

eduScrum goes international!



eduScrum International Team, credits to Alisa Stolze.

The pioneers

With the goal of laying out the foundation for the international expansion of **eduScrum**, a framework for coaching students where the responsibility for the learning process is delegated from the teacher to the students, last February 23–25, 2017, **Willy Wijnands**, the initiator and founder of eduScrum, together with **Alisa Stolze** as his co-trainer, invited 14 Education pioneers with different backgrounds from around the world for the 1st eduScrum International Training:

- Alejandra Topete Jiménez from Mexico.
- Christian Breternitz from Germany.
- Christian Nowak from Austria.
- Cristina Winters from the Netherlands.
- Denise Newnham from Switzerland.
- Emmanuel Ponchon from Spain.

- Filip Windels from Belgium.
- Günther Schiemer from Austria.
- Joachim Gruwez from Belgium.
- José Lomelin Larios from Mexico.
- Manfred Wagner from Austria.
- Marie Mertens from Belgium.
- Nuno Rafael Gomes from Portugal.
- Patrick Giefing from Austria.

Knowing each other

I arrived on Thursday night, February 23, at Alphen aan den Rijn train station. Willy picked me up and we went to the Van der Valk Hotel Avifauna, where the international training was going to take place.



[Van der Valk Hotel Avifauna](#)

When I arrived I finally met the other pioneers from around the world: secondary, vocational and special education teachers, school owners, principals and pedagogic staff, agile coaches and people simply interested in seeking an alternative to the “real”

Scrum. Regardless of their background or profession, all of them are eduScrum pioneers in their own home countries.

We gathered in the hotel's bar for a couple of hours, meeting each other and sharing some of our own experiences about eduScrum, Scrum, Agile in Education, Active Learning and some other related topics.

A special word to Emmanuel Ponchon (from Spain): we finally meet in person and what a wonderful conversation we had :-)

In the classroom

On Thursday, February 23, the pioneers visited Willy's chemistry classes at the [Ashram College](#) at Alphen aan den Rijn – Netherlands.

Unfortunately I wasn't there with the group, but on May 26 I had my opportunity with [Willy Wijnands](#) and [Arno Delhij](#), co-author of the [eduScrum Guide](#).

It was really inspiring to see and feel the invisible power of eduScrum working in the classroom. I could try to explain some of things I saw, or even felt, but logic, words, and even pictures, can't capture the true essence of it.

At first I couldn't fully understand what I was witnessing: it was something beyond my very limited "logical brain". But by calmly watching Willy and kids "playing eduScrum" from the back of the room, somehow I did.

The best analogy I can think of is a beautiful flower: you can't grasp its beauty by closely examining it, by identifying its constituent parts, or whatever.

The best way to capture a flower true essence is to take a step back, look onto it from a distance, and "watch" its wholeness, its

color and shape patterns, the spaces in between its petals and its leaves and how it “moves” within the surroundings. Really, to see is not the same as to understand.

After so many years trying to find the “honeypot at the end of the Agile rainbow”, I finally got it: eduScrum in Willy’s classroom is that wholeness, the patterns, the spaces in between, the “vibration”, the “flow of energy”.

Many thanks for the experience Willy. Unforgettable.



An eduScrum classroom.



An eduScrum Team doing a daily lesson stand up.



An eduScrum Team Flap.

Setting the stage

On Friday morning we met for the training by quarter to nine.

Willy started by raising the following questions:

- Who are you?
- Why are you here?
- What's important to you?
- What does trust mean for you?

We played a **wonderful card game** to introduce ourselves and try to answer the above questions :-)

At the end Willy shared his thoughts about the **why**:

Your why is important; please, always share your why with your students.

Your students' why is even more important; always give them the opportunity to find out why they want to learn before starting with eduScrum.

... and about **trust**:

If you do not trust your students, you should not start with eduScrum.

We then brainstormed our **Definition of Fun** (DoF) for the training, by trying to answer the following questions:

- What do you need to have fun during your work?
- But most importantly, how do you want to learn?

Here's an excerpt of the DoF we came up with:

Ask questions.

Tell stories.
Play games.
Enjoy process.
Laugh.
Take care.
Take a break when needed.
Do not go too fast.
Cell phones off.

Willy continued to challenge us through powerful questions and videos.

The next question was:

- Is creativity somehow related with learning? And how about fun?

We watched “Doen is de beste manier van denken”, meaning, “Doing is the best kind of thinking”, by Arthur Kruisman and Patrick Donath:

Doing is the best kind of thinking, by Arthur Kruisman and Patrick Donath.

After a brief collective reflection, our conclusion was:

Creativity happens on the borders, near or where the chaos is.

To unleash creativity you have to let self-organization to happen.

The more creative you are, the more you'll learn and the more fun you'll have.

Then Willy asked us:

- Are you preparing your students for the past or the future?

And we watched Prince Ea's video, "I just sued the school system":

I just sued the school system, by Prince Ea.

After another collective reflection, our conclusion was:

Learning how to learn is way more important than to simply learn "stuff".

Every student has some talent "waiting" to be discovered and developed.

The most important duty of a Teacher is to guide students throughout their own learning journeys.

By this moment we were ready to start learning together :-)

Experiment, fail, learn, repeat

After a short break we self-organized into small teams of 4/5 based on our skills and personal qualities, developed our own teams' identities and Willy gave us our 1st assignment: to come up with a tasty, healthy and responsible menu to learn the link between chemistry and nutrition!

While playing our first learning cycles, Willy and Alisa guided us through:

- The **eduScrum definition**: a framework where the responsibility for the learning process is delegated from the teacher to the students, and within which students can tackle complex adaptive problems on their own by having the freedom to determine their own learning process within given boundaries and learning goals.
- Empiricism (empirical process control theory), the same foundation as **"vanilla" Scrum**.

- The similarities and differences between Scrum and eduScrum.
- The **eduScrum Team** = Student Team (students) + eduScrum Master (student) + Product Owner (teacher).
- The **eduScrum Values**: Freedom, Commitment, Autonomy, Personal Growth, Focus, Trust, Ownership and Authenticity.
- The **eduScrum Principles**: Transparency, Inspection, Adaptation, Collaboration, Reflection, Visibility and Iteration.
- The relationship between Trust, Delegation, Ownership and Transparency behind eduScrum (Agile Learning loop).
- The eduScrum basic concepts: its roles, events and artifacts and the rules that bind them together.
- How to build our own eduScrum Flap, that is, the information radiator (boards) on which students plan and manage their work.

A few iterations later all teams were somehow struggling, either by not being able to plan properly, doing the work within each timeslot, being able to demo it to the rest of the class, or improving their way of work through retrospectives.

For many of us, all of this was too stretching: acquiring new knowledge and, at the same time, working together to complete the proposed work was simply too much. In other words, all teams were right in the middle of a “storming” phase :-)

Willy and Alisa decided to run a final collective retrospective for the 1st assignment by playing a classical Agile game: the **Ballpoint challenge**. Since I already knew the game, I played the role of the time keeper.

At the end of the game, the group came up with the following conclusions:

Self-organization is key to optimize the flow and increase the throughput.

To increase the throughput, a work-in-progress limit together with a pull system always beats a push system with high “resource” utilization.

Self-management is key for continuous improvement (kaizen) of a team’s way of working.

We don’t need to work harder to deliver more value, we just need to work smarter.

eduScrum and Scrum, are both lightweight and simple to understand, but very difficult to master :-)

Going deep

After our 1st assignment, Willy and Alisa gave us the next one: let’s organize a party!

Again, and while we were playing and learning, Willy guided us through some of the most powerful topics of eduScrum:

- The Sangen of eduScrum, that is, its three basic building blocks.
- The differences and relationships between the WHY, the WHAT and the HOW, inspired by Simon Sinek’s work.
- The 21st Century Skills and the **4Cs of Education**: Creativity, Collaboration, Critical Thinking and Communication.
- The Ideas Iceberg :-)

- The **5 “bricks” of a strong Team**, how they relate with each other, with Education and eduScrum, inspired by Patrick Lencioni’s work.
- The **PDSA learning & improvement cycle** and it relates with Scrum and eduScrum, inspired by W. Edwards Deming’s work.
- **Shuhari**, or as Willy putted so well, “listen to the master”, that is, the 3 stages of learning to mastery we all go through when acquiring, practicing and mastering a new skill.
- Some Zhan Zhuang exercises (translating, “to stand like a tree”) to use our natural power of breathing to increase our energy levels.

This part of the training touched me in a very special way:

I was connecting the dots once again by looking backwards, to my own past.

Suddenly, my previous personal and professional experiences, my passion for Education and Eastern philosophy (namely Japanese), all my current Lean and Agile knowledge, were somehow intertwined and made perfect sense.

In a nutshell, we just need to teach Deming’s PDSA cycles to students, teachers, etc... the rest will follow naturally.

Thanks again Willy and Alisa.

After playing a few learning & improvement cycles and finishing our work, the first day was almost ending. Willy and Alisa asked us to do a personal retrospective by answering the following questions:

- What did you like the most?

- What insights did it give you?
- What did surprise you most?
- What did you learn & what are you going to apply?

Some of my own answers:

Q: What did I like the most?

A: The holistic way of explaining human systems.

Q: What insights did it give me?

A: How it is really easy to connect “strangers” in just 2 hours :-)

Q: What did surprise you most?

A: The Willy’s special explanation about the link between the WHY, the WHAT and the HOW.

Q: What did you learn & what are you going to apply?

A: Patrick Lencioni’s work.

And before leaving the room we played the **feedback game** for the 1st time. Here, some excerpts of the feedback given by the group:

Working together as the kids helps understand a lot :-)

Variety of hands-on activities and games, different rhythms, fun!

Deeper explanation of concepts with real life examples.

eduScrum thinking “mixed” with Eastern philosophy: enlightening!

Dinner mingle

At the end of the day we had a delightful dinner together: as we were more attuned to each other, this was a very special moment where we shared knowledge, experiences, challenges and ideas. And we continued our stimulating conversations at the hotel's bar for a couple of hours more :-)



eduScrum International Team dinner.

Teachers and eduScrum

We started the next day at around 8:30 am with a Zhan Zhuang exercise :-)

Willy and Alisa guided us through some practical aspects of eduScrum from a Teacher point of view:

- The Teacher as a Servant Leader to the Student Teams.
- Some powerful questions to ask students before starting with eduScrum: What do you want to learn? How do you want to learn? What do you want from me? What do you need from your team members?
- Learning Goals, Definition of Done (DoD) and Acceptance Criteria: official definitions, how they relate with each other

and with monitoring and evaluation, and why they are important for students and their learning journeys.

- **The Sprint:** how to define and plan the lessons within a timebox for a learning goal, how to interleave regular classes in a given timebox, how to properly start and finish a sprint (planning, review and retrospective), how each lesson should start (daily lesson stand ups) and how to combine eduScrum with the standard school evaluation system (content assessment tests).
- **Retrospectives:** why they are important for students and their learning process, difference between a team and a (collective) classroom retrospective, and some retrospective models and techniques.
- Some considerations about using eduScrum across different classrooms and subjects: weekly teacher stand ups (Scrum of Scrums).
- Final Q&A session about eduScrum.

The final challenge

After this Willy and Alisa gave us our 3rd and final assignment: come up with a project to use eduScrum on our own schools, or extend it beyond the classroom.

After a new team formation episode (included in the planning event of eduScrum) Denise Newnham, Christian Breternitz and I made up the **F1 Team** with the following **learning goal**:
How can we support groups of students to run side projects in Schools?

From a **Lean point of view** this is also our **problem statement**.

Digging it into more detail we came up with:

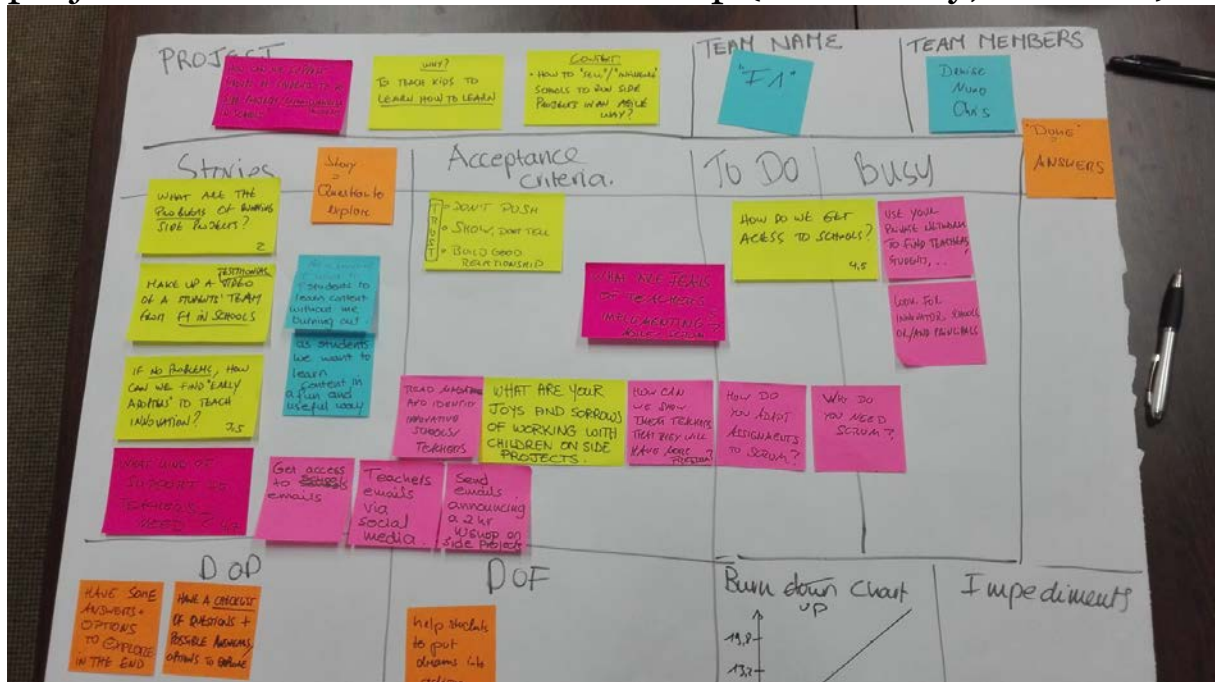
- Q: **Who** is affected by the problem?
A: Students directly, and K-12 schools indirectly.
- Q: **What** is the problem?
A: Accordingly to our own shared experiences (amongst all trainees present in the room), most K-12 schools don't run extra curricula projects in an Agile way. This is a tremendous wasted opportunity to really prepare students for the 21st century.
- Q: **Why** is it important to solve the problem?
A: In order to prepare students for the 21st century, we should embrace every opportunity to foster the 4Cs of Education (creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and communication).
- Q: **Where** is the problem occurring?
A: This problem is occurring on almost all K-12 schools (our assumption based on our shared experiences).
- Q: **When** does this problem occur?
A: With notable exceptions, this problem occurs when kids are attending a K-12 school, from the kindergarten through grade 12.
- Q: **How** are we going to try to solve the problem?
A: We are going to try to indirectly solve the problem by influencing K-12 schools to run side projects in an Agile way.

Our assumptions are:

- We believe this is a common problem faced by most of the K-12 schools around the world.
- We believe the majority of K-12 schools are open to improve the way in which their students' extra-curricular projects are developed.
- We believe we can come up with some powerful questions and potential options/answers to explore later by other pioneers, that will instill schools into thinking and changing their way of running students' side projects.

Finally, we defined our **value proposition**:
Teach kids to “learn how to learn” through side projects in a creative and fun way.

After a few learning and improvement cycles, here’s our current project status shown on the below Flap (a bit messy, we know):



Final assignment, a work-in-progress by Denise, Chris and me.

We are still away from finishing this assignment: we believe that we can finish it over the next coming weeks by working together on weekly learning and improvement cycles.

eduScrum from the trenches

In the afternoon Willy offered us a very special gift: the stunning opportunity to talk with some of “his” students about their learning journeys with eduScrum.

This was **the most magical moment of all**: we had the chance to “interview” them in groups, and learn a lot from their wisdom :-)

Here some of the insights we captured from them:

We learn much more through self-organized learning teams.

Teachers are really there (in the classroom) to help us and facilitate our learning.

It's motivating to plan our own work and see the final results of it.

eduScrum teamwork is a powerful way to boost our self-confidence.

Prioritization is something I use on my daily live: generally speaking, it makes everything much easier.

Even our colleagues with “traditional” learning difficulties manage to excel themselves with eduScrum in a couple of sprints: it's that powerful.

I have already taught my parents some concepts of eduScrum to use on our daily family life and routines :-)

At the end we played the **feedback game** again. Here, some excerpts of the feedback given by the group:

Inspiring, instructive, relaxed.

Trust the students: they will know/feel what they want.

Students learn a lot more with eduScrum than just content.

Very impressed by the maturity and profound thinking of these kids.

Best exchange of knowledge ever!

In a word: **magical**. Thank you all!



eduScrum students sharing some of their wisdom with all of us.

Definition of Done

And, at end of this remarkable second training session, we were ready to sign each other's certificates of participation to officially become eduScrum Teachers :-)



Willy saying “thank you” to Emmanuel for his accomplishment.

