

## Looking Back at the Lockdown: Some Experiences of the EEB2 Students, Parents and a Teacher.

*Dear parents,*

*The second half of this academic year has been exceptional in many ways: due to the corona crisis a lot of great initiatives and current projects as well as our daily life needed to be urgently reshaped. Please find below a handful of impressions penned down by some of our parents, students and one teacher – Niina Viima, the class teacher of P5FIA. We are happy to present to you too the ‘Pizza Project’: a fascinating example of solidarity of the parents of the Italian section of EEB2 and the staff of the St. Luc Hospital.*

*Enjoy the reading and above all – have a nice and refreshing summer vacation!*

*The APEEE board*

*Bettina Mogensen*

We started confinement right after the February holidays. My son came back from skiing in Lombardy and, despite a negative corona test, the whole family was stuck at home immediately, meaning the first two weeks the kids had no on-line learning. Well, we all tuned into home mode. I started to grow vegetable plants from seeds (proud to present my tomato wilderness, incredible that they all came from a small seed). I got organised to order online from local grocery stores, e.g. “la ruche” - quite a success story by the way. Also my local community got more active and I found we all also gained from the situation.



On the other hand, being Administrative Vice President and canteen coordinator of our APEEE became very challenging, with all the organisation needed to find ways not to lose the grip on our services, endless calculations and discussions with a lot of people involved. So, if you ask me whether I got bored at home, the answer is: definitively not. And I learned that on-line meetings are effective and actually a good alternative. Before, we always had to rush to school for meetings during lunch time. Well, I hope in future this will be handled in a much more flexible manner. The same is true for my workplace. I do hope that this exceptional situation shows that people are flexible, can work remotely in an effective way and suspicious managers have learnt a lesson.

If I look at how my teenage kids dealt with the on-line learning offer, I must say, they did a great job. It's like sitting in front of the screen the whole day, stay concentrated. Not sure I would have been able to do that when I was young. But then, kids are amazingly flexible, too. Even if some classes were not organised perfectly, I still have respect to the teachers who had to basically change their way of teaching from one day to another.

Now, big discussions are going on for September scenarios. *Rien est acquis!* The future is not entirely clear, we have to stay flexible and open minded. Let's all try to make the best out of these special times. After all, we can be grateful for our comparatively good situation!

## Pizza to staff at Saint Luc Hospital - Initiative from Italian section

Messages from Natacha Van Gossum -Infirmière chef équipe mobile- Cliniques Universitaires Saint-Luc (Original text)

*“Un énorme MERCI à tous les petits élèves italiens de l'école européenne. Vos pizzas et votre petit mot nous réchauffent le cœur et nous donnent beaucoup de courage. A chaque livraison nous distribuerons à une équipe différente. Aujourd'hui les pizzas ont été distribuées à: l'équipe des brancardiers, les médecins et sages-femmes en charge des patientes covid, le personnel d'entretien, les infirmières de l'équipe mobile qui vont aider dans les unités covid. Merci beaucoup. Bon week-end de Pâques.”*

A few days after the lockdown in the North of Italy the health emergency appeared in its full severity, but solidarity and philanthropy became even more contagious than Covid-19, and Italians responded by showing remarkable resilience and unity.

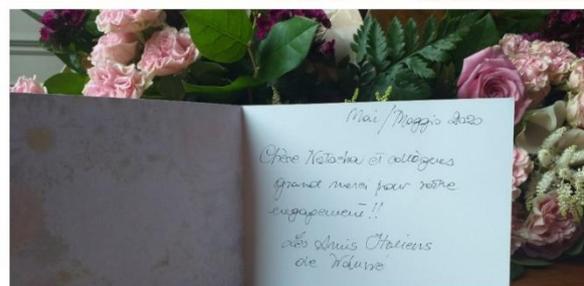
The media told us about acts of silent courage of researchers in hospital, about the tireless work of nurses and doctors, and about many other spontaneous initiatives like P2P riders who offered thousands of masks to hospitals, directors of schools who provided old PCs for their students, ordinary citizens who provided food to vulnerable people.

This generosity deeply touched me and while stuck at home to respect the lockdown, I decided that I had the moral obligation to show my closeness, gratitude and admiration to our silent heroes in Brussels, in particular to those working on the front line of the battle against Coronavirus at Saint Luc Hospital, the nearest one to our school in Woluwe.



Un grand merci de la part  
toute notre équipe 🍕

Unité 74 de Saint luc



In the first week of April, the Italian section immediately responded to the simple but concrete initiative to collect around 5 EUR per family, to deliver meals to healthcare workers. Thanks to Francesca Tudini who kindly supported the action.

Thus, we succeeded in raising around 2.000 euro to deliver pizza, and other Italian food for the employees in the Covid Unit, from doctors to nurses, from cleaners to porters in Saint Luc Hospital.

The idea was also to support small local business, giving a little help to survive in this critical period. On top of that, we had the occasion to donate part of the money to a Covid ONG in Italy, the "Protezione Civile".

*"C'est vraiment très gentil de votre part. Ça m'a vraiment fait très plaisir d'organiser la distribution des pizzas et de voir le bonheur dans les yeux de mes collègues. Ça a vraiment été fortement apprécié par toutes les équipes de médecins et infirmiers."* Natasha Van Gossum.

### **Patricija Prince**



*This is a random image from the internet my daughters chose to illustrate their mood.*

As to our experience during the lockdown, there is hardly any good word to say. At the beginning the things were still not so bad as my two daughters, learning in Secondary, and I thought that the school would restart normally after a few weeks. The girls looked for something positive in this situation and tried to do some new activities they had not done before, however after Easter holidays the mood started to deteriorate rapidly. The children became apathetic and depressed. After about a month they did not show any interest anymore about going out, they lacked physical activities and their style of life became motionless, sedentary and actually indifferent to everything. The internet world was much more attractive than any walks in the parks, observing nature returning to the city etc. The strain on the eyes grew considerably both because of online lessons and online free time.

Every new e-mail from the school prolonging this abnormal situation brought further stress and disappointment, and the message that this would last till the end of the school year was the last straw. After this neither of us saw any reason for the girls to be physically present in Brussels, and after a few days they departed to their home country. This time has shown us that we are made of an explosive material when our fundamental freedoms like the freedom of movement are concerned.



*The atmosphere upon departure to their home country felt for my daughters like escaping from Alcatraz*

**Emilia Cannistraci**

In the beginning, we found it really difficult and very intense sharing homework, home office and every other activity all together. After one month, my daughter, learning in primary, understood how to manage the new school's system "Teams" and she started to be a bit independent, needing less supervision and leaving me more time for managing my work. We were always happy and motivated. I also received very positive feedback from the teacher about the work of my daughter and my support to her. The only negative side was that, after a few months, my daughter was missing her schoolmates and her teacher.



Personally, my teleworking experience was very positive and I can recommend it strongly. My husband had a chance after years to find the time to restart his passion - painting.



The positive side is also that I never spent so much time with my daughter (apart the first 6 month of her life). Taking advantage of our garden and the fact that the weather was nice each day, we also had the opportunity to spend enough time outside.



All in all, I can say that the experience was positive.

Incrédulいた, colère, incertitude, irritabilité, résignation, ... en résumé, une profonde angoisse. Ce sont les mots qui décrivent au mieux nos sentiments pendant ces longues semaines de confinement, sans école « in situ ».

Nous avons deux filles, une en 3<sup>e</sup> primaire et l'autre en maternelle. Etant moi-même médecin et travaillant dans un hôpital de référence pour le Coronavirus, j'ai dû beaucoup travailler sur place pendant le confinement. Le matin, j'imprimais les devoirs pour l'aînée, et je lui expliquais les consignes pendant le petit-déjeuner. Mon mari prenait la relève, tout en faisant du télétravail. C'était très difficile pour lui de superviser le travail de notre fille et faire le sien en même temps. Parfois il ne pouvait pas être interrompu pendant une heure ou deux...

Même si la situation s'est quelque peu améliorée avec le temps, elle est restée extrêmement difficile. Je rentrais vers 18 heures et souvent notre fille n'avait pas encore fini. Elle avait du mal à se concentrer à la maison. Je devais alors m'asseoir avec elle et l'aider à terminer ses devoirs. Elle était épuisée. Un jour elle m'a dit qu'elle ne voulait pas continuer à «vivre comme ça»...Je lui ai demandé pourquoi. Elle m'a dit qu'elle en avait ras-le-bol et qu'elle craignait de ne plus revoir ses amis et sa maîtresse... J'ai encouragé les vidéoconférences avec ses copines, ce qu'elle a fait avec grand plaisir. Cela va sans dire que ces coups de fil n'ont jamais remplacé les contacts sociaux réels...

Nous essayions de sortir en fin d'après-midi, faire du vélo ou du jogging, en profitant du beau temps printanier. Tous les mercredis après-midi, nous faisons de longues promenades à pied, jusqu'au parc de Woluwe, ou en forêt de Soignes. C'est peut-être la seule chose positive de cette période: les promenades avec les filles. C'était magnifique de les voir courir et s'amuser, se ressourcer et reprendre des forces.

Lorsque mon mari leur a annoncé la réouverture de l'école, c'était la joie. Un très long éclat de rire de notre fille aînée. La petite aussi. Et le retour à l'école s'est passé à merveille.

Lorsque je relis mon texte, je reprends conscience de l'impact malsain que cette période sans école a eu sur la santé mentale de notre fille de 8 ans. Je crois que, si on avait dû continuer l'école à la maison pendant encore quatre semaines, les conséquences auraient été plus délétères et difficiles à prédire...

J'espère de tout cœur que cette situation appartient maintenant au passé et que les enfants pourront retourner à l'école après l'été.



*Ahimsa Gesquire*

### "How I see the lockdown" from the eyes of P3 student Ahimsa

When the lockdown began, I was not very happy. Although the nature was healing, I hated lockdown (and Covid too). But, after a few weeks, it felt almost normal! I had more time for myself, the cherry flowers were blooming in the tree, my brother got more irritating by the minute, you know, the usual. Now I am doing school on the computer. I also am doing music and dance lessons (from the local music and dance academy) on the computer or from my dad`s smart phone. but I still can not get used to my music/dance lessons online. I was so happy when the primary school choir teachers organised a virtual lockdown choir.

Since March each time it was 8 o`clock I went outside to clap and sing in honour of the frontline workers. Some times to dance, if the neighbour brings his saxophone out to play Jazz. My parents bought a microphone and speakers for my 9th birthday which was in May. My brother starts the ritual by playing "Ode to joy" on recorder. I sing every evening songs like "Tomorrow" from the movie "Annie", "Anthem", "Hallelujah" and "Suzanne" by Leonard Cohen, "Over the rainbow" from the movie Wizard of Oz, "Words" by the Bee Gees and also Sri Lankan songs as I am half Sri Lankan. Our neighbours' children also join in singing and our elderly neighbours are so happy with this ritual.

Now I actually like the lockdown! I get to know my neighbours better, I have more time to draw **manga**, I see foxes on the walking path and I play a lot in the garden. I miss school and my friends. My mum and dad decided to keep me home this month because the risks are too big and the virus has not disappeared. Even today there was a class (each class is a bubble) quarantined. But for the rest it is ok. And me, my brother and my father went to the library yesterday. We got loads of nice books! I also talk to my friends on TEAMS chat and I am so happy when we get an online class with the teacher.

I pray for a new normal.

Where people have respect for nature,  
have learned their lesson from this lockdown and  
have what they have and be happy with it.

Stay safe!





### *Sarnath Gesquire*

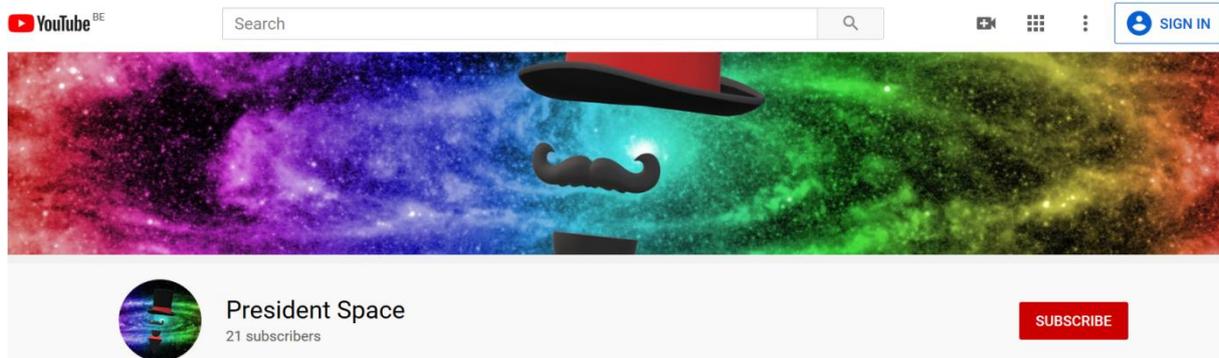
My name is Sarnath. I am a student of S2 NLA. During the third week of lockdown our L1 (Dutch) teacher Ms Zielman asked my class to create an acrostichon. This means every line starts with a letter of a word from our names. She asked that the content of the poem should be about the lockdown. Our opinions, habits, feelings and frustrations, anything went, as long as it was going to be about the lockdown. These were the fruits of my labour.

*Stomme verveling, wat kan ik er aan doen?  
Aan school verandert niks, het blijft even erg.  
Ritje per fiets? Dat ontspant ons voor een poosje.  
Nieuws is deprimerend, waar gaat de wereld naartoe?  
Alles en iedereen gaat dood, je naar buiten wagen is zelfmoord.  
Tijd vertraagt, de bubbel wordt verstikkend.  
Hoog tijd dat iemand er iets aan doet!*

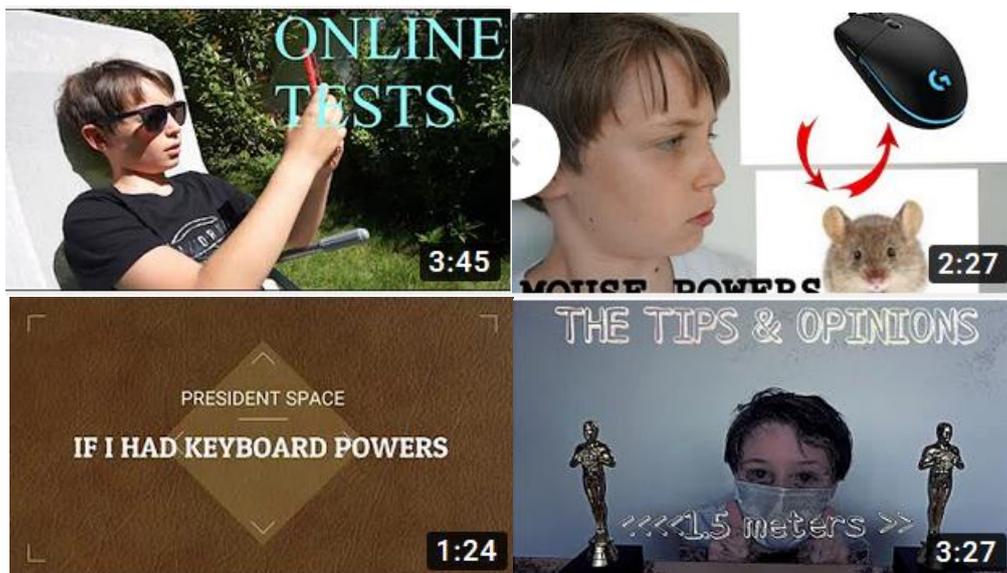
*Geloof helpt niet, alleen kritiek is nuttig.  
Een letsel voor de mensheid, de redding voor de natuur.  
"Samen" haalt niets uit, blijf alstublieft apart.  
Quarantaine is de oplossing, maar geld blijft stinken.  
Uw lofzangen klinken mooi, maar dit zijn begrafenisliedereën, niet fanfarerepertoires.  
Iets moet gebeuren, maar wat?  
Enkel de tijd weet onze koers en onze snelheid.  
Ronkende motoren vallen stil, fabrieken stoppen met hoesten,  
En zal er hier iets goeds uitkomen?"*

**Guido Salvatore**

Check out how Oscar Salvatore (S2 ITA) has kept busy during confinement period by creating his alter ego '[President Space](#)' in YouTube!



President Space's videos are hilarious and depict the reality of the past months. They even feature some special effects and animation!



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Discover how [e-learning](#) and [online tests](#) really work, or how to change [boring confinement](#) days into exciting ones, or to make [tricks](#) with simple tools...

Creativity within the walls of the house has no limits!

**Tomas Jonsson**

Home schooling has worked really well in our case, with online assignments and hand-ins. Results have been excellent. Regarding teachers' activity levels, it has been overall good, but some teachers need to be much more active during chat sessions with the pupils. Information from EEB2 and APEEE has been good.

## **Taija Toratti**

Guerrilla gardening - 'The illicit cultivation of someone else's land' - is a movement that started in New York in the 1970's with people cultivating empty city lots, and has since spread all over the world. The idea is to sow seeds and plant on unkept or unused land for all to enjoy.



*Fraxinus excelsior*

A year ago, we sold tree saplings at Footfest, and since autumn I have been sowing seeds in pots and gathered saplings to do the same this year... then came the virus, and I was left with a lot of plantlets waiting for a new home. This gave me the opportunity to become a guerrilla gardener during lockdown.

I walk daily in the green areas around our neighbourhood - not the maintained parks but the wild in-between areas with random paths where nature seems to take care of herself. There, I looked for patches for the trees: Not too open but neither too shady, easy access but safe from trampling and mowing, marked with a circle of dry twigs and some wood chipping to make them easy to find. I have been watering them on my daily walks, lost two due to dryness and two to a farmer who extended his fields, and I now have 17 marked on my map. I will visit them for as long as I live close by.

The planting has felt therapeutic this spring, a way of belonging and saying 'this place is important to me'. Take only photographs, leave only footprints - and maybe a tree 😊

## **Natalia Karpenko**

With my contribution I would like to express my deep appreciation and heart-felt understanding to all the parents who have shown an incredible creativity, resilience and at times true self-sacrifice in the past months to help keep up the development of their kids under the unprecedented circumstances of a lockdown.

We've all found ourselves suddenly placed in front of a virtually impossible task of giving our kids an opportunity to develop all their different talents and stay sane – within the limits of our home and the direct neighborhood. With all the due respect to the tremendous efforts of the teachers to supervise these processes, a big part of this responsibility was carried out by parents. We've (re-)discovered our own talents in music, arts, sports, math, languages, cooking, gardening, digital skills etc. etc. and above all – in organizing ourselves in an attempt to minimize the harm of the lockdown on our kids. I'm glad we've survived this period and I'm happy too that we can close it off now and move forward, with all the necessary precautions and the knowledge we have now to prevent another lockdown from happening.

Looking back and shaking off the stress of the past months, our family retains the beautiful memories which perhaps wouldn't have been possible without a lockdown. Under different circumstances we would perhaps not have come up with an idea to grow our own potatoes, cucumbers, tomatoes or

beans in flowerpots at the windows of our apartment. The kids truly enjoyed the chance to be able to follow the growth of a plant from a seed to a fruit. Our own home-grown potatoes tasted fantastic!..



***Niina Viima  
Class teacher P5FIA  
Primary Choir Team***

### **Learning in focus**

What an experience! In two days we put everything around us in Teams and made sure that teaching and learning continues no matter what the circumstances are. In Nursery and Primary we started with limited key competences to make sure every pupil got used to the technology and the new ways of learning in distance. As time went on, we needed to add all the subjects in order to follow the curriculum. And little by little we adapted, kept on going and even improved the methods of learning.

It required a lot of teamwork, leadership and leading in change, quick reactions, flexibility, digital and pedagogical competence, resilience and trust. We were lucky to have already a good digital structure in our school. In a very short space of time we had to take stock of what learning means and establish a common understanding of the core issues – interaction and community. So it was interactive learning itself and the sense of community which we had to quickly adapt to a new format.

We had teams for different groups of pupils and teams for different groups of professionals at the school and we started to build on that. We asked for help on technical issues and quickly started to share good practices among colleagues. We had lots of meetings that were really needed to keep the pedagogical discussion ongoing. We had enough autonomy to take some pedagogical decisions, depending on the group of pupils and their needs. We started to realize that some pupils were shining and learning much better than in class. And we made the best we could of it.

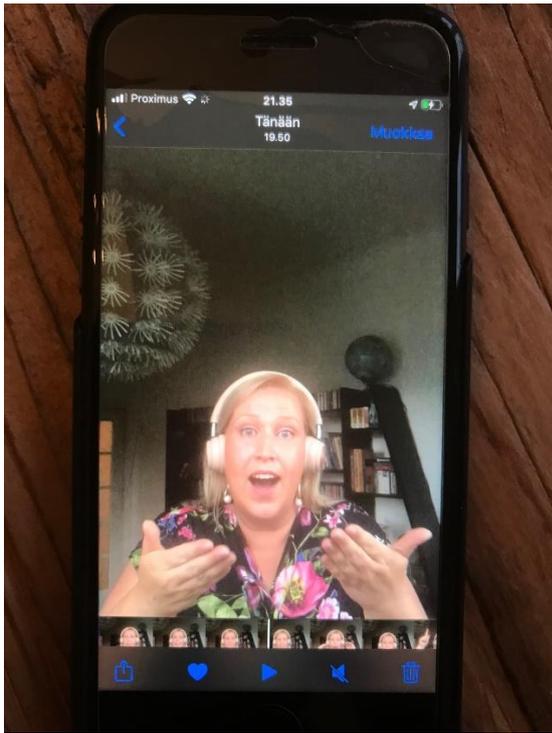
Teamwork with parents was certainly the most important dimension in Nursery and Primary that made all this distance learning possible. We communicated and tried to find the best solution with each family to survive this time together. For sure, it required resilience at home just as it did at school. And, in some funny way, the time of confinement brought us closer together. Also closer with colleagues around the world that we don't even know... I, for example, belong to a group where over hundred thousand educators share pedagogical ideas on distance teaching worldwide.

Security is a feeling that needs to be re-created every day. As routines and school culture brings security for small pupils, we tried to keep carrying on with our action plans. In the choir team, we posted songs at the moment we would have had a concert together and, encouraged by a parent, we even made the virtual choir project happen, together with the Primary choir. Again, a massive contribution by the parents of our little choristers.

Looking ahead, it is surely wise to reflect on this time and benefit as much as we can in order to formulate our future. We are not simply trying to carry on but to create a better future in our schools. We took these big steps in the area of digital competence, and there are surely more methods we can use to improve. Digitalization is not only distance learning. It can serve pedagogical aims also when we are happy and fortunate, and help continue school work as we know it, as a community together at the school, taking care of the well-being of all and keeping learning in focus.



Boss working in Teamsteaching



Fun with virtual choir project



Not professional but from the heart