

The Future of the Netherlands

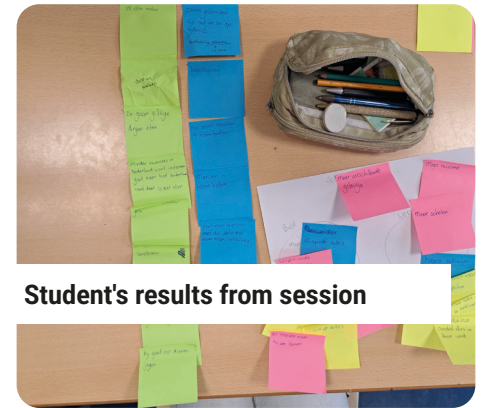
In a 2nd class of a secondary bilingual school (students aged 13–14), students work on a task addressing the spatial and societal future of the Netherlands.

At a city school with a regional function, students are working on a sustainability project. Their assignment is to design a sustainable Netherlands in 2100, based on a specific future scenario. By creating a map that represents the Netherlands in 2100, and answering key questions about climate, economy and technology, students design practical solutions to key issues, such as energy and food supply. After two lessons on map skills, the students participate in a creative thinking workshop led by an informal educator, who acts as guest teacher. The regular geography teacher is also present.

The workshop is meant to encourage divergent thinking. During the workshop, students are asked to give as many answers as possible to questions about future situations. The

guest teacher encourages the class to think creatively: *“If you write down ideas that don’t exist, then you’re engaging in future thinking.”* After each round, the guest teacher reviews the answers. She asks students how many answers they generated and to share a few with the class. An example of a question the guest teacher asks is “What can you do to get your little brother, who played soccer in the mud, to take a shower?”

The atmosphere in the classroom can best be described as “lively.” Especially a few boys in the back are very involved. They talk loudly or make other noise. During debriefing, students find it difficult to listen quietly to each other. From time to time, an intervention by the teacher helps to restore a quieter atmosphere.



Student's results from session



EXPECTATION FROM THE SUBJECT TEACHER, FROM A CONVERSATION IN CLASS:

“Last year, it turned out that students found it very difficult to come up with creative ideas and to think about the future. That’s why we brought in this guest lesson.”



IN THE FINAL ROUND, STUDENTS CATEGORIZE ALL THEIR IDEAS INTO A ‘BEST CASE SCENARIO’ AND A ‘WORST CASE SCENARIO’ (SEE HERE FOR TRANSCRIPT OF THE FULL DISCUSSION).

Guest teacher: “Does anyone have ideas that you can’t categorize?”

Student B: “Yes, becoming a vegetarian is hard to place.”

A discussion follows in the class.

Subject teacher: “I understand this sparks discussion, but if you all keep talking at once, it becomes very noisy. Just raise your hand.”

Guest teacher: “Does anyone have an idea they’d like to share?”

Many students respond.

Student A: “What if overweight people ate less?”

Student C: “We could take over Russia, because if you have a big country, you can plant a lot of crops, and then you can eat them.”

The teacher has to warn the group again not to talk too much.

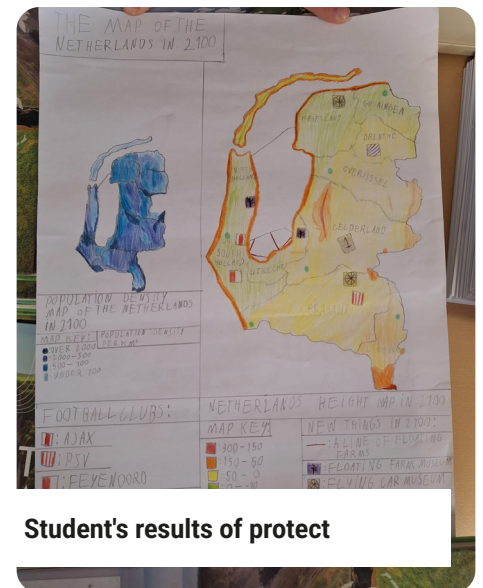
Student D: “A refugee could change the Netherlands with a magic wand.”

Guest teacher: “Anyone have one last idea they think is worth sharing?”

Student A: “When we had to imagine the Netherlands being underwater, I thought living with oxygen tanks would be really hard. So I thought, what if we lived naked? If everyone was naked, then it would be normal for everyone to walk around like that.”

– Reactions from the class –

“But I’m really serious! Listen, listen. If we did that, it wouldn’t be so weird. We live in a society now where everyone wears clothes, and then it’s weird to walk around naked.”



Student's results of protect

SEE HERE FOR MORE PROJECT RESULTS.



TEACHER IN AUDIO DIARY:

“The kids thought it was cool to participate. [...] Kids you never hear from enjoyed thinking along. What did surprise me was that students came up with extreme ideas—more extreme than I expected. I’ll need to address that next time.”



STUDENT A, IN AN INTERVIEW AFTER THE LESSON

“I think that if we walked around without clothes in the future, you’d also save more money, you know. Then you wouldn’t spend money on expensive clothes or just clothes and shoes. When I have an idea, I just want to say it right away. It just comes naturally.”