

SCHOOL WITHOUT THRESHOLDS

ASHOKA EDUCATION



THE PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL



«LESSEN THE THRESHOLD BETWEEN KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY SCHOOL BY MIXING BOTH AGE GROUPS IN DEDICATED LEARNING SPACES.»



CHALLENGE

In kindergarten education, we focus on basic development mostly by exploratory learning. In primary school, and already from the first year on, it is rather by intentional learning. Observations show that the transition from kindergarten to primary school is often too big a step for many children, resulting in fear of failure and a drop of self-confidence and motivation. Some children are just not mature enough to make this step just yet, while others already are way before the actual transition to primary school.



PROJECT

The project creates an educative bridge where the first year of primary school becomes a part of the kindergarten, and the kindergarten becomes a part of the first year. Both levels retain their individuality, but the threshold between the two disappears. Both age groups are mixed in a dedicated space and moment. They can learn from each other and be stimulated at their level of maturity. The transition for toddlers to primary school becomes less scary. Not only does that benefit the children, but it also benefits the teachers who are much more likely to lean on their strengths and competencies.



STAKEHOLDERS

School direction: You can implement part of this project without it, but if you want to have a dedicated space for the «threshold classroom», then you need to have your direction on board.

Teachers: For such a project to be a success you need a dedicated team of teachers from primary and kindergarten to work hand in hand.



WORKLOAD

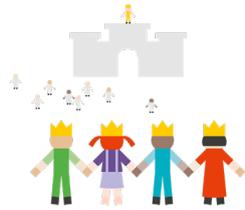
It requires a little extra time for teachers to organise their respective class schedules, find a common time slot for the «threshold class» and design the activities together. However, the project is entirely part of the school program; it happens during school hours.



RESOURCES

The vital element is the space dedicated to the «threshold class». Another aspect is the class material and organisation that should be well adapted for both age groups to evolve together.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE PROJECT **IN YOUR SCHOOL**



ADAPT THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The «threshold class» must be a physical space that children can recognise. It must be adapted to both age groups to make them interact easily.

A good practice is to start from the needs of the kindergarten pupils, and focusing on creating a **calm environment** that allows for a proper **work attitude** as a preparation for primary school.

The space works better when furnished with a clear structure, with sustainable material that allows for **collaboration between students and teachers**: high tables, bright colours and equipment adapted to both age groups.



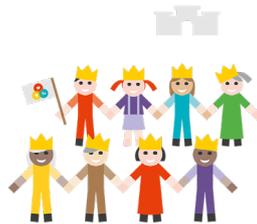
CREATE A WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Organise network learning between the toddlers and the children of the 1st grade so that they work together at specific times.

The duration and frequency of this «threshold class» depends on the teachers and the students themselves.

To start with, gather two groups, one from kindergarten and one from primary 1st grade. Make sure to have at least **two teachers deployed across levels** with no more than 50 children to handle.

A good practice is to have this session every **Wednesday morning** for about 2,5 hours in order to better include it in the rest of the week.



DESIGN SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

For the «threshold class» to work well, it is essential to adapt the learning contents, the learning forms and the learning processes so that it can fit both age groups and support cross-level cooperation. It is therefore crucial that teachers design these activities together and agree on common objectives before each session.

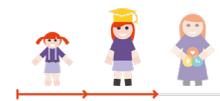
The activities for this class are **somewhere between formal and informal learning**. This takes shape especially by linking the learning content that children explore through games and playful activities to conscious didactics, instruction, stimulating guidance, social and collaborative learning. Also, **independent work** is encouraged as it triggers the self-regulatory process and **stimulates self-directed learning**.

It is also crucial to tailor the activities to the **different learning styles** and the **multiple intelligences** of the children.



CHILDREN PORTFOLIO

It can be interesting to create a portfolio for each pupil to keep a record of their achievements from the «threshold class» and keep it home.



SELF-EVALUATION

At the end of each activity, make sure to have a feedback circle in which pupils explain what they liked, what they didn't like and the reasons why.

PRE-REQUISITES OF THE PROJECT



Having a long-term dream and vision is what will keep the teaching team strong and aligned around the project. In the Kosmos school, teachers strongly believe that primary schools work in a too fragmented way, with fixed milestones to achieve, based only on age and not on maturity. Their vision is to influence the school system for every primary school to implement such a project. Make sure you align on a common vision first and only then figure out how you will implement it in practice!

BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNT

IMPACT MEASUREMENT

It is key to evaluate the project among children at least every six months in order to measure the impact on their motivation for learning, well-being and self-confidence. It is indeed essential to reflect on improvement areas before doing more. In parallel to pupil's satisfaction surveys, make sure to keep reflection moments among the teaching team to ensure that the project is still impactful and on the right track.

MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

It can be challenging to manage the evolving expectations of the children over the year, especially once they are not stressed about primary school anymore. Make sure to take the parents on board with you right from the start!



SMALL STEPS

Implementing everything at once can be tempting. However, make sure you plan things and make each step very clear for everyone involved. Make sure to organise each step thoroughly and concretely. The smaller the steps, the better. It can start from one hour per week to - ideally - 100% collaboration between kindergarten and the 1st grade of primary school.

TRAINING

The team of teachers facilitating the «threshold classes» has a leading role in the project. Make sure they are well trained on topics such as work attitude with children. But also, that they share good practices with others (including teachers from other schools). Finally, it is essential that both teachers have a common understanding of the learning objectives in kindergarten and 1st primary!

MORE INFORMATION TO GO FURTHER



CONTACT

Meet with the project owners
Hilde Witters, Marc Papanikitas &
Linda Avet from Kosmos school.

VIDEO

Discover the story, the participants and behind the scenes of the project in video:
ashoka.org/en-be/eduinnovation

