concerned. However, thanks to vertical teaching and our commitment, the older children develop relationships, organise points of reference and put in place the rituals which reassure the younger ones and offer the stability they so need.

It is enormously beneficial all around as it allows the older children to evolve and develop skills at their own pace with all the tools they need within their range. The younger children in turn have the possibility of expanding their knowledge according to their individual capabilities. This allows us to gauge each child's potential early on and to understand how they function and learn. Moreover, the older children are invested in an educational role and their presence within the group is reinforced.

The name 'Stepping Stones' was chosen as it evokes the idea of helping one make progress towards a specific goal. This illustrates, to my mind, the passage from preschool, crèche or home to primary school. We are this transition, in which, little by little, young children will grow up.

The teachers and other members of our staff come from very different backgrounds but our passion for children's development and education drew us to this project.

History

This project is a result of a lot of thought and consideration with regards to children's development and education. My wish is to respect and provide the children with all the necessary tools to enable them to be happy, to flourish and develop a strong sense of self confidence. The thinking behind this project was also inspired by the work of various philosophers and education specialists such as Lamy, Freinet, Montessori, Steiner, Alexandre Klein, Caroline Sost and Matthieu Ricard. Through their work I discovered new concepts in terms of young children's activities and how to listen out for their needs, whilst respecting both the children and their parents.

Educating my own children was certainly the trigger for the project's conception and realisation. Choosing to send them to school from the age of three seemed to me of utmost importance for their development. I was very keen to find somewhere which inspired curiosity and the desire to learn, helped them to flourish, and which made them happy. Returning from three years abroad, a bilingual school for the children seemed an obvious choice.

I am above all a patient and rational person, keen to meet people. A life devoid of contact with children is inconceivable, irrespective of this project. For me, children are the driving force of life, a source of endless joy. Kofi Annan said: "Nothing is more important than building a world in which all our children will have

the possibility to realise their full potential and grow up healthy, in peace and with dignity." My desire as a mother is to respect this but also to apply it to my professional life with the children as well as those close to them.

Aims

To provide a safe educational environment for children aged 3 and 6 years, supporting their development through the teaching of life skills and helping each child become autonomous as well as gaining both the knowledge and skills to enter primary school. This kindergarten aspires to be a place where there are no losers, only winners, with the help of a positive, validating and enabling education. In order to comply with this, it is essential to have passionate teachers who are committed to taking on their task with the child's full potential in mind and with the wellbeing of all, children, parents and teachers as their primary concern.

Like a tailor making a suit and adjusting it to the client, Stepping Stones will adapt to each child with the utmost respect.
