



Non Violent Education

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Violence Prevention in the Educational Institution "Kindergarten" – Present Approaches and Development Possibilities

Country Report on present situation in Belgium



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COUNTRY LEVEL

I. Structure of Early Childhood Education and Care

Université de Paix asbl, Belgium, 2007

1°) General legislation ?

- Laws on primary education, co-ordinated **20/08/1957**.
- Law of **29/05/1959** modifying certain educational legislation measures, called the 'School Pact'.
- Law of **30/07/1963** concerning the language system in education.
- Co-ordinated laws of **18/07/1966** on the use of languages at the administrative level.
- Law concerning schools responsibilities **29/06/1983**.
- Royal decision **02/08/1984** concerning the rationalisation and programming of nursery and primary education.
- Decree of **18/12/1984** organising teaching at a distance.
- Co-ordination of the Belgian constitution **17/02/1994**.
- Decree of **14/03/1995** related to the promotion of a successful school within basic education ('Successful School' Decree)
- The French Speaking Community of Belgium decree of **13/09/1995** relating to the establishment of local joint official subsidised education Commissions, their composition and appointments to them.
- the French Speaking Community of Belgium decree of **27/03/1996** making obligatory the Joint private denominational Basic Education Commission's decision of 24th January, 1966, related to the creation of a local decision making body including organizational bodies and union delegations.
- The French Speaking Community of Belgium decree of **24/07/1997** defining the priority missions of basic education and secondary education and organising the structures necessary to carrying them out, known as the 'Missions' decree.
- 'Positive Discrimination' Decree of **30/06/1998**.
- Decree of **13/07/1998** dealing with the organisation of nursery and primary teaching and modifying educational regulations, known as the 'Framework Decree'.
- The French Speaking Community of Belgium government decree of **12/01/1999** defining disciplinary measures and the ways they are carried out in the educational institutions organised by the French Speaking Community of Belgium.
- Circular of **28/06/1999** relating to the organization and running of basic consultation Committees within the French Speaking Community of Belgium's education network.

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- Decree of **07/03/2002**, modifying the decree of 30 June 1998 aiming to guarantee every pupil equal opportunities for social emancipation, notably by putting into practice positive discrimination and carrying out various modification measures.
 - Decree of **11/07/2002** related to in service training within basic education.
 - Decree of **3/03/2004** organising specialised education.
 - Decree of **12/05/2004** providing various measures in the fight against school disengagement, exclusion, and violence at school, notably through the creation of a re-schooling and re-socialisation centre for the French Speaking Community of Belgium.
 - Circular of **19/11/2004** : roving teams capable of intervening within educational institutions concerned by violence or school disengagement.
 - the French Speaking Community of Belgium Ministry, General Administration of Education and Scientific Research (AGERS) : Circular n°1554 of **28/07/2006** (supplementary dispositions added for 2007-2008).
 - Decree of **15/12/2006** reinforcing the legislation concerning 'school dispute services' and providing various measures in terms of regulations for collective life within educational institutions.
 - Decree of **08/03/2007** providing various measures concerned with school enrolment and changing schools within compulsory education.
 - Decisions of **08/03/2007** fixing holidays and days off within basic education and secondary education for the years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009.
 - The French Speaking Community of Belgium government decision of **08/03/2007** specifying the specific programme of psycho-medical-social centres run by the French Speaking Community of Belgium.
 - Decree of **09/04/2007** related to language immersion teaching.

A school or establishment can be created or granted subsidies and maintained on the following conditions :

- It is situated at least 2km from any other establishment or school within the same network, which is in the area managed by the same local authority.
- It must reach, for four consecutive years, dating from 30th September, the foundational standards (population minimums)
- It adopts a structure already in existence within the French Speaking Community of Belgium educational system or approved by the Minister responsible for basic education.

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- It respects the measures fixed by the decrees: of 24/07/1997 (Missions Decree); of 20/12/2001 related to health promotion at school; of 30/06/1998 aiming to guarantee every pupil equal opportunities for social emancipation, notably by putting into practice positive discrimination (see also the circulars n°1278 of 08/11/2005 and n°1360 of 13.02/2006).
 - It subjects itself to monitoring and inspections organized by the French Speaking Community of Belgium, which examines the subject areas taught, the standard of studies, the application of language laws, with the exception nonetheless of teaching methods.
 - It is established within rooms which meet standard hygiene and cleanliness conditions.
 - It is managed by a legal entity or 'natural person' (in legal terms) that assumes all responsibility.
 - It has available teaching material and school equipment which meet educational needs.
 - It forms an educational whole located within the same building complex or, at the very least, within the same local authority or agglomeration.
 - It makes use of personnel who are not likely to endanger the safety of the pupils (on this subject see Article 28 of the law of 29/05/1959).
 - It subjects itself to the system of days off as it is determined by the decree of the French Speaking Community of Belgium.

Teachers within the two levels of basic education must consult at the rate of a minimum of 60 periods per school year. The consultation is organized: by school, by establishment, or by area within the French Speaking Community of Belgium's educational remit (a Government decision); by establishment, by school or by local authority for official subsidized education (a decision of the governing body when the consultation takes place within a school) or by establishment (decision by the establishment's governing council when the consultation takes place within the establishment) for subsidized private education.

For each class that is organized, 24 periods (a period is 50 minutes) are attributed to qualified teachers and 2 periods to physical education courses. However, it is permitted to bring together pupils of the same educational strand for physical education, as long as the number of pupils does not exceed 25. Each school or establishment based on a separate headcount also has the possibility of organising, above its key periods, 12 or 24 adaptation periods. The teacher responsible for adaptation (or 'adaptation-teacher') is a teacher with the same status as qualified teachers in charge of classes. He takes care of remediation courses

and support for pupils in difficulty in one or more school or establishment classes. He can also take charge of physical education or modern language classes, as long as he has the necessary qualifications.

- The application of the 'Mission' decree conditions educational institutions access to funding (endowments, salary allowances, running cost funds), funding granted by the French Speaking Community of Belgium.
- A school has access to school building funds as soon as it has reached the foundational standards for the fourth consecutive year (thus after 3 years, 1 month at the earliest, 6 years, 1 month at the latest).

Basic education is free in institutions managed or subsidised by the French Speaking Community of Belgium. No direct or indirect enrolment fees may be received. These principles do not nonetheless exclude the possibility of costs being claimed during a school year, in certain circumstances. Nonetheless no costs can be claimed for the following activities: lending out school books, personal material or equipment; the running costs, equipping and managing the school; the distribution and purchase of educational manuals; photocopies distributed to pupils to supplement educational manuals; the distribution and purchase of school supplies; the class journal which forms part of the establishment's teaching plan. The 'Mission' decree specifically requires that before the beginning of the school year, and by way of information, an estimate of the amount of costs claimed and a break down of them is provided in writing to the parents or people who have been granted parental authority. It is not acceptable, from an educational as much as a legal point of view, to penalize a pupil in whatever way their parents' dereliction of duty. The report, as well as any other teaching tool or activity, cannot be used as a way of exerting pressure. It is thus not acceptable that their deployment is conditioned by the potential payment of costs by the pupils' parents.

A pupil is ordinarily enrolled within education on the 30th September if he:

- Is aged at least 2 years, six months by the 30th of September of the current school year (for the 2007-2008 school year the pupil must have been born no later than 31st March, 2005).
- Attends the same school or separate headcount establishment during the month of September by being there at least 8 half-days spread out over 8 days of the pupil being

present (a full day's presence thus here only counts for half a day), on condition that his enrolment has not been withdrawn during the month of September. Enrolment becomes effective on the 8th day of attendance. The eight days do not necessarily have to run consecutively.

2°) What forms of kindergarten exist in Belgium ?

The nursery and primary educational institutions, managed or subsidised by the French Speaking Community of Belgium, are divided (in terms of the governing authority they belong to) into four networks: official schools managed by the French Speaking Community of Belgium; official schools managed by the provinces and local authorities; private non-denominational schools; private denominational schools (Catholic, Protestant; Jewish, Muslim, Orthodox). No matter what the network there exist amongst these schools: educational special needs schools (for autistic children, children with behavioural problems, mentally handicapped pupils, blind children), broken up into 8 types of teaching format according to the child's specific problem; positive discrimination schools (which are attended by a majority of children from immigrant backgrounds or who come from so-called 'disadvantaged' backgrounds), which receive supplementary subsidies and means. Furthermore there also exist independent schools.

There exists a philosophical school of thought that has inspired the teaching of a number of schools (11 in the French Speaking Community of Belgium), called Freinet schools. Freinet's philosophy is based on the child and his interactions with the environment, on autonomy, on communication, co-operation and democracy. The idea is to give each child the skills (knowledge, know-how and attitude) that will allow him to become, along with the others, a responsible citizen. In order for children to learn these skills, they must find meaning, links, continuities and positive relationships between themselves and what they learn, and between the different things they learn and their interactions with other people.

In this respect, the Freinet schools are very attentive to the quality of the emotional relationships between adults and children. They also give great importance to debate, negotiation, collective decision making (for example by setting up class, educational strand or school councils) and co-operative work (tutors, advisory roles, group work amongst pupils who develop projects between the school and its local context. In terms of methodology, these schools are inspired by 'natural methods' and privilege free expression, creativity and communication, notably through 'open texts' and inter-school correspondence. Mutual commitment between teachers and their pupils (in terms of tasks, targets, behaviour) are

formalised and regulated through teaching aids ('contract', 'work plan') which help each person to know where they are, where they are going, and who with. A Freinet school is open to family involvement in its plans and activities and wants to allow parents to become involved in co-operative management in order that they follow up the children's schooling.

3°) Information concerning teachers ?

The teachers are called 'qualified teachers'. To teach, they must carry out a programme of studies in nursery teaching in a higher education institution (known as 'normal'), officially recognised by the French Speaking Community of Belgium. These studies last three years, and include supervised training schemes and practical teaching.

A primary school teaching graduate can also become a nursery school teacher provided he does a supplementary year of studies in order to learn the specifics of the nursery school teacher's craft.

Potential teachers apply and are hired on a temporary basis by school directors. In the official teaching network they must respond to an invitation to apply by filling in forms, supplying a copy of their qualifications, official good character references and certificates relating to previous employment. Full time appointments are based on seniority and potential reports based on inspection.

4°) Organisation ?

There are normally between 8 and 25 children, but in some circumstances that can rise to 30 or 35. A supplementary quarter time post can be taken up for blocks of 6 to 8 more pupils. Each teacher is in charge of a class.

The organisation of psychomotricity activities is obligatory for nursery schools or establishments. For the 2007-2008 school year and the following years up until 2010-2011, each school establishment will benefit from at least 2 psychomotricity sessions, taken charge of by a qualified specialist. A number of circulars produced between 2002 and 2007 point out that it is also possible to hire nursery nurse, people who can supervise the midday period and carry out logopedic work at the school.

The pupil timetable must include 28 weekly periods (of 50 minutes) of courses and activities which meet the regulations of the 'Missions' decree. These weekly 28 periods are staggered over nine half-days, from Monday morning to Friday evening. The timetable is continuous. Each full day includes a recreation period lasting a minimum of 15 minutes in the morning and a break of an hour between morning and afternoon classes. Recreation periods do not make up a part of the aforementioned 28 periods.

In nursery teaching the weekly pupils' timetable consists compulsorily of: 26 periods taken charge of by the teachers (in schools authorised to embark on immersion learning, one part of these periods is given in a language other than French: Dutch, German or English, in other words); two periods of psychomotricity (for each class from 2010 onwards).

5°) Diversity ?

A teaching language adaptation course (ALE), aiming at integrating pupils into the school system and equipping them with French language skills, can be organised for 3 periods a week :

a) to benefit stateless people, people with a foreign nationality or adopted people, if they meet the three following conditions: their mother tongue or everyday language differs from the language used for teaching; they have attended primary education organised or subsidised by the French Speaking Community of Belgium for less than three full years and do not know the language used for teaching sufficiently enough to adapt successfully to their class activities; at least one of their parents or the people assigned responsibility for the child do not possess Belgian nationality, apart from in the case of adoption.

b) to benefit Belgian pupils who meet conditions 1 and 2 and at least one of whose parents is of foreign nationality or has acquired Belgian nationality less than three years previously.

As has been explained previously, special needs schools exist. Specialised teaching is aimed at children who, it has been established on the basis of multi-disciplinary exams, need to benefit from teaching which has been adapted to their specific needs and their pedagogical potential. These children are called 'special needs children'.

But it is also possible to integrate pupils with particular needs (blind children, behavioural problem children, mentally or physically handicapped children) into 'normal' schools. Whether temporary or complete, this integration allows them to follow all or part of the courses in ordinary education, according to their needs, free transport and supervision taken charge of by specialised teaching.

Other 'out of the ordinary' children are granted priority access to nursery schools: Children placed by a judge or the Youth Aid Councillor; children from boarding schools whose parents have no fixed address; children from community centres managed by the National Bureau for Children; late developing children in the first year of primary teaching, retained in nursery school, or maintained for 8 or 9 years in primary school; children staying here illegally, refugees, stateless people.

Boys and girls are mixed together in nursery schools, whether in class or in psychomotricity courses and physical education. Nothing is specified in law concerning measures to be taken concerning sexual and gender matters.

II. Violent behaviour, violence prevention and peace education

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6°) Legislation in terms of violence prevention and peace education ?

- Decree of **12/05/2004** providing various measures in the fight against school disengagement, exclusion, and violence at school, notably through the creation of a re-schooling and re-socialisation centre for the French Speaking Community of Belgium.
- Circular of **19/11/2004** : roving teams capable of intervening within educational institutions affected by violence or school disengagement.
- The French Speaking Community of Belgium government decision of **08/03/2007** specifying the specific programme of psycho-medical-social centres run by the French Speaking Community of Belgium.

Article 12 of the 24/07/1997 'Missions' decree stresses that nursery teaching has the same objectives as compulsory education. It particularly aims at:

- Developing a child's awareness of its own potential and to promote self expression through creative activities.
- Developing socialisation.
- Developing cognitive, social, emotional and psychomotricity learning.
- Detecting difficulties and handicaps and to provide them with the necessary remediation help.

According to the French Speaking Community of Belgium government's decree of 12/01/1999 each disciplinary sanction must be proportional to the seriousness of the acts and to any potential previous history.

- Disciplinary sanctions and the methods they are arrived at must feature in the schools internal policy documents.
- Disciplinary sanctions taken against a pupil must not be taken into account during an evaluation of ability.
- In respect of the measures found in the internal policy document, a pupil can be punished for any serious act, behaviour or abstention committed not only within the school but also

outside the school if the incidents they are charged with have a direct impact on the smooth running of the school.

In this respect, the Psycho-Medical-Social Centre :

- Contributes, in its role as an interface, to making family-school dialogue easier and strengthening it;
- Privileges parent support activities in their following up the school path taken by their children;
- Is involved in partnership work and working across networks.

In dealing with individual situations, and when considered necessary, the head of the institution can, beyond the intervention of the Psycho-Medical-Social Centre (psychological, social, medical and orientation help), ask via the General Directors of Compulsory education for outside help in relaunching the child in school life, in conflict management, concerning acts of violence, in dealing with various addictions, etc. For basic education institutions, an action plan has been established in the fight against school disengagement, exclusion and violence, composed of six measures aimed at the durability and development of the school mediation service, the creation of roving teams, putting in place an administrative unit to coordinate action against school disengagement and violence, organising in service training in terms of school violence, the creation of a Re-schooling and Re-socialisation centre, and putting into place an action plan to encourage a successful return to school of pupils taken charge of by institutions external to the original educational institution

A subsidy is granted by the French Speaking Community of Belgium to the Association for the Prevention of Violence in Schools. The subsidy is aimed at providing aid to carry out projects to improving life environments and surroundings, in order to prevent violence in schools which cater for a school population from less privileged socio-cultural backgrounds. Another Association ('No Violence in Schools') has recently been financed by the French Speaking Community of Belgium in order to: promote, in a neutral space and through symbolic events, a rise in awareness of the problematic of violence, its consequences and remedies; organise thorough debates with partners representative of society (political, community, legal, individual citizens); encourage partnerships between the diverse actors engaged with the problematic of violence; to get involved long term to help all those

concerned to produce non violent communication and behavioural alternatives and become ever-evolving different citizens; eventually, to offer a place where everyone concerned with violence can be listened to.

The A.M.O.s (Aide en Milieu Ouvert: 'open environments assistance') are services specialised in Youth Assistance which provide preventive aid to the benefit of young people in their daily living environments and in their relationships with their social environments. This aid necessarily comprises of individual aid and community-based action developed on the basis of each A.M.O.'s specific educational plan. The A.M.O.s are special in that they are directly accessible to the public without any access conditions and without being mandated by the Youth Assistance department, the Juridical Protection department of the Youth Tribunal. Taking into account this particular feature, an institution's director can contact an A.M.O. in matters relating to preventative assistance to the benefit of young people.

Criminologists intervene to help the public prosecutor's 'family-youth' sections. They are mainly responsible for providing assistance to magistrates in the following cases:

- Juvenile delinquency, particularly in support of the application of measures provided by the laws of 15th May and 13th June 2006 relating to youth protection and taking in hand minors who have committed an act which is an offence;
- School absenteeism;
- Mistreatment.

In July 2006 the Minister for the Interior published a circular relating to collaboration between the police and educational institutions, hereafter known as circular PLP 41. This circular defines a certain number of objectives and the means to achieve them, amongst which are drawing up conventions (safety protocols) amongst different relevant actors, including school directors. The accords can in effect deal with organising awareness, information and prevention campaigns whose themes and working methods would be established by common accord, it being understood that these types of intervention can equally be organised with other services.

7°) Violence prevention and peace education in recruitment, education and in service teacher training ?

No official selection criteria exist demanding that the teachers employed have skills in terms of violence prevention and peace education. That said, a trend established over the past 20 years would seem to place greater importance to these issues in the curricula of future teachers.

Courses are suspended for 6 half-days in order to allow members of the personnel: 1) participate in two half-days compulsory training (these two half-days are given by the school authorities); 2) participate in four half-days compulsory training. By granting exceptions to preceding circumstances, the government can, in order to organise an extra training day in special circumstances, suspend courses for two half-days.

To this end, by the 15th September of each year, the administrative unit which co-ordinates activity to prevent school disengagement, exclusion and violence, created by the decree of May 2004, gives the Steering Committee its recommendations relating to training in preventing school disengagement and violence. The training themes broached in career courses, formerly linked to content and teaching, seem to be more and more connected to conflict prevention and management: co-operative games, emotion management, relaxation, self esteem.

8°) Diversity ?

The decree of 14/06/2001 aiming at the insertion of first arrival immigrants into teaching organised or subsidised by the French Speaking Community of Belgium states: 'a first arrival immigrant pupil is enrolled into an ordinary class and integrated into a bridging-class if such is organised at the school he finds himself in'.

A pupil attending a school at hospital benefits from a double school enrolment: in the original school and in the hospital school, in other words within Type 5 specialised education. The pupils remain administratively attached to their original school for the duration of their hospitalisation (and sometimes during convalescence at home). In this light, any moving onto the following year remains a matter for the original school. When leaving hospital, no formal administrative procedure needs to be carried out if the child returns to his original school.

In basic education, each school year, establishments benefiting from positive education introduce a unique positive discrimination action plan for the following school year. Concrete activities can in particular be linked to the school local context and surroundings, notably through creating synergies with local associations active in the neighbourhoods. To bring their activities to fruition, the plan must indicate the necessary means.

They concern :

- 1) the human resources in terms of key-periods;
- 2) the organisational means.

These means allow for :

- 1) hiring or appointing nursery teachers for at least one post (quarter time);
- 2) hiring or appointing qualified physical education teachers;
- 3) hiring or appointing on a temporary basis for a fixed term - within the relevant Psycho Medical Social Centre for establishments benefiting from targeted positive discrimination – of a social assistant, a paramedical assistant or a supplementary psycho-pedagogical counsellor for at least a quarter time post;
- 4) hiring or appointing nursery nurses for at least one quarter time post;
- 5) the hiring of non-teaching staff;
- 6) organising specific training for teachers;

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- 7) replacing teachers, within the framework of continuous education, notably through organising the training of activity stimulation technique;
 - 8) common action plans, with the Youth Aid sector, and specifically with the sector dealing with authorised open environment aid;
 - 9) refurbishing and improving rooms and surroundings;
 - 10) service contracts with cultural, sporting and teaching associations;
 - 11) buying material;
 - 12) creating spaces and meetings;
 - 13) installing and running libraries, document and resource centres, buying books, newspapers and journals;
 - 14) taking charge of the costs of participating in sporting activities; costs for visiting museums, theatres and other activities of cultural interest organised at school;
 - 15) hiring nursery nurses, educators, social assistants.

Change of scenery and discovery classes and activities outside the school (in Belgium or abroad) will only deliver their full value if they are integrated into the institution's action plan. They can thus not be conceived of as a simple digression from the life of the school: preparing departure, the stay itself and making use of it once returned to school are complementary stages whose results have to be invested in long term.

III. Research, studies and programmes

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9°) Violence and social skills ?

The notion of social skills, as Winnykamen stresses, 'refers to the ability shown by a child to direct his knowledge and his behaviour towards culturally accepted interpersonal and social objectives'. (Winnykamen, 1985, p. 222). Stassen (1992) also thinks that social skills constitute a verbal and non-verbal repertoire of behaviour through which an individual influences the behaviour of other people in an inter-personal context, with the aim of gaining from them either a desired response or the suppression of behaviour judged undesirable, without that leading to harmful consequences for himself or other people. According to a number authors (Cartron and Winnykamen, 2001; Rubin *et al.*, 1998), a child's social skills can be recognised by his ability to interact with his peers, in order to cooperate or compete, his ability to establish and maintain contact; his capacity to approach other people, but also his ability to respond to the approaches other people make, and the latter in an appropriate manner which is adapted to his interlocutor. A capable child is also distinguished by his ability to establish and maintain reciprocal and durable friendly relationships. Thus, the children who most develop friendly relationships are more socially active, and express more pro-social behaviour than those without friends. Their playful activities are also more complex and reciprocal (Howes, 1996). The child who is liked the most by his peers is the one who participates actively in regulating group interaction, whilst a rejected child is characterised by aggressive and disruptive behaviour (Barbu and Jouanjean, 2002; Cartron and Winnykamen, 2001).

It is girls who display more pro-social behaviour than boys and seem more attracted to social partnerships (Allès-Jardel and Genest, 1994; Allès-Jardel *et al.*, 1995; Bernard-Peyron and Allès-Jardel, to be published soon). Children thus develop social norms close to those of sexualised adults, that is to say affiliation for girls and self-affirmation for boys (Maccobu, 1990).

There exist individual characteristics, such as temperament or the type of attachment. The number of siblings, the composition of the latter and the status within the hierarchy involved can also contribute to establishing particular forms of socialisation (Balleyguier, 1998). Self esteem and internalization (Allès-Jardel, 1997; Allès-Jardel *et al.*, 1999) also seem to play an important role in a child's social and school-based adaptation, and thus in the adults they become.

There are correlations between the level of social skills and the socio-economic background as well as the structure of family life (Allès-Jardel *et al.*, 2002b; Schneider, 1993, 2000). The role of adults, in particular parents' expectations, attitudes, and educational practices play an active part in establishing socialization and communicative behaviour in young children (Allès-Jardel, 1995, 1996, 2000; Allès-Jardel *et al.*, 2002a; Schneider, 2000).

There is an evolution in social skills according to age, in terms of the quality of where the child is placed and looked after or in terms of schooling, the organisation of space or the employment of school time (Allès-Jardel and Genest, 1994; Allès-Jardel *et al.*, 1995; Bernard-Peyron and Allès-Jardel, to be published soon). The observations carried out by Blomart *et al* (1988) demonstrate an evolution in social-emotional behaviour during the three strands of nursery education. The presence of peers, living life in a group, and stimulation within a group seem to be the principle cause of this.

For a number of children, who have not been in a crèche, the age of 2 is the age of discovering others. Lots of 'beginners' behave in ways which reveal their confusion: they are inactive and maintain a distance from other children. For the first few days they seem lost, not letting go of their little bag or satchel, the only object which connects them to their family environment, and follow the teacher step by step. After this period of adapting to school, the child of 2 and a half years often depends on the teacher: they demand their help when they see that they are deprived of their favourite toy, they are on the look out for congratulations as if for the first time, they go to the toilets by themselves.

Children at this age are sensitive to the presence of their peers, even if they demonstrate this through impulsive and aggressive behaviour. Children communicate by 'simple interactions': there is no co-operation, or requests for help. They communicate more with their peers than with the teacher. More often than not a child expresses his surprise, and his discoveries: he recounts an event he has just experienced or else he 'muttered' in a corner by himself. In effect, it's something more than mere chatter.

The more a child is faced by a large choice of toys, the more he wants to have the toy of his companion. Whilst this behaviour often takes on aggressive connotations, it assumes a certain form of social contact. In clashing with his fellow human beings the child takes in a certain way the first step towards communal life. Furthermore, when the child displays more

impulsive behaviour, the reactions of his peers make him aware that not all his needs or desires can be satisfied: there will be numerous conflicts and they will reduce egocentrism.

Co-operation in the sense of carrying out a common plan is totally non-existent. It is more often found at the level of motivation to play, without developing a defined objective. Any co-operation we were able to observe was brief and fugitive. This is probably because the child quickly wearies of this collective activity.

At the age of 4, socialisation behaviour (communication, initiative, autonomy, affirmation) took place in close to half the observations gathered together by the studies of Blomart & al. (1988). In other words a child of 4 has a growing interest in others: he likes company, he is capable of collaboration and sharing. He comes to take account of others and their desires. Co-operation with the aim of a common goal is frequently seen.

He nonetheless experiences certain difficulties in getting on with other children: he demonstrates all the more impulsive and aggressive behaviour which impedes bridge-building behaviour. Exchanges of blows disappear little by little. Speech takes its place amongst the ways of expressing anger (insults, threats).

Language brings the child and teacher closer together. The 'verbal explosion' characteristic of this age will allow the child of 4 to intensify links with adults. He has available the same ways of expressing himself as they do and looks more and more to get their attention. If teachers encourage exchanges between children and themselves interaction takes on more and more importance. The child depends more often on the adult but also on other children: he seeks reassurance, support and a sense of value from them. He thus becomes a very developed human being in a 'social sense' and the different activities offered within nursery school should enable a maximum socio-emotional flowering.

Through his bridge-building and affirmative attitudes the child of 5 attaches great importance to his companions. This desire for affiliation is manifest. When he has the choice the child turns to his classmates more and more. Communication becomes more and more a 'dialogue' with real exchanges. The child takes pleasure in talking to others and listening to what they say. The school 'climate' has an unfavourable influence on exchanges between children. It is during free activity courses that they are seen to better express socialisation behaviour.

In children of 5 collaborative behaviour is little seen, as opposed to his 4 year old junior, apart from during free activity periods. In growing up, the child is less turned in on himself and instead becomes 'school orientated'. Each child has personal objects and their own exercise book, sometimes their own locker. They become very individualistic, mainly because the teacher's attitudes tend to take on that form. It is not surprising thus to see once more a lot of behaviour which displays the need for self affirmation. The child has a tendency to impose his own will, in claiming HIS space through the teacher and in appropriating his neighbour's toys.

Aggression is still displayed, but it is verbal aggression which is used much more, particularly amongst girls. Physical aggression is sometimes used to take possession of an attractive object, as 'theft' happens often and reveals very well the problems of rivalry and envy which reach a maximum at the ages of 5 and 6.

The school climate is such that the child places value on his work and on carrying it out. He likes to be told that he has done well, that his picture is the most beautiful. The child of 5 thus enters into rivalry with his companions. On the other hand he becomes capable of forming friendships with others: they become very important for him (when arguments happen one often hears the expression 'You're not my friend any more!').

10°) Developing social skills ?

Mediation can be defined as a way of constructing and managing social life thanks to the intervention of a neutral third party, who is independent and has no power but the authority that the parties have freely chosen to confer to him (Guillaume-Hofnung,1995). Bonafe (1992) and Touzard (1999) speak of the mediator as a neutral intermediary in the perspective of helping to find fair solutions, acceptable to each party and satisfactory for all. It involves giving back power to the actors in order that they take on their responsibilities.

In the French Speaking Community of Belgium, following serious social incidents, a school mediation action plan has been established within 22 institutions and 28 mediators have been designated to deal urgently with conflict situations and to facilitate dialogue between parents, pupils and teachers, which seemed to be defective before. Over the years the work of the mediators has evolved, become organised and more precise and in 1998 a decree allowed for the action plans objectives to be specified and laid the groundwork for its activities. In a study carried out in francophone Belgium by Sowula & al. (2002), an evaluation of this mediation action plan shows that school mediation has counter cultural concerns as it is in opposition with the culture of the law.

Frydman & Mesdagh (1994) explain in their study that they have determined that schools are far from promoting autonomy building and the growth of altruistic attitudes. The results they have obtained allow us to state that these objectives can be achieved if a social education programme is integrated within daily school activities.

The role of nursery school

According to Blomart & al. (1988; 2001), certain situations encourage the socio-emotional flowering of a child. If the child can move about freely and satisfy his momentary desires he will look for the company of others. If he is not given a very precise task to be done with specific material he will be more spontaneous and take part more in exchanges with his companions.

The traditional 'observation / informal discussion' situation is unsuitable for young children. After a very brief time span where they show interest (for example when they are shown a small animal) they fall back into passivity and daydreaming. Sometimes only some children express themselves and monopolise the conversation. There is no interaction between the children. Nevertheless it is in this situation that verbal exchanges are the richest and give the teacher an opportunity to develop the children's language levels. Certain adjustments can make this more beneficial: for example making time for each pupil to speak, giving children the chance to lead the meeting, stimulating more restrained groups, etc.

Teachers sometimes place value on individual work, thus preventing imitation: 'Look at the beautiful drawing Valérie did by herself.' Recent research has nonetheless shown the importance of social interaction, collective efforts and discoveries in a child's intellectual development (CRESAS, 1987; Perret-Clermont and Doise, 1976; Perret-Clermont, 1979). Teachers could use the richness of the group more and encourage social communication. They could give more place for 'free activities' and playing in class as they encourage development and social behaviour to the maximum: in these situations there are multiple occasions for exchange and to be confronted with others, initiative, and creative imagination

In addition it appears that changes in the organisation in the overall environmental daily variables (how the children are positioned around the classroom or the times that the diverse activities during a school day take place) are also effective and less difficult for the teacher to arrange than classic interventions dealing with individual contingencies (Krantz and Risley, 1977).

Finally, Blomart & al. (1988; 2001) explain that in the third year of primary school, researchers have observed that children became less spontaneous: their initiative and creativity diminishes. Their hypothesis is that these children were pushed to reproduce what

the teacher asked them to and the children were appreciated when they conformed rapidly to what was expected of them. Activities became essentially an exercise in preparing for school learning within primary school. On this point, Jason & Feron (1978) add that the more a child is seen as being unsuitable by his teacher and the more the latter pays attention to the child's unsuitable behaviour, the probability of this behaviour being displayed rises.

In order to develop the social skills of the young child, Liliane Mathys (1982) talks of a support based teaching, which encourages sharing the activities of daily life with available and friendly adults: preparing meals, hygiene care, maintenance and keeping the rooms tidy, taking care of plants, green spaces, walks, shopping, visits outside the institution, preparing celebrations which are shared across the school, or with the neighbourhood or village community, etc.

The author thinks that it is important to encourage the acquisition or invention of support tools for graphic, manual, verbal and gestural expression: puppets, shadow theatres, miming, drama games, nursery rhymes, songs, musical games, dances, round dances, rhythm based activities, making objects for the children's garden or the home, musical instruments, painting techniques, printing, collages, ripping and tearing activities, cutting paper, stitching, dexterity games, parlour games, etc.

Mathys (1982) thinks that in order to develop tolerance and co-operation it is useful to include adult and child participation in managing the institution and taking charge of common projects. She suggests integrating pupils and teachers from the different communities represented: the presence of teachers from other countries or from immigrant backgrounds; enriching both pupils and teachers by contributing stories, histories, games and dances that come from different horizons; discovering how each social group organises the daily activities in which the children participate (meals, family life, celebrations, housework, relationships with neighbours, etc.); a critical approach to the way adults intervene in children's games; establishing new relationships with parents (participation in the life of the children's garden, walks, help in refurbishing and keeping up the classrooms, toys, re-emphasising their educational skills, welcoming and integrating handicapped children).

Mouvet & al. (2002) evoke the school plan as a means of preventing and combating school violence. The object of mutual discussion, then progressively a benchmark reference point, the school plan seems to play a role as a medium through which members of the team will

progressively be able to construct and put into place combined concrete activities, which more often than not do not specifically target the problems of violence and which have outcomes which are judged positive. What has been put into place in the institutions, explain Mouvet & al. (2002), is a process which contributes to weaving collaborative and interdependent links between all the actors involved, links which develop through planning and carrying out concrete activities.

Research on the development of social skills

Many peace education programmes have been developed over the last 50 years (Salomon, 2002; Pettigrew & Troop, 2006). The philosophy which underpins these programmes is that negotiation is more efficient than violence, and that it can also help to understand and improve peaceful relationships between groups (Kelman, 1990). Giving information and knowledge about (the members of) other groups encourages positive inter-group relationship (Mackie & Smith, 1998; Miller & al., in press). More long term interventions allow for the more durable modification of the emotional processes underpinning relationships between groups (Pettigrew, 1998). That is why Yablon (2007) suggests that education is earmarked in order to create considerations of tolerance, understanding differences and eliminating moral exclusions. The author thinks that this ethical education could include, from the very first schooldays, the development of skills such as listening, reflection, co-operation, empathy and resolving problems (Harris & Morrisson, 2003; Opatow & al., 2005). This early intervention could reduce the need to intervene (with or without success) later on, during adolescence or at an adult stage.

In the studies described below, various training procedures have been put in place: they call for role playing, verbal instructions, strengthening, and modelling. O'Connor, for example, has worked on a group of nursery school children who, according to information provided by the teacher and confirmed by direct observation, were very closed in on themselves and avoided social contact with other children. Half of the children were shown a film lasting 23 minutes in which a child of the same age engaged in more and more complex activities at school. For the child in the film, participation in social activities was followed up by reinforcement outcomes. The other children watched a film of the same duration but with no relation to social activities. Observation of the behaviour exhibited in the class immediately after the film projections indicated a very marked growth in the frequency and the quality of social interaction amongst the children who had seen the film featuring social interaction, whilst the children in the other group did not change their behaviour (O'Connor, 1969). Children received social reinforcement as a consequence of social interactions. Stassen (1986) adds that it is important to maintain the full quota of positive reinforcements but that they should be handed out on the basis of appropriate behaviour.

Poinsart (1984) obtained very significant results in preventing smoking in the third year of secondary school. The pupils had received self assertiveness training and communication

training, in groups of around 25, for one hourly meeting a month over two years. At the end of the two years the number of pupils who smoked in the test classes was appreciably lower than in other control classes (reduction between 290 and 50%).

A number of authors, Meichenbam in particular, have observed that it was possible to improve the social behaviour of impulsive children by teaching them to talk to themselves. Young children who displayed great emotional problems were taught to master their impulses: imagining that they were tortoises huddled up within their shells, by putting their arms firmly by their sides, by lowering their heads and closing their eyes; an exercise in learning how to relax; learning a method to resolve problems aiming at making them conceive of alternative responses to aggression. All the children studied reduced their levels of aggression by at least 34% during the treatment stage (Robin & al, 1976).

In 1998, thus some years after the first major French studies on 'violence at school', Laurette Onkelinckx, the French Speaking Community of Belgium's Education Minister, commissioned a series of studies on violence. Two studies were given to the University of Liège, one to the University of Brussels. Later on, when the next coalition government came to power, the Minister of Secondary Education, Pierre Hazette, ordered another enquiry, given to the Louvain Catholic University.

Vienne's study (2005) consisted of examining for a period of two years schools known to live with violent situations, and considering where the violence sprang from and how they were dealt with by the school personnel. The results of this study show that the pupils had lost much in terms of school hopes and expectations. The more the school lost a sense of meaning in their eyes, the more their youth cultures took on greater importance (street culture or other areas of socialisation beyond school). Among other interventions encouraging the reduction of violence, we can highlight working closely with pupils and work based on listening and understanding their daily world. It involves talking with the pupils and knowing how to listen to them.

Social skills development programmes for children

The 'Become your own mediator' programme (Blomart & al., 2001) is divided into 12 sessions (one session per concept and a closing celebration) of 2 times 50 minutes. The activities are staggered and calibrated over time: one session every two weeks. A creative and ludic character is ever present, taking into account the age of the participants. In addition, the activities are very diverse in order to give the teacher the choice of activities according to his own criteria and talents. Researchers have tested and offered a number of different tools in order to interest every child: stories, history, theatre, talking circles, analysis of real life emotions and experiences, discussions, moments of relaxation, theoretical presentations, co-operative games, teaching files, etc. The objective is to combat in a preventative manner the violence which is increasing from the very earliest years.

In their research-groundwork Blomart & al. (2001) observed a progression in pro-social behaviour (co-operation, self assertion self control) and a reduction of unsuitable behaviour (internalised or acted out) amongst children who had benefited from two years of stimulating activity. When they witness disputes or fights between two pupils or when they notice that a friend is sad or in difficulty, a large number of the pupils state that they intervene to either separate the belligerents, either to help or comfort their fellow pupil. The teachers involved have acknowledged the importance of taking the time to talk to pupils, and to also give them the opportunity to express themselves concerning certain situations or events they have experienced. The 'talking circles', taken from the programme, appear to be an activity that should be promoted in every class in order to build up a convivial and calm atmosphere. Here are the stages found in the 'Become your own mediator' programme.

Concept n° 1 : Me, knowing myself

Key ideas : I am unique. We are all similar and different. We learn to know ourselves.

Concept n° 2 : The others and myself

Key ideas: I have qualities. Each person has strong points. We discover each person's qualities and learn to respect difference.

Concept n°3 : Feelings and needs

Key ideas : I have emotions of joy, fear, sadness and anger. I express them and become aware of my needs.

Concept n°4 : Non verbal communication

Key ideas: My body says things and sends out signals. We learn to decode them; signals that others send out and those we send out ourselves.

Concept n°5 : Verbal communication

Key idea : when I communicate, I use the message 'I' or I listen actively to the other person.

Concept n°6 : Let's avoid misunderstandings

Key ideas : seeing, thinking, feeling are not the same thing. Our imagination can trick us. What I think belongs to me. We learn to check. We learn what the problem is by avoiding misunderstanding.

Concept n°7 : Conflict, an inescapable experience in our lives

Key ideas : sometimes we feed conflict . We learn to recognise what puts the brake on communication

Concept n°8 : My reactions and my natural solutions

Key idea : I recognise my type of reaction in a dispute. Every one has solutions. We create our wheel of solutions.

Concept n°9 : Stages in mediation

Key ideas : red light, orange light, green light. We learn how to make a 'stop'. I attack the problems, not the person.

Concept n° 10 : I am responsible for what I say and what I do

Key idea : I can say yes, you can say no. We are not puppets. We have a brain to think with and make decisions. We are each of us responsible for what we say and what we do.

Concept n°11 : 'One for all, all for one,' 'Unity makes us strong'

Key ideas : I can ask for help. I am part of a whole. We are all important, complementary and inter-dependent. Self-help and solidarity: long live co-operation!

Cantrell & al. (2007) have applied the 'Peace Pal Programme', a peer mediation programme, to some children and led them to: define anger and conflict; to re-express and reflect on the resentment of others (active listening); distinguish acts, thoughts and emotions; use open and closed questions; guaranteeing confidentiality; situate themselves physically during mediation. Confirming the results of other exploratory research (Bell & al., 2000; Hanson, 1994; Humphries, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 2001; Johnson & al., 1994; Johnson & al., 1996; Powell & al., 1996), the results of this study show that after coaching, verbal and physical conflict diminished, no matter what the ethnic origins. The researchers also observed a significant improvement in abilities to resolve conflicts positively.

On the basis of research carried out since 1992, the Université de Paix has created a programme called 'The Seeds of Mediation'. This programme was put to work from 1995 onwards in numerous nursery and primary school classes. In 2000, it gave rise to the publication of a book: *Graines de Médiateurs, Médiateurs en herbe*. Alongside this, Joëlle Timmermans - who collaborated on the programme's development – continued his work independently of the Université de Paix, creating his own programme ('Become your own mediator', 2004), whose various steps are in part inspired by 'The Seeds of Mediation' (2000).

The ultimate goal of the 'Seeds of Mediation' programme is to put in place within schools a dynamic of respect for each person, and peace and citizenship education in order to – in particular – allow mediation to be practiced. It more precisely consists of: developing self awareness and knowledge of other people; experiencing confidence and co-operation within a group; to work on listening to verbal and non-verbal languages; improving communication within the group; to promote the expression of acts, feelings and needs; learning and appropriating the process of peer mediation in order to be capable of intervening as a mediator in a conflict involving other people. Our programme is staggered into seven stages, which lead little by little to conflict management:

1/ Myself amongst other people

Knowing oneself, making oneself known by other people and knowing other people are the pre-requisites for every constructive relationship. Often children give much weight to the judgement of other people. In the activities offered, importance is given to personal development and blossoming. Each person will be able to discover within himself the strengths and particularities that will lead them to share, to see other people in a different light and to experience differences as an enrichment the group.

Domino : the children imagine that they are dominoes, cut in two by a vertical line. They must find a common characteristic with each of their neighbours. The discussion which follows the exercise allows the children to become aware of the points they have in common with children that they perhaps had less affinities with at the beginning.

2/ Confidence and co-operation

Having confidence in oneself and in other people and understanding the benefits of co-operation are indispensable in tackling conflict positively.

The knot : the children stand in a circle and link arms in an unorganised and haphazard way. The aim of the game is to unravel the knot without letting go of each others' hands. The discussion which follows the exercise allows the children to understand the importance of respecting each other (some arms can be 'squeezed'), and to become aware of the methods and strategies used in solving the problem. What does co-operation really mean? Can the knot be unpicked if everyone gives their advice and talks at the same time?

3/ Myself and conflict

This stage allows each person to give terms and expressions to the way they manage conflict, and to what the word 'conflict' means to them. This review and an analysis of the different experiences are the basis on which the group will construct positive conflict management. The group members, in mutually helping each other, will be able to discover the different possible attitudes people can have in conflict situations, and if they are appropriate or not.

Animal cards : the group presenter offers the children different animal cards, and the children have to state the characteristics of the animals when they are in conflict. For example, the butterfly flees conflicts, the jaguar says what it thinks and 'eats' its prey. Then the children choose the animal which symbolises the attitude they frequently adopt during conflicts. A conversation follows concerning the consequences of these attitudes and the difficulties experienced by the 'butterflies' when they are in dispute with 'jaguars'. In this way each child becomes responsible and aware of the impact of their behaviour on other people. They also become capable of varying their attitudes according to the situation.

4/ Listening to the verbal and non-verbal

Here the first positive conflict management tool is dealt with. The activities allow people to become aware of all the impediments to listening in everyday life. It is in being receptive to all the verbal but also non-verbal messages that each one can become a respectful interlocutor.

The mirror. The children are placed two by two, facing each other and placing their palms in front of those of the other person, but without touching. To the sound of calm music one child moves his hands, and is imitated by the other in such a way that their movements are perfectly synchronised. After the activity, the discussion focuses on the way the exercise

developed and on possible analogies in terms of communication. What happens when I go too fast and the other cannot follow?

5/ Listening to what is happening

This stage continues the previous learning exercise. Beyond vigilant observation and faithful imitation of the signals emitted, a faithful translation of them is required, in order to understand what they mean. Participants will be able to learn how to decode the feelings and needs of others as well as to express their own and to make requests. By its nature this dialogue enables participants to find solutions which satisfy everyone when conflict occurs.

Let's stick to the facts. Children are given a photo or an image: they describe what they see. The group organiser invites them to distinguish between the facts and feelings within interpretations.

6/ Putting an end to conflict

This stage allows the concepts seen so far to be applied. At present it involves being coached in positive conflict solution in real or fictional situations. It is the first step on the path towards rebuilding, not imposed upon anyone but decided by two or more people.

'Be quiet, violence!' The students are divided into groups. They are given a sheet dealing with a story concerning conflicts amongst animals. They have to imagine a maximum of solutions which could solve the conflict. This activity encourages creativity and imagination in putting an end to conflict. In everyday life, the children will be 'trained' to look for imaginative solutions in which everyone wins.

7/ Mediation

The specifics and process of mediation will be explained to the participants. Based on real or fictional cases, they will be dealt with in real time. It will involve applying the whole of what has been acquired during the previous sessions in order to make the mediation process as effective and respectful as possible.

An inventory of children's social skills, STASSEN (1992)

This questionnaire aims at evaluating children's social behaviour, in other words the form and quality of the relationships they maintain with other people.

1. Base your grading on the child's recent behaviour.
2. Base your grading on your own experience of the child. Consider only your own observations and ignore as much as possible what other people have said about the child and their impressions.
3. Do not try to describe a consistent personality or consistent behaviour. A child can display apparently contradictory behaviour.
4. Grade each item whilst taking into account the following particular instructions;
 - Grade 5 signifies that the phrase applies very well to the child; it corresponds to his habitual behaviour. = ALWAYS OR NEARLY ALWAYS
 - Grade 4 signifies that the phrase applies quite well to the child; it corresponds to behaviour that is frequently observed in him. = OFTEN
 - Grade 3 signifies that the child does not stand out in terms of this behaviour, as his behaviour in this regard is irregular. = SOMETIMES
 - Grade 2 signifies that the phrase does not really apply well to the child; it corresponds to behaviour rarely displayed by him, without nonetheless being completely absent. = RARELY
 - Grade 1 signifies that the phrase does not at all apply to the child; it corresponds to behaviour that is never or nearly never displayed by the child. = NEVER OR NEARLY NEVER;
5. Try to respond to all the items.

The child's name and surname : _____

Evaluation date : _____

Questionnaire completed by : _____

1. Makes other people laugh by telling jokes and amusing stories.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Threatens or intimidates others.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Becomes easily angry.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Complains or feels sorry for himself.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Hits or slaps others when angry.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Comforts a friend who has been hurt.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Gives other people 'dirty looks'.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Becomes angry or jealous when others do something good.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Rolls on the floor when he doesn't get what he wants.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Annoys others so that they get angry.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Approaches others and engages in conversation.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Says thanks you and shows he is pleased when someone does something for him.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Is scared of talking to others.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Deliberately hurts others' feelings to make them sad.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Looks at the people who are talking to him.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Deliberately smiles at people he knows.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Acts like someone who thinks he is better than others.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Says that others are bothering him when it's not the case.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Works well in a team.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Deliberately makes sounds which bother others (burping, sniffing)	1	2	3	4	5
21. Calls others nicely by their names or surnames.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Asks for help when he needs it.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Likes to help others.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Expects unpleasant things to happen to him.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Participates in conversations by asking questions.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Rests on his own.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Is spontaneously sorry when he hurts someone.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Participates in collective games.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Respects the rules of the games.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Shows he is jealous of others.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Shows kindness to those who are kind to him.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Asks others how they are, what they have done.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Imposes his presence on others more than they would like.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Is friendly to the new people he meets.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Attacks others to get what he wants.	1	2	3	4	5

36. Hurts others when he teases them.	1	2	3	4	5
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