How the Dutch Youth Institute (NJi) contributes to safe and supportive secondary schools

The processes and experiences of creating/developing, implementing and using systems to collect and use data to inform policy and practice

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The issue in hand

Council of Amsterdam ➔ NJi

• “develop and apply a system of judging the school safety”

• “improvement for the benefit of the 84 secondary school in Amsterdam: more safety, less incidents”
Outline of the situation

In general: inappropriate, anti-social, and/or disruptive behaviours are becoming more prevalent.

Affects staff and student safety negatively

Management of disruptive behaviours has been identified as the most troublesome issue that schools are facing *

* Cotton, 2001; Elam, Rose, & Gallop, 1998
And in Amsterdam....

- A great many serious incidents in the past years
- Negative impact on the focus on learning
- Expenses for the municipal council and the tax payers; (the years of additional expenses when a student is expelled; the costs of absence through illness)
Approach NJi

Auditing of two variables:
1. School safety $\rightarrow$ positive school climate
2. Caring $\rightarrow$ positive school climate

Caring has three tiers *:
1. positive attention for all the students
2. support for some of them
3. timely care for (a few) students with serious problems.

* Shinn & Walker, 2010
School climate (safe, supportive and caring) is influenced by *

- the leadership role and behavior;
- the morale of the teaching staff and their teaching practices in classrooms;
- the physical environment of the school;
- the characteristics and mix of students, teachers and parents;
- the connections between the school and its surrounding neighbourhood;
- the social interactions within the school.

* Osher & Dwyer, 2006
The auditsystem

• **ISO 9001**
  Qs matches requirement in certification schedule; in agreement with requirements the organization itself sets; is implemented and maintained effectively

• **Certification scheme with criteria**
  Using a great amount of international literature Ebp/Pbe

• **Criteria following the PDCA-cycle**

• **29 criteria Safety, 26 criteria Caring**
Auditing

The council of Amsterdam: financial support in the realization improve the quality of a safe and caring learning environment
Characteristics

*Time invested*

- The audit takes 5.5 hours and is carried out by two auditors.

*Content of the audit*

- analysis of school documentation about a safe and caring learning environment
- interviews with key-persons
- observations during the review.
Next steps

- The results are discussed with the school management (‘consent’)
- The management draws up an improvement plan
- The plan is elucidated in the presence of the NJi and a representative of the council
- If need be, the council provides financial support for realization
Preliminary results

Meanwhile an audit was carried out on 21 of the 84 schools. The schools are satisfied with the approach and method so far:

- audit is “penetrating”, “revealing”, “constructive” and “little bureaucratic”
- the plans for improvement they make are challenging and ambitious, but also measurable
The NJi intends to use the audit’s results for further research, knowledge development and support of schools, collaborations and the Ministry of Education.

Investigating:

• if the amount of incidents will diminish
• school results will rise
• the absence of students and rate of early school leaving will sink
• students and personnel feel more safe
Hopefully: next year some challenging results!

Thank you for your attention!
Questions?

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