

## MASTERTHESIS

# Students: who cares?

A qualitative and quantitative study of the Student Care system at Foundation Based Education Schools on St. Maarten, Netherlands Antilles

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### **ABSTRACT**

**This study investigates the implementation and effects of the integral student care system in the primary schools on St. Maarten Netherlands Antilles. The student care system is an important tool in inclusive education. Qualitative and quantitative research techniques were combined: structured interviews, analysis of statistical information and case studies. The implementation of the system differed per school, the main effects were more individual attention for students, more student tracking and slightly more parental involvement. Recommendations are an organizational schedule for everyone in student care and a standard digital student tracking system.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 2003 an integral student care system was introduced in the first cycle of primary schools on St. Maarten Netherlands Antilles, for children in the age of four to eight years old. The introduction of the system was one of the thirteen so called ‘core improvements’ mentioned in a document called “Inrichtingsplan Funderend Onderwijs” that is meant to improve educational practices in primary schools (Ministerie van Onderwijs en Cultuur, Afdeling Onderwijs, 2003). The system strives to help special needs students as much as possible within their schools and even within their own classes. The purpose of the student care system is to create inclusive education with the lowest possible percentage of referrals to special education (Ministerie van Onderwijs en Cultuur, Afdeling Onderwijs, 2003).

### **Research question and goals**

The Department for Educational Research, Policy and Innovations (DERPI) on St. Maarten, requested an analysis of the state of affairs with regard to the student care in primary schools on the island. The Department wants to gain a clear view of the support students receive at present, in policy as well as in actual practice. The general research question which addresses this request is as follows: *Since student care is an important tool to reach inclusive education, to what extent is the student care system on St. Maarten as it was developed by DERPI implemented in the primary schools and what are the effects of this system as far as they are visible at this moment?* This study has three goals: first, the results of the research must give a

clearer view of the way all involved individuals have experienced the implementation of the system. Secondly, it aims to make the changes the student care system has achieved visible in terms of the number of referrals to special education, in terms of the academic achievement of students and in terms of parental involvement. Thirdly, this study strives to identify aspects that could be improved and to formulate recommendations in order to reach these improvements.

In order to address issues of student care and special education, we need to first reflect on a more general concept that underlies these facilities, which is the idea of 'inclusive education'. After discussing this idea some dilemmas in the practical execution of inclusive education will be addressed. This leads to a discussion on inclusive education and student care in the Netherlands and on St. Maarten. This introduction will be concluded by a short look at success factors for innovations.

### **The idea of inclusive education**

Inclusive education is a concept that is understood and described in different ways. Some authors mainly concentrate on the rationale for inclusive education whereas others focus on the realization of the concept (Dyson, 1999). Some authors write from both dimensions and let rationale and realization intertwine.

#### *Rationale for inclusive education*

Authors who mainly concentrate on the rationale for inclusive education fit in the 'rights and ethics discourse' which says inclusive education is an inevitable outcome of the general notion of social justice (Dyson, 1999). For example, Lipsky and Gartner (1999) state that the inclusive educational concept is based on the belief that all children have special needs, all children can learn and furthermore, all children benefit from doing this together. In addition, Kirk, Gallagher and Anastasiow (2000) explain inclusive education as the idea that special needs students should be part of regular education, and should not be kept apart. Others define the concept of inclusive education in some fundamental aspects and state that all students, without exception, belong in regular education and that the results of this kind of inclusive education include literacy and a diploma for all of them (Pearpoint, Forest and O'Brien, 1996, as cited in Kirk, Gallagher & Anastasiow, 2000). The rationales of these authors make inclusive education not only a strategy in the technical sense but a normative stance that has its roots in certain social movements with an ideological perspective around the inclusion of

disadvantaged groups. (Stainback & Stainback, 1996, as cited in Kirk, Gallagher & Anastasiow, 2000).

### *Realization of inclusive education*

Lipsky and Gartner (1999) write on the realization of the inclusive educational concept as well when they state some principles of inclusive education. One of those principles says inclusive education needs to be carried out school wide. Another principle of inclusive education has to do with the help offered to children: help should be based on the specific needs of individual students. Because of the earlier mentioned assumption that all children – and not just a few- have special needs, this help should be offered within the regular schools and not in different schools for special education. Finally, Lipsky and Gartner (1999) mention the importance of cooperation between teachers and the use of teaching methods that differ from classical instruction like peer instruction and cooperative learning.

Gerber (1996) states pure inclusionists begin to realize the need to consider the possibility of inclusive education because they see the need for a fundamental restructuring of education. Without this, one creates what he is trying to escape: insufficient care for children because of an increased burden for teachers (Gerber, 1996). This reorganization should include providing material, resources and training and requires more and bigger changes in the educational system than in the case of integration. Integration of special education into regular education means that part of the educational system will be adjusted to facilitate opportunities for students who would have been excluded before, to stay in regular education. Inclusive education works on the basics of individual demands of all students; for inclusive education a whole new system is created that all students will fit in (Barton, 1999; Daniels & Garner, 1999; Gerber, 1996).

However, Slee (1996) acknowledges the system change is needed but the focus should be on more than the redistribution of human and material resources. Dyson (1999) agrees with Slee and combines the two dimensions by stating that one should recognize that inclusion is not defined by the presence of particular pedagogical practices and organizational forms, but by the absence of injustice, discrimination, and exclusionary barriers. This combination, however, leads to some dilemmas in the practical execution of inclusive education.

### **Dilemmas in the practical execution of inclusive education**

Kirk, Gallagher and Anastasiow (2000) mention the difficulty of drawing a line between students: should every student really be participating in regular education or are there still

some children whom this does not apply? If so, who are these children and who decides? When making this choice, one must consider the opportunities and restrictions because without any adjustments, a regular school cannot take care of children in wheel chairs, for example. At the same time, without enough remedial teachers or competent teachers, children with a severe mental handicap can not be educated in the school. Another point of discussion is the way extra instruction is offered: will this take place in the classroom or will a separate room –within the school- be made available for the extra help? If you want total inclusion, you have to keep all students together, all the time, so the help should be offered within the class. On the other hand it is questionable whether that is in the best interests of the child and other students in the class. The third problem that is mentioned by the authors deals with responsibility: in the case of inclusive education, are teachers in regular education responsible for the whole educational system and the development of special needs children or is this someone else's responsibility (Kirk, Gallagher & Anastasiow, 2000)?

Some other authors state that the supporters of inclusive education have confused 'participation' with real opportunity. Making it possible for –for example- disabled children to enter the school, does not automatically mean they actually do participate in the whole educational process and does not mean they are able to develop to their fullest potential either (Kauffman, 1993, as cited in Gerber, 1996; Gerber, 1995, as cited in Gerber, 1996). Howe (1996) also states that inclusive education only is not sufficient for equality. These dilemmas make inclusive education a disputable concept.

The discussion on special and inclusive education is not a new discussion and has been held all over the world. In the years right after the establishment of the first special education school in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in the United States, some experts criticised the organization of these schools. They said the designer's only concerns were the physical characteristics and location of the buildings (Dorn, Fuchs & Fuchs, 1996). Later it became clear that a large group of students did not benefit from the special education system at all. At this point, some experts started to say there were reasons enough to get rid of special education (Hernstein & Murray, 1994, as cited in Dorn, Fuchs & Fuchs, 1996). The special education discussion also arose in the Netherlands where the first form of special education was established in 1855, although this discussion started for different reasons (Van Drenth, 2005).

### **Inclusive education in the Netherlands**

In the Netherlands, around 1980, there were concerns about the marginalization of children in special education. At the same time, the costs for special education were rising since more and

more children were referred to these schools. A policy named Weer Samen Naar School (WSNS) (going to school together again), was developed as an inclusive educational solution to counteract these concerns. Several goals were distinguished, both on a system level and on the level of the students (Meijer, Meijnen & Scheerens, 2004, as cited in Meijer, 2004):

#### Goals on a system level

- Social goals: To reduce and stop the marginalization of students with special educational needs
- Educational goals: Implementation ‘Wet op het Basisonderwijs’ (Law on Primary Education) which requires continuous development, expansion of care and an established care continuum
- Financial goals: To reduce and stabilize the growth of special education

#### Goals on a pupil level

- To give early and flexible care to more students,

These goals were meant to be reached by the establishment of cooperative unions between schools for regular education and schools for special education and by a different system of financing the care for students. The expectation was that through the WSNS-policy the required expansion of care would take place in regular schools because these schools would receive financial support to care for special needs students within their school instead of referring them to special education (Meijer, 2004).

### **The ideas for inclusive education on St. Maarten**

On St. Maarten around the year 2000, policy makers indicated more or less the same kind of problems as mentioned in the Netherlands. The high percentage of referrals to special education, the large amount of repeaters and the high number of school drop-outs in regular education were the main reasons for the explicit choice St. Maarten made for Foundation Based Education (FBE). The main FBE-principle is that there should be child-centered education instead of the so called ‘manufacturing curriculum-centered education’ (DERPI, 2008; Stone, 2007). The belief that ‘differences between children are an enrichment’ led to the formation of heterogeneous, multi-aged groups which stimulated teachers to adjust to the opportunities and needs of their students. However, this choice for a different educational system was, just like in the Netherlands, also a choice for another communal vision: the government wanted to keep special needs children in the community and prevent them from being isolated. Inclusive education is a clear practice of this vision (Vermeersch, 2005).

The policy document 'Groeien in Zorg' (Vermeersch, 2005) (Growing in Care) describes the way inclusive education should be carried out on the Antillean island. This description meets the earlier described principles of inclusive education. It states that the educational needs of every individual student should be the foundation of the pedagogic-didactic performance of the teachers. This guarantees that for all children, whatever their background, optimal chances for development should be created (Vermeersch, 2005).

The author of the policy document Groeien in Zorg (Vermeersch, 2005) states that this urge for the inclusion of special needs children requires a solid, integral student care system. It is important to know which children in a class need special care and how this care should be organized. Integral student care is defined by Reezigt, Houtveen and Van de Grift (2002) as '*all measures needed at a school level to make adaptive education in the class possible*'. This way of taking care of students aims to offer all the care different children need in a way that fits into the regular curriculum at a school level; this goal matches the inclusive educational concept (Reezigt, Houtveen & Van de Grift, 2002).

### **The practice of integral student care in an inclusive education system on St. Maarten**

St. Maarten's choice for an integral student care system should be carried out in six different ways in the schools: (1) the use of a student tracking system, (2) the appointment and training of one Student Care Coordinator (SCC) for every 192 students, (3) internal school discussions about the children's development, (4) the involvement of parents in the care of their children as much as possible, (5) the composing of a school policy plan which states how student care should be organized, and (6) the setting up of working unions with the external care structure on the island. Two of these are characteristic for the St. Maarten system and will be discussed in more detail.

1. Appointment and training of Student Care Coordinators - One of the main pillars of the St. Maarten student care system is the appointment and training of Student Care Coordinators (SCC). Based on the assumption of an average amount of 192 (8 x 24) students per school, one or two of these coordinators per school were appointed and trained by DERPI. DERPI set up an SCC-profile, based on the principles of Foundation Based Education (FBE). This SCC-profile stated the responsibilities and tasks of the SCC in the school (Appendix A).

DERPI trained the SCCs for this task by giving them about 150 hours of training. Training was given in different areas, for example on the role of the SCCs within the schools, keeping up a tracking system and observation and communication, for example (Dekker, 2006).

2. Involvement of parents in the care - Another feature of the student care system is the involvement of parents with the student care. The importance of this parental involvement was already described by Redding (1999): he described that a child could only develop to its fullest potential when all responsible people around the child, cooperate. Finn (1998) also states that parental involvement, especially when it starts at a young age, can lead to improved learning performances of children. Although, he admits other research has not shown this causal relationship but neither does it deny it. Besides, the author writes it is not useful when parents are cooperating with a negative attitude, this does not help the educational performance of the child (Finn, 1998). The issue of cooperation as well as involvement with an innovation, is also mentioned more general organizational theories.

### **Innovation theories: involvement and cooperation**

The involvement of organization members with an innovation seems to cause appreciation of the innovation, which implies innovation success (Raadsen & Knorth, 2000).

Organizational cooperation is seen by several authors as one of the main strengths in innovation (Tether & Tajar, 2008). Cooperation could be established by a clear organizational structure (Anthony di Benedetto, Calantone, 1994). A large European study revealed that this cooperation is one of the problems schools encounter when they try to effectively execute inclusive education, to actually benefit all the students. To establish cooperation between teachers, supporting personnel within the school and external care structures, is a major challenge (Meijer, 2001). Seeing the importance of these two aspects, the degree of involvement in the implementation and cooperation with the student care system, might have influenced the experiences of involved persons and also the effects of the student care system.

### **Three sub questions**

This research aims to give a clear view of the actual situation of the student care system on St. Maarten and therefore three sub questions were formulated:

- 1) a. How was the implementation of the student care system executed: were all parts of the system as defined on page 6 implemented in every school, especially the appointment of the student care coordinator and the implementation of the student tracking system?
- b. How do policy makers, school boards, school directors, site-based coordinators, student care coordinators and teachers perceive the student care system?



- 2) For which indicators is change / improvement visible? Is there a change in the number of referrals to special education, the academic achievements of students and parental involvement?
- 3) Which aspects need improvement and how could this improvement best be realized?

## **METHODOLOGY**

To answer these questions, this study has a multi method design which combines quantitative research techniques with qualitative research. After approaching nearly all primary schools on St. Maarten, 62 interviews were held, the available statistic information was gathered and case studies were executed. The choice for the mix of these research techniques was made because differences in statistics could have different causes and perceived changes are not always reliable. First the research group and selection procedure will be described, followed by a description of the research instruments and methods for analysis

### **Research group and selection procedure**

In total 62 persons were interviewed, from six different groups (See Appendix B for a more specific overview of participants):

- a. 3 DERPI-members (implement educational innovations)
- b. 4 site-based coordinators (support teachers in their job)
- c. 5 school board members (representatives of five school boards)
- d. 13 school directors (heads of the schools)
- e. 17 Student Care Coordinators (coordinate student care in their school)
- f. 20 Teachers (1 or 2 per school) (educate children)

These groups were chosen because they are involved in different ways with the student care system on St. Maarten. 15 FBE schools on St. Maarten received a fax about the research and a presentation was held to inform the Student Care Coordinators about the study. One school was not contacted as it will close down soon and one school did not fully participate. The Student Care Coordinators were asked to act as a liason and select two teachers within their school who were working at the school when the student care system was implemented. This selection procedure was chosen to make sure a proportional representation of teachers was interviewed who would have interesting information about the situation before, during and after the implementation of the student care system.

All participating schools were visited. The Student Care Coordinator (SCC) was interviewed first. In every school the researcher tried to interview two teachers as well as the director.

Whenever possible the interviews were held orally. In some cases the interview was left behind at the school and filled out later.

Observations - When possible, some class observations were done by the researcher. These observations made the interpretation of results easier. They were used in the case studies.

**Instruments:** Structured interviews

Structured interviews have been held among involved people on several levels. The interviews contained a general part and a specific part for the group the interviewed person belonged to. Every respondent was interviewed about his or her involvement with the implementation of the student care system, about his or her opinion about the execution of the system implementation, and the effects the implementation had according to this person. Attention was also paid to the respondent's opinion of the cooperation with the other levels. In addition, the interviews tried to explore whether the system as it was developed by DERPI was implemented accordingly and whether the participants saw any obstacles in the implementation. Finally, each level received some specific questions because each group was involved in different aspects of the system. For example: teachers do not make policy but do see the effects on their students.

DERPI employees were asked to substantiate the choice for this student care system and school directors were asked if they knew if the student tracking system at their school was updated and if the school meets the DERPI requirements for student care. For Student Care Coordinators there was a question about their opinion of the training they received and teachers were asked about classroom organization and parental involvement. In most interviews the last question asked was the respondent's opinion of the concept of inclusive education on St. Maarten because the student care system is one of the tools of inclusive education. The researcher expected that the answers to these questions by these specific persons would give a clear view of the actual situation concerning the implementation and results of the student care system at the different schools. This expectation came from the idea that this part of the research would clarify to what extent the system was implemented as it was developed by DERPI and what obstacles there have been for the various people involved. See Appendix C for the interviews.

### Analysis of structured interviews

The interviews were analyzed in a qualitative way, because that gave the researcher the opportunity to gather more information from the questionnaire than would have been possible with a quantitative analysis. Every part of the transcribed interviews was first labeled, then brought together by label per research group and then the codes were put into categories. This led to the four general themes and outcomes discussed in the result section.

### Role of researcher in interviews

The researcher was introduced as a employee of DERPI, and although the researcher has tried to stay independent from DERPI and asked participants to be honest in favour of the study, it must be taken into account that participants possibly acted less negative about DERPI than they actually were. This might have influenced the outcomes of this study.

### **Instruments:** Collection of statistical information

Another part of the research was quantitative. The available relevant statistical information on some topics was gathered to indicate the effects of the student care system. The topics were:

- a. statistics about the number of referrals to special education (before and after the implementation of the student care system)
- b. information about students' academic achievements ((before and after the implementation of the student care system). Statistics about school leavers were used: to which kind of secondary education did they go?
- c. information on parental involvement (before and after the implementation of the student care system)

### Analysis of statistical information

These statistics were analyzed in a quantitative manner. When enough information was available, the percentages were calculated and means were compared. Results of this analysis contributed to answer the research question because pre and post student care statistics could be compared.

### **Instruments:** Case studies

Following the results of the interviews, case studies were held at two schools. These schools were chosen based on the difference in the implementation and daily execution of the student care system The case studies focused on the themes from the interview analysis. The results

of these case studies contributed to answer the research question since they helped the researcher to interpret results better and –regarding the first school- to see what student care could and maybe should be like.

## **RESULTS**

The general theme of this thesis is inclusive education which is also something that is strived for on St. Maarten. The student care system is, as one of the 13 core improvements in FBE that should improve education on this Caribbean island, a clear attempt to make inclusive education possible on St. Maarten. In this section the outcomes of the different research methods will be discussed in order to gain a better view of student care on St. Maarten, which will say something about the possibility of inclusive education on St. Maarten and in other familiar settings.

The result section will start with the results on two themes that deal with the implementation of an innovation: involvement and cooperation. Secondly, the changes in education due to the student care system will be discussed in two parts. The first part gives the results of the interviews: what are the perceived changes in education? The second part will mention the results of the statistical analysis. This will be followed by an overview of the results on the three bottlenecks that were mentioned in the different interviews. The fourth part of this section displays the results on the perceived applicability of inclusive education on St. Maarten and at the end of this section the case studies are presented.

The results of the different subjects are discussed per interviewed group, if relevant. In these cases the groups have different opinions from each other, but when most of the groups share one opinion they will not all be mentioned or not all be mentioned separately. The question around the possibility and applicability of inclusive education in settings like St. Maarten should be kept in mind in every part of this result section since the student care system is an operation in the spirit of inclusive education.

### **1. Innovation: involvement and cooperation**

The answers given to questions about the involvement with the implementation of student care firstly and the cooperation in the student care system secondly, will now be discussed.

*Involvement* - The interviewed DERPI staff members were involved in different degrees and on different levels. Some of them were involved with implementation activities (such as developing the Student Care Coordinators profile and setting up the implementation plan).

Others were more involved on a policy level. Most of the interviewed school board members felt very involved with the introduction of the student care system because of their role in selecting the SCCs. The interviewed school directors said they were more or less involved with discussing –or at least informed about- what student care meant and why it should be introduced in their schools. Most of the Student Care Coordinators said they were just asked for the SCC position by their school board or school director, one was more involved. She also experienced the difficulties of the implementation of an innovation:

*“I was the first Student Care Coordinator and worked on all the schools. I was a pioneer and I learned as I went along how to put the system into practice. It took a while because it was change and people don’t want change.”*

Teachers said the SCCs presented the student care system to them in a meeting so they were not involved with the implementation.

#### Conclusion on involvement

It became clear that mostly school boards and DERPI were involved with the development and implementation of the student care system. For the other participants, with some exceptions, the student care system came from the top since they were hired for their jobs and told what to do.

*Cooperation - DERPI* members experience their own cooperation with the school boards as positive, but see communication problems between other levels. One of them thinks this problem comes from the historical roles of different levels:

*“(..)the communication between the school boards and the school managers, and then between school managers and teachers is not good, (..) The communication problems come from the history of the school board being the one with power, thinking it is not obligatory to share information and to communicate with others in the school, teachers, SCCs and so on. This is also the problem with school managers.”*

School board members are to a certain degree positive about the overall cooperation in the system between the different groups. Willingness of everyone involved is by some seen as an important key to success. Some of these participants see problems in the cooperation between DERPI and the school boards because of leadership issues and unclear roles:

*“DERPI shouldn’t take charge, the school boards should be in charge, DERPI should coordinate. They need to sit down and clearly define roles for the different persons and parties involved.”*

One of the interviewed school directors saw room for improvement for every group involved when it came to the overall cooperation in student care. The rest of the directors was positive and saw that all stakeholders were cooperating effectively. The overall Student Care Coordinator's opinion on cooperation is explained by one of them who says DERPI asks too much time and teachers lack in reporting:

*“Good cooperation from everyone except that sometimes DERPI organizes too many workshops and activities which take away the time from the Student Care Coordinators regular duties. And, teachers need to complete checklists and so on, on time.”*

Some of the SCCs work closely together with SCCs in other schools. This happens within the Catholic schools and to a lesser extent also in the Public schools. All Catholic SCCs are positive about these meetings. The Site-based Coordinators see that cooperation between mainly school boards and the other groups has come a long way since the beginning, and they mention as well that cooperation between the other groups needs improvement. Most of the teachers say they only cooperate with the SCC and they are positive about that cooperation. The teachers are especially happy with the help and suggestions they receive from the Student Care Coordinators. In their opinion, the cooperation between other levels is mostly good and the overall concern for the children is seen as positive by this group.

### Conclusion on cooperation

The different groups in the school are moderately positive about the overall cooperation. There are different causes for their different visions. The main finding on this cooperation topic is that DERPI says to have good cooperation with school boards, but school boards members experience some problems with some aspects of the role DERPI has taken in the system. The communication problems between the school boards and the groups in the school, stated by a DERPI member, are not mentioned by these groups themselves. Teachers are positive about the cooperation with the SCC; the SCCs state they would like some more cooperation from the teachers.

## **2. Change**

*A. Perceived changes* - Many of the participants have experienced the change: from no student care system to this student care system. Asked about their feeling about the change in general, all participants are positive. This theme section works out the participant's perspectives on changes on several aspects. Beside some general observed changes, the

changes seen in the number of referrals to special education (R), student tracking (T) and on parental involvement (PI) will be discussed for every level.

DERPI members see the increase of help for and attention paid to children as the main change student care has made. (R) According to the DERPI member's perspective, the number of referrals has not changed that much, although the reasons for referrals have. (T) The issue of tracking is an important one for these participants, since they say proper tracking of students will make it easier to gather information from the SCCs and the schools in general. Without this information, other problems cannot be solved. DERPI members say this aspect needs improvement: schools have to work on student tracking. (PI) The DERPI members are moderately positive about the activities for parental involvement and its effects. In most school the Active Parenting workshops are carried out successfully: parents attend the workshops and are positive afterwards.

(R) School board members did not see a difference in referrals to Special Education. (T) Most of them strongly pointed to the importance of tracking; they were not satisfied with the present situation. (PI) Most school board members saw increased parental involvement.

The main changes seen by the school directors are the (individual) care and attention given to the students and the support teachers receive from the Student Care Coordinators. (R) The directors differ a lot from each other in their answers on the subject of the referral rates: some state the number has dropped, others say it has increased and others say it has remained the same. (T) Most schools have implemented some kind of student tracking, others are still working on it and their directors hope that it will be in place by the end of this school year. The systems used differ per school. Some schools have an official (digital) tracking system such as KVS and make use of it, others don't. Some other schools use their self-developed digital or non-digital tracking system, such as progress reports. Some of the directors say it is a lot of work for the SCC and the teachers to put in all the required data, but if schools make use of some kind of tracking system, directors usually see the benefits. (PI) By some different activities such as the Active Parenting workshops, schools try to improve parental involvement. Some of the directors have seen a difference since then: parents are more involved with their children.

The changes seen by most of the Student Care Coordinators are summarized by one of them who sees monitoring, assistance to teachers and student support:

*“Three significant changes. Firstly, student development and performance are monitored closely. Secondly, teachers are given assistance with students who have learning and behavioral problems. Thirdly, students receive extra support and guidance.”*

(R) The SCCs react differently to the question about the changes in referrals. Some state that because of more investigation at school, more children are referred, other say just the opposite. However, most SCCs think that there has been an increase in referrals to special education because the process prior to the actual referral is easier. (T) Some of the SCCs make use of the KVS tracking system, but most of them use a self-made system to track the progress of the students. In a few schools, there is no STS available. (PI) Nearly all SCCs see improvement in parental involvement, mainly due to the Active Parenting workshops.

Site-based Coordinators observe teachers in their classes and work with them to improve their classroom practices. Classroom changes—for now mainly in Cycle 1- were obvious to them: they saw differentiated instruction, grouping and learning centres in the classes. (R) About the reduction of referrals to Special Education (one of the system goals) one of them says it depends on the way the student care system is executed:

*“It depends on the schools. If the system is executed efficiently, it should help.”*

(T) One of the SBCs points to the need of tracking students, and relates the lack of tracking to the school boards because do would not think it is important enough.

Teachers see the increase of attention and help given to their students and to themselves as the main change since the implementation of student care. Nearly all teachers said in the interviews they made changes in their classroom organization due to student care and / or FBE. Main changes were grouping and differentiation in instruction. Most of these changes were made because of SCC suggestions. (R) Most teachers have no idea about the number of referrals. Some say it must have increased because the screening is improved. (T) Although not every school and therefore not every teacher has a student tracking system in place, the teachers who make use of it see benefits since it gives them better insights into the students in their class. (PI) Lots of teachers stated in the interviews that the parental involvement with their students was and / or is very bad. However, most of them also say that it was even worse a few years ago, so there has been some improvement.

#### Conclusion on perceived changes

The change to the student care system is seen as positive. Nearly all participants see more attention paid to individual children. (R) Most participants think the number of referrals to special education has remained the same, although they say more children are tested. (T) The use of tracking systems is very different per school although when a tracking system is used, the benefits are visible. The main benefit seen is a better insight in the child’s progress. (PI) Schools work on parental involvement mainly by executing the Active Parenting workshops



and the participants are positive about the efforts and its effects: parents attend the workshops and are positive. Most participants think parental involvement has increased. In the classroom some changes are seen as well. Teachers grouped students and make use of differentiation in their lessons. Suggestions made by the SCCs made them do so.

*B. Results available statistical information* – (See Appendix D for the tables) Only a few schools were able and willing to hand over some of the requested information. For many different reasons this was not available in other schools. The information that was available differed per school.

*Referrals* –(Table 1) For two schools (Seventh Day Adventist & Oranje School) the total number of students per school year were available. In one school, no children were referred to Special Education so the percentage of referred children remained 0 % over the years. The percentages of the other school showed changes but no clear increase or decrease over the years (table 2). For other schools only some referral numbers were available which led to the conclusion that in one school (Ruby Labega) the number of referrals increased in the last few years (but no information about the situation before the implementation of the student care system) and for another school (Methodist Agogic Centre) the number of referrals to Special Education decreased slightly after the implementation of the student care system.

*Academic achievement* – (Table 3 and 4) Statistics of two schools on the enrolment to secondary education, led to the conclusions that there is no change visible in the academic achievements of children from Hillside Christian Schools. Before and after the implementation of the student care system, about 70 % of the children entered Praktisch Kadergerichte Leerweg (PKL) or Theoretisch Kadergerichte Leerweg (TKL). No more children from Oranje School entered Vocational Education after the implementation of the Student Care System. The percentages of children entering Praktisch Basisgerichte Leerweg (PBL) and PKL has risen after the implementation. In percentages, less children from Oranje School entered TKL after the implementation than before, this decrease is –with one exceptional year- also visible for enrolment in Havo. In terms of the enrolment to secondary education, academic achievement of children from Oranje School, has decreased somewhat.

*Parental involvement* – (Table 5) From –partly estimated- percentages according to the attendance of parents at the Active Parenting workshops, can be concluded that parental involvement in terms of attendance, differs per school, from 10 % to 90 %.

### Conclusions based on available statistical information

The available statistics suggest that few effects are visible and differ a lot per school. The information shows that the number of referrals to Special Education has risen in one school, dropped in another and remained the same in two other schools. Besides this, for one school there was no change found in academic achievement, and for one other school the academic achievement has slightly decreased. Finally, the attendance for the Active Parenting workshops varies significantly per school.

### **3. Bottlenecks**

In the implementation and the execution of student care, the involved parties encountered three main bottlenecks which will be described in this section.

#### *A. Ratio Student Care Coordinators – students*

DERPI members say they are familiar with the request for more SCCs and one of the participants reacts to this by referring to report issues:

*“The Student Care Coordinators want a lower ratio, but to be honest, I cannot justify if this ratio is too high without a report.”*

Some of the interviewed school board members mention the unclear ratio as one of the bottlenecks in the student care system, and not the amount of students per SCC:

*“Ratio Student Care Coordinator – student, this must be made clear. Once we know how many SCC we can employ and we are assured that the subsidy is secured then we will see better results.”*

The school director's reactions according to the question about the ratio, can be divided into two groups. About half of the directors state their school is within or around the formal ratio, the opinion of the other half is that one or more extra SCCs are needed for their school. Few Student Care Coordinators think they are within the formal ratio. The rest of them is responsible for larger amounts of students, varying from 210 to 900 students. Most of the SCCs know if they are within the formal ratio, but at the same time some of them have no idea about this ratio. The majority of the teachers makes the remark that their school needs another SCC to be able to deal with all the students because the SCC is responsible for too many students.

Conclusion on bottleneck ratio The formal ratio student care coordinator : students (1 : 192) is exceeded in many cases. Policy makers like DERPI and school boards say reports are needed

to be sure about this and say the ratio is still unclear. On the other hand, SCCs state they can not deliver these reports since they are too busy because of the exceeded ratio.

### *B. Student Care Coordinator role and tasks (see Appendix A)*

One of the participating DERPI members says the SCC- profile now used is too broad:

*“If I had to do it again, I would make the criteria for the Student Care Coordinator more precise, they have to be able to deal with children and with adults. The profile that was now used, was too broad, there is more psychological profiling needed, of the Student Care Coordinator’s persons.”*

The school directors say they are still involved with some SCC tasks such as referrals. At the same time they say they are relieved about the tasks the SCC position has taken away from them. Some Student Care Coordinators say they try hard to stick to the SCC-profile. When asked about their daily activities, they exactly name the tasks mentioned in the profile. For other SCCs this is hard. The workload is something many SCCs describe as ‘overwhelming’. One of them explains the profile is broad and says the effect is he / she has to make choices:

*“Our task description is very broad. And yet, reality is different! (..) I just look to see what is really important for <school name> at that moment. I do not have all the things as DERPI wants me to, all these reports and things. I am trying but sometimes it becomes bureaucratic, and I feel like I am wasting my time with paperwork.”*

Some SCCs have other tasks in the school which make it hard for them to stick to the tasks in the profile. Lack of clarity is a problem as well: some SCCs see overlap with the tasks of a cycle coordinator. Some of the site-based coordinators say the SCCs do not stick to their profile:

*“The Student Care Coordinators are not doing exactly what they are supposed to do. They are tackling other issues, which do not belong to student care.”*

The participating teachers see the SCC role mainly as a help for the students and for themselves in classroom suggestions. One of the teachers would like the SCC to work more from his / her perspective:

*“The SCC can be very functional when she is well prepared and when she plans her activities from the perspective of the teachers, but that is hard to do.”*

Some teachers say they sometimes send children to the SCC to get help with reading or because they rebel against the teachers.

Conclusion on bottleneck of Student Care Coordinator role and tasks The SCC-profile was broad and that caused some ambiguity by participants about the exact role of the SCCs. The broad profile urges the SCCs to make choices: the actual tasks they carry out differ per

school. In some schools the SCCs are seen by teachers as a help line for the teacher to deal with children with learning or behavioral problems, and the SCCs respond to that by helping them.

### C. Needs

In nearly all the interviews, needs were mentioned by the participants. The lack of these things seems to be an important bottleneck in the system. See the list of Needs in Appendix E.

The summarizing word for the most frequent mentioned needs is ‘assistance’, such as an extra SCC, teacher assistants and extra specialists in and around the school. Finances are also a frequently mentioned need, as well as reports and clarity.

## **4. Inclusive education on St. Maarten**

In most interviews, the concept inclusive education was brought forward to the participants. They were usually positive about the idea because they saw positive aspects in the ideology of excluding no child from regular schools. Some teachers said inclusive education would help to develop independence of children and one of the SCC said it teaches tolerance:

*“Inclusion teaches tolerance, if done right. It can give students confidence, self esteem and a feeling of belonging.”*

Most other participants agree with this SCC about the concept. However, nearly all participants were also sceptical about the execution because of situational aspects of St. Maarten. Most of these aspects were similar to the aforementioned needs. One of the DERPI members said the burden on the teachers is heavy because of the amount of students and the lack of assistance:

*“The concept is fantastic. Because of the number of students in the class and the lack of educational assistants, in case of heavy problems it can be really tough for the teachers”*

It can be said that a mix of positive and sceptical feelings were present in almost all participants regarding inclusive education on St. Maarten.

## **5. Case studies**

In this case study two of the participating schools will be studied in more depth: the Seventh Day Adventist School and the Ruby Labega School. Both schools will first be shortly described and after that the findings on the aforementioned themes will be discussed.

The Seventh Day Adventist School (SDA) is a school with about 250 students and is located in the Cole Bay district. The school has two SCCs: one started in 2003 for Cycle 1 (grade 1-4), the other one started in 2008 for Cycle 2 (grade 5-8). The SDA School belongs to the Seventh Day Adventist Church; children attend this school mainly because of its religious identity. When the student care system was implemented, the Cycle 1 SCC was mainly busy with the tasks described in the SCC-profile, namely: monitoring student development, being a resource person and planning communication with teachers and parents. The school board member says to have taken FBE and student care very seriously and this urged the school board to – together with DERPI- put a lot of work into the resource centers (two at this school), to appoint two SCC and to supply teachers with materials. The result is a lower SCC : student ratio at this school than in other schools (1 to 148), one complete resource center and one that is not yet finished. When observing the lessons, it becomes clear that the Cycle 1 teacher has enough materials and competences to deal with all the different needs of the children in her multi-aged class. In the Cycle 2 class, this is different: the lesson is very classical and there is no differentiation here. The Cycle 2 SCC says she still has to get started since she came here in August 2008.

Involvement and cooperation – The SDA school board has put emphasis on involving everyone in FBE and student care: not only the principal and the SCCs, but also all the teachers and the parents of the children. The school board believes everyone's understanding and willingness is needed to let this innovation succeed. The school board also thinks involvement will improve the cooperation between the different parties. At this school, most participants see all stakeholders willing to cooperate for the child's best interest, although just like mentioned before: participants say that DERPI asks them to do one thing whereas their school board asks them something else.

Changes – Improved parental involvement (mainly due to the Active Parenting workshops), better record keeping (with a non-digital tracking system) and more individual attention paid to children are seen as the main changes student care has made. Participants say the number of referrals to special education has not changed but because of the closer eye on students, no child is overlooked and children are only referred when it is absolutely necessary. These changes are only for the referrals seen in the school's statistical information

Bottlenecks - Ratio – At this school there is a relatively low ratio SCC : students and this is experienced as very positive by all participants because it gives the SCCs the opportunity to do what they have to do. Still, one of the SCCs feels very overwhelmed by the workload.

SCC-profile – The SCCs at this school stick to their SCC-profile. This is possible because of the low ratio, because of the FBE-competences of the teachers (they can handle the children in their class and do not send them to the SCC) and because of the clear role these SCCs have in the school. Everyone, including parents, knows what their job is so they are not asked for other things. Needs – Needs mentioned at this school are an assistant to input tracking data, smaller classes, teacher assistants and more willingness from everybody involved in student care.

Inclusive education - Inclusive education is seen as a challenge in this school, because of the diversity at St. Maarten. To execute it efficiently, the school would like to have more money to pay teacher assistants.

The *Ruby Labega School* is a public school with about 225 students, located in the St. Peters district. The school has one SCC that accepted her job in 2003. Many children at this school come from non-English speaking countries and some children who were not placed in special education, came to this school instead. These issues made the student care system seen as ‘God sent’ by one of the teachers at this school. An important issue for the SCC at this school is awareness. She tries to make teachers more aware of the challenges the children in the school face in their lives. The school does not have place for a resource center at this time, so there is none.

Involvement and cooperation – Since the school director is very familiar with different student care instruments, she was more closely involved with the contents of student care than school directors in other schools. The involvement of the school director with student care can also be seen in the cooperation between her and the SCC at this school. She wants to control a lot of the things the SCC is doing. The SCC feels the high involvement of the director as a support. All participants say there is a good cooperation and communication between all parties, although the SCC would like to see more cooperation from some teachers.

Changes – The main changes perceived are improved tracking (a self-developed, non-digital tracking system is used) but it only tracks grades which the SCC is not satisfied with. More awareness about the challenges students are facing is seen as well as an increase in the number of referrals to special education because of more attention paid to students. Parental involvement has improved a little bit due to the Active Parenting workshops but is still very low. The changes in referrals are also visible in the statistical information from this school.

Bottlenecks - Ratio – The formal ratio is exceeded slightly at this school: SCC is responsible for all students. A teacher and the SCC say an extra SCC is needed.

SCC-profile – The position of the SCC is seen as a relief for the heavy burden by the teachers, although the school director wants her to document more things than she is doing right now. This SCC says she tries to stick to the SCC-profile but feels overwhelmed. Needs – Many needs are mentioned at this school, main themes are assistance and adjustments.

Inclusive education - Situational aspects make the participants from this school see inclusive education as impossible. They do see the positive aspects of the concept, but immediately add that the lack of enough specialists and all other needed adjustments will make it impossible to execute inclusive education at this school. The linguistic background of the children is also seen as a bottleneck in this school.

## **DISCUSSION**

In this section theory and results of this study are brought together, recommendations are formulated (see Appendix F) and answers to the research questions are given. To increase the readability and to prevent overlap, the answers to the sub questions and the discussion on the different themes in the result section are integrated. This section will close with some suggestions for further research.

*Implementation of the system* – In most schools, most parts of the student care system were implemented; all the schools did appoint one or two SCCs and the Active Parenting workshops were carried out successfully to improve parental involvement. Tracking systems and resource centers are not implemented in every school as yet. It is recommended to make sure all schools implement all aspects of the system since Gerber (1996) stated the importance of implementing a system as a whole for otherwise the goals will not be reached.

*Involvement and cooperation* – A high level of involvement with the implementation and good cooperation would increase the chance of a successful implementation (Raadsen & Knorth, 2000; Tether & Tajar, 2008). The results of this study lead to the conclusion that since at the time of the implementation of the system the level of involvement was not the same for all groups this might have influenced the success of the innovation and the degree of cooperation between the different groups. It is recommended to set up an organizational schedule (see Appendix F.1) in which all groups and their roles are represented. This will make it easier for the different levels to understand the roles of everyone involved with the student care system and to cooperate accordingly (Anthony di Benedetto & Calantone, 1994).

*Change* – The student care system had several goals such as a reduced number of referrals to special education, improved academic achievement and increased parental involvement

(Vermeersch, 2005). On some of these aspects and on other aspects as well, changes are visible, although it is not sure student care was always the main and only cause for these changes. The number of referrals to Special Education were not available in every school but did not seem to be reduced and in some schools even increased. The reason for the increase of referrals in some schools might be the closer eye on students due to the improved student tracking in most schools. Although not every school uses an official tracking system, schools do see the benefits of tracking since it gives them insight in the students' progress. Most participants see an increase in parental involvement due to the Active Parenting workshops but this is not visible in statistical information. It is recommended to use a standard digital tracking system (see Appendix F.2) in all the schools so the progress of the student can be tracked properly and more uniform data can be collected from the schools. This might help to see more clearly whether the system goals are being reached and what adjustments are needed. The increased individual attention paid to children is mentioned by a lot of participants and although this is not one of the goals of the student care system, it connects to the FBE goals in setting up child centered education (Stone, 2007). Overall, all participants saw the implementation of the student care system as a positive innovation.

*Bottlenecks* - The three main bottlenecks mentioned in the execution of the student care system are (1) the ratio SCC : students which is too high in many cases, (2) the broadness of the SCC-profile which leads to unclear tasks and different execution of the SCC function in the different schools and (3) the variety of needs present in every school which make it hard to execute the student care system properly. Gerber's (1996) statement of implementing all the requirements of a system counts here as well: without enough SCCs and the fulfilling of needs, the student care system will not function properly. The case study of the SDA school shows the benefits of enough SCCs in a school, the benefits of SCCs who stick to their profile and the benefits of needs taken seriously. It is therefore recommended to employ enough SCCs in every school (according to the ratio) and to set up an organizational schedule to make the SCC role more clear to the SCCs and to others in the school. To be able to fulfil the needs of the different schools, it might be useful to think about the implementation of person bound budgets for children. Just like in the Dutch system, this might give schools the opportunity to appoint the specialists they need for their students so their needs can be fulfilled (Meijer, 2004). At the Ruby Labega school, for example, this measurement might enable the school to properly help children with another linguistic background.

*Inclusive education* – The participants are positive about the rationale for inclusive education such as mentioned by Kirk, Gallagher and Anastasiow (2000) who say special needs children



should not be kept apart. However, when it comes down to the realization of inclusive education, participants differ in their views and see dilemmas mainly due to the lack of specialists and SCCs. The aforementioned recommendations might change these views since they would improve the student care system and therefore make it easier to execute inclusive education on St. Maarten.

### **Answer to the general research question**

Vermeersch (2005) stated a solid integral student care system was needed to execute inclusive education effectively. In answer to the general research question, from this research can be concluded that the student care system is implemented to a great extent in the FBE-schools on St. Maarten. However, since the effects in referral numbers, academic achievement and parental involvement are not clearly visible at this moment, it can be said that the student care system may not function optimally yet. To be the important tool student care could and maybe should be in inclusive education, the student care system must be improved with the given recommendations. With a fully implemented and well functioning student care system on St. Maarten, a proper, effective execution of inclusive education on St. Maarten might only be a few steps away.

### **Suggestions for further research**

As for further research, more statistical information should be collected and analyzed, parents should be interviewed as well to improve the measurement of parental involvement and an evaluation should be carried out on the execution and effect of the recommendations mentioned in this research.

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## APPENDIX A – Student Care Coordinator Profile



### ISLAND TERRITORY OF ST. MAARTEN

## DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, POLICY, AND INNOVATION

### PROFILE STUDENT CARE COORDINATOR

Based on the principles of Foundation Based Education (FBE)

- Developmental approach
- Heterogeneous grouping
- Evaluation / Assessment
- Independent learning
- Team approach of school, teacher and parents
- Prevention / Referrals

The Student Care Coordinator

- In FBE the teacher is supported by a Student Care Coordinator (SCC)
- The Student Care Coordinator is the central point

Main Task SCC: Coordinate

- Student support and guidance, student performance and development
- Developments in education
- Supervision of a documentation center for teachers

Coordination of Documentation Center

- Professional literature is available
- Material for supervision
- Material for testing children

SCC as central support system

- For students
- for colleagues
- for parents of students

Works close with management

#### Requirements SCC

- Knowledge of new teaching methods and lesson materials
- Knowledge of the development of children (cognitive, social-emotional and motor)
- Ability to motivate and stimulate the individual child
- Knowledge about different learning styles, different thinking styles, taking into consideration the individual child and the group process
- Creative and flexible towards curriculum control and development
- Open contact with parents of students
- Knowledge about testing methods, testing materials and methods of evaluation
- Ability to evaluate the development and performance of the child
- Manage a Student Tracking System
- Documenting the student's development and performances
- Early detection of developmental / learning problems
- Early detection of behavior problems
- Preventive approach towards learning and behavior problems

#### Working Skills SCC

- Coaching and motivating colleagues in FBE process
- Monitoring development and performance of students
- Informing and involving parents of students in FBE process
- Computer skills (student tracking system)
- Statistical data interpretation and control of student information
- Accept flexible working hours

## **APPENDIX B - Overview of research participants**

### *3 DERPI members*

Mrs. Patricia Lourens (Head of Department)  
Ms. Carmencita Chemont (Psychologist)  
Mrs. Eveline John (Psychologist)

### *5 School board members*

Mrs. Asha Stevens (Christian School Board)  
Mrs. Lilia Aventurin-Hodge (Catholic School Board)  
Mr. Alvin Connor (Seventh Day Adventist School Board)  
Mrs. Bryson (Public School Board)  
Mr. Clinton Spring (Methodist Agogic Center School Board)

### *13 School directors*

Oranje School  
Hillside Christian Schools (two directors)  
Sr. Borgia  
Seventh Day Adventist  
Sr. Regina  
Leonald Conner  
Sr. Magda Primary  
Sr. Marie Laurence  
St. Dominic Primary  
Ruby Labega  
St. Joseph  
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

### *4 (Ex-)Site-based coordinators*

Oralie Boirard  
Claudia Connor  
Celia Stewart  
Patricia Williams

### *17 Student Care Coordinators*

Oranje School  
Hillside Christian Schools (two SCC)  
Sr. Borgia  
Seventh Day Adventist (two SCC)  
Sr. Regina  
Prins Willem Alexander School  
Leonald Conner  
Sr. Magda Primary (two SCC)  
Sr. Marie Laurence  
St. Dominic Primary  
Ruby Labega  
St. Joseph  
Browlia F. Maillard Campus & Rev. John Gumbs Campus (one SCC)  
Marie Genevieve de Weever

*20 Teachers*

Oranje School (one teacher)

Hillside Christian Schools (two teachers)

Sr. Borgia (two teachers)

Seventh Day Adventist (one teacher)

Sr. Regina (two teachers)

Leonald Conner (two teachers)

Sr. Magda Primary (one teacher)

Sr. Marie Laurence ((two teachers)

St. Dominic Primary (two teachers)

Ruby Labega (one teacher)

St. Joseph (two teachers)

Browlia F. Maillard Campus & Rev. John Gumbs Campus (two teachers)

*Other*

One Cycle Coordinator (Oranje School) – Appeared to not be useful for this study

**Total            62 participants**

## **APPENDIX C – Structured interviews for 6 different groups**

### **DERPI-members**

- 1 In what way have you been involved with the introduction of the student care system?
  - 2 If I would ask you to describe the student care system in three words, what would you say?
  - 3 What differences do you see compared to the situation before, now that the student care system is working for a few years?
  - 4 How do you think these four aspects have changed in the last years, due to the student care system:
    - A number of referrals to special education
    - B information received from data of student tracking systems
    - C ratio student care coordinator / students
    - D parental involvement
  - 5 What is your overall feeling about the change? Is it positive or negative and can you explain your answer?
  - 6 What is your opinion about the cooperation with others in the student care system (directors, student care coordinators, teachers) ?
  - 7 Can you argument why the choice for this kind of student care was made?
  - 8 Do you think the student care system as it was broadcasted by DERPI was compatible for the schools and its students here at Sint Maarten or was it necessary to change some aspects? If yes, what things have been changed and why?  
→ Since Wednesday February 4th: What do you think of the concept of inclusive education?
- 

### **Representatives of school boards**

- 1 What does student care mean to you?
  - 2 How involved was your school board with the introduction of the student care system?
  - 3 Why was this kind of student care chosen?
  - 4 If I would ask you to describe the student care system in three words, what would you say?
  - 5 What is your opinion about the concept inclusive education on St. Maarten?
  - 6 What is your overall feeling about the change? Please explain your answer?
  - 7 How is the cooperation with others in the student care system?
  - 8 What are the bottlenecks in the student care system?
- 

### **School directors**

- 1 In what way have you been involved with the introduction of the student care system?
- 2 If I would ask you to describe the student care system in three words, what would you say?
- 3 What differences do you see compared to the situation before, now that the student care system is working for a few years?
- 4 How do you think these four aspects have changed in the last years, due to the student care system:
  - A number of referrals to special education

B information received from data of student tracking systems

C ratio student care coordinator / students

D parental involvement

5 Is there a student tracking system at your school and is it up-to-date? How many students and how many student care coordinators are in your school? + What kind of data are tracked and how are these data used?

6 How do you feel about not having to do the referrals in your schools anymore, now it is done by de Student Care Coordinator?

7 What is your overall opinion about the change? Is it positive or negative and can you explain your answer?

8 What is your opinion about the cooperation with others in the student care system (DERPI, student care coordinators, teachers) ?

9 Do you think the student care system as it was broadcasted by DERPI, was compatible for the school and students at Sint Maarten? Was it compatible for your school? Why?

10 Has the student care system undergone any changes since it was introduced at your school? Can you tell what changes there were made, why were they made and who made them?

→ Since Wednesday February 4th: what do you think of the concept of inclusive education?

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### **Student Care Coordinators**

1 In what way have you been involved with the introduction of the student care system?

2 If I would ask you to describe the student care system in three words, what would you say?

3 What differences do you see compared to the situation before, now that the student care system is working for a few years?

4 How do you think these four aspects have changed in the last years, due to the student care system:

A number of referrals to special education

B information received from data of student tracking systems

C ratio student care coordinator / students

D parental involvement

5 What is your overall feeling about the change? Is it positive or negative and can you explain your answer?

6 What is your opinion about the cooperation with others in the student care system (DERPI, directors, teachers) ?

7 Do you know for how many students you are responsible and do you know about the formal rules concerning that ratio?

8 How do you feel about the workload and can you explain your answer?

9 What is your opinion about your role as student care coordinator in the student care system?

10 What is your opinion about the training for student care coordinator that you have received? Do you have any recommendations for these trainings?

11 Do you think the student care system as it was broadcasted by DERPI, was compatible for the school and students at Sint Maarten? Was it compatible for your school? Why?

12 Has the student care system undergone any changes since it was introduced at your school? Can you tell what changes there were made, why were they made and who made them?



→ Since Wednesday February 4th: what do you think of the concept of inclusive education?

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### **Site-based Coordinators**

- 1 What is your daily activity?
  - 2 What did you have to do with the student care system?
  - 3 Could you describe the student care system in three words?
  - 4 How do you see the role of the SCC?
  - 5 Do you think teachers have changed their classroom organization?
  - 6 What do you think of the choice for the system and how it was made?
  - 7 What is your opinion about the cooperation between the different stakeholders?
  - 8 What changes do you see compared to a few years ago when the student care system was not introduced yet?
  - 9 Has the system brought a solution for the problems? (Mainly: too many referrals to special education?)
  - 10 What do you think could be improved?
- 

### **Teachers**

- 1 In what way have you been involved with the introduction of the student care system?
- 2 If I would ask you to describe the student care system in three words, what would you say?
- 3 What differences do you see compared to the situation before, now that the student care system is working for a few years?
- 4 How do you think these four aspects have changed in the last years, due to the student care system:
  - A number of referrals to special education
  - B information received from data of student tracking systems
  - C ratio student care coordinator / students
  - D parental involvement
- 5 What is your overall feeling about the change? Is it positive or negative and can you explain your answer?
- 6 What is your opinion about the cooperation with others in the student care system (DERPI, directors, student care coordinators) ?
- 7 Do you think the student care system as it was broadcasted by DERPI, was compatible for the school and students at Sint Maarten? Was it compatible for your school? Why?
- 8 Has the student care system undergone any changes since it was introduced at your school? Can you tell what changes there were made, why were they made and who made them?
- 9 How do you feel about the care that is now given to your students?
- 10 Have you made changes in your classroom organization since the system was introduced? What kind of changes and why?
- 11 How do you feel about the involvement of the children's parents with the education?

→ Since Wednesday February 4th: what do you think of the concept of inclusive education?

## APPENDIX D – Statistical information

### (1) Referrals to Special Education

Statistical information about the number of children referred to Special Education from six schools, before and after the implementation of the student care system.

Table 1. Referrals to special education

<b>REFERRALS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION (number + (amount of students in the school that year))</b>						
	OS	RL	HCS	SDA	LC	MAC
<i>Before implementation SCS</i>						
2002-2003	3 (321)	?	?	? (249)	?	12
2003-2004	3 (308)	?	?	0 (227)	?	8
<i>After implementation SCS</i>						
2004-2005	1 (414)	?	?	0 (222)	?	8
2005-2006	? (418)	?	?	0 (247)	?	6
2006-2007	9 (403)	19	?	0 (244)	?	7
2007-2008	3 (380)	30	7	0 (257)	6	5
2008-2009	? (?)	45	?	? (247)	?	?

Table 2. Referrals from Oranje School to Special Education in percentages

<b>REFERRALS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION (percentages of total amount of students per school year)</b>	
	OS
<i>Before implementation SCS</i>	
2002-2003	0,9%
2003-2004	1,0%
<i>After implementation SCS</i>	
2004-2005	0,2%
2005-2006	??
2006-2007	2,2%
2007-2008	0,8%
2008-2009	??

Abbreviations:

(SCS = Student Care System)

OS = Oranje School

RL = Ruby Labega School

HCS = Hillside Christian Schools

SDA = Seventh Day Adventist

LC = Leonald Conner School

MAC = Methodist Agogic Centre

(2) Academic achievement

Statistical information about the secondary education children enter after primary school from two schools, before and after the implementation of the student care system.

Table 3. Academic achievement in numbers

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT (number of children entering different kinds of secondary education)												
	Vocational		PBL		PKL		TKL		Havo		Totals	
	OS	HCS	OS	HCS	OS	HCS	OS	HCS	OS	HCS	OS	HCS
<i>Before implementation SCS</i>												
2002-2003	?	0	6	3	12	37	14	14	5	8	37	62
2003-2004	2	0	5	15	17	6	18	26	3	5	45	52
<i>After implementation SCS</i>												
2004-2005	0	0	2	3	7	26	21	22	1	9	31	60
2005-2006	0	0	12	2	14	24	13	20	1	7	40	53
2006-2007	0	0	12	4	15	38	12	22	5	6	44	70
2007-2008	0	?	20	?	17	?	8	?	1	?	46	?

Table 4. Academic achievement in percentages

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT (number of children in percentages of total amount)										
	Vocational		PBL		PKL		TKL		Havo	
	OS	HCS	OS	HCS	OS	HCS	OS	HCS	OS	HCS
<i>Before implementation SCS</i>										
2002-2003	--	0,0%	16,2%	4,8%	32,4%	59,7%	37,8%	22,6%	13,5%	12,9%
2003-2004	4,4%	0,0%	11,1%	28,8%	37,8%	11,5%	40,0%	50,0%	6,7%	9,6%
<i>After implementation SCS</i>										
2004-2005	0,0%	0,0%	6,5%	5,0%	22,6%	43,3%	67,7%	36,7%	3,2%	15,0%
2005-2006	0,0%	0,0%	30,0%	3,8%	35,0%	45,3%	32,5%	37,7%	2,5%	13,2%
2006-2007	0,0%	0,0%	27,3%	5,7%	34,1%	54,3%	27,3%	31,4%	11,4%	8,6%
2007-2008	0,0%	--	43,5%	--	37,0%	--	17,4%	--	2,2%	--

Abbreviations:

(SCS = Student Care System)

PBL = Praktisch Basisgerichte

Leerweg

PKL = Praktisch Kadergerichte

Leerweg

TKL = Technish Kadergerichte

Leerweg

OS = Oranje School

HCS = Hillside Christian Schools

*Parental involvement*

Measured or estimated attendance of parents at Active Parenting workshops in three schools, after the implementation of the student care system.

Table 5. Attendance to Active Parenting workshops

<b>PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT (estimated attendance at the Active Parenting workshops in percentages)</b>		
<b>School</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	
Leonald Conner	10%	
Martin Luther King	50%	
Prins Willem Alexander	90%	

## **APPENDIX E – Needs as indicated by the different research groups**

### DERPI

- reports
- support system (external care)
- better communication

### School board members

- clarity about ratio student care coordinators : students
- more SCCs
- finances
- facilities
- willingness and FBE taken seriously by anybody

### School directors

- more work on parental involvement
- action / willingness from teachers concerning FBE
- external support
- teacher assistants

### Student Care Coordinators

- extra SCCs
- appropriate tracking system
- specialists to care for students
- follow-up training
- clarity about tasks
- more teachers and material
- FBE training for teachers

### Site-based Coordinators

- data from the schools
- improvement of FBE teaching practices
- clarified role social worker vs. SCC
- psychologist / specialist
- executing the system as it is described

### Teachers

- extra SCCs
- trainings / tools to deal with different students
- teachers
- smaller classes

## **APPENDIX F - Recommendations (elaborated)**

### *F.1 Organizational schedule*

Make a schedule in which the roles of DERPI, school boards, school directors, Student Care Coordinators, Site-based Coordinators and teachers are clearly described. Use arrows to show who is supervising who and make sure everyone in the school knows the schedule by discussing it with them (teachers, SCC, school director, school board). Put it on the wall in the teacher's room. DERPI and the school boards should also have this schedule somewhere they can find it easily. This might make the different roles clear for anybody involved which helps the SCCs stick to their role.

### *F. 2 Standard digital tracking system*

In case of a standard digital tracking system information can easily be found and compared. The needed reports can be written and no space is needed for archives. In addition: the tracking system in the Methodist Agogic Centre Schools might be used as framework.

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