



# ‘There is no average student, so we focus on the individual’

TEXT: MICHEL STOL | PHOTOS: GO! SCHOLENGROEP 20

**The traditional method of a teacher standing at the front of a classroom and talking to a group of 25 students all day is being considered a more and more outdated approach. That is why the Belgian government is restructuring its education system, with the focus to be on coaching each individual student. At GO! Scholengroep 20 Zuid-Oost-Vlaanderen, a trust for 15 elementary and secondary schools in the Zottegem and Geraardsbergen region in Flanders, they have already implemented this new approach to teaching in some of their schools. “Instead of ‘receiving’ an education, the children will now ‘experience’ education,” says Isabelle Truyen, director of the trust.**

“For decades, education was centred on the ‘average’ student,” Truyen continues. “But the average student doesn’t exist. It meant students that were behind got more attention, while others who were

more advanced, were not challenged enough.” The new education system lets teachers and students create a more individual route together, with remediation or excellency options. “Involving the students gives them ownership of their education, and that will benefit them.” One of the biggest changes in this new way of teaching, is that courses are combined in clusters. “If students have to do a presentation for English, then why not make it about a project they did for Biology or History?”

**A new classroom and team-teaching**  
The new approach also means that the classroom itself has changed. In all of their secondary and elementary schools, Scholengroep 20 has created bigger spaces with much more room for students to work on different subjects in a different way. In Zottegem, they are building an entire future-proof school, developed by Rosan Bosch, B2Ai and Harvard. “Spaces can accommodate

groups of up to 120 students,” Truyen explains. “Instead of long lectures, students will get short, 15-minute instruction sessions in small groups of no more than 15. And each group is coached by at least two subject teachers.” This way of teaching, where the subject teachers are co-teaching the students, means a shift in the mindset of the teacher too. “They are each experts in their subject field, but as a team, they are there for the individual student. That is something new and we are training them in this new approach.”

Individual routes with room for remediation and excellency, and focusing on students’ wellbeing while stimulating their ambitions and engagement, is what GO! Scholengroep 20 envisions in their approach to the new education system. “We want our students to enjoy learning and to learn well.”

Web: [www.scholengroep20.be](http://www.scholengroep20.be)