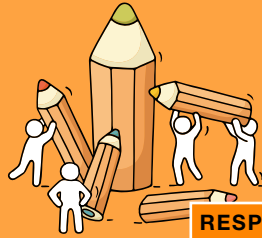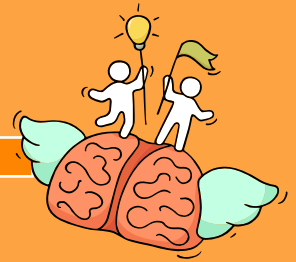# Manifesto for Agile education
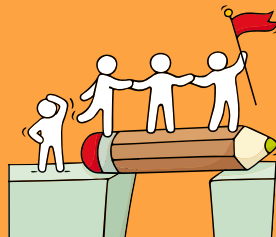
RESPONSIBILITY FOR STUDENTS ABOVE CONTROL BY TEACHERS
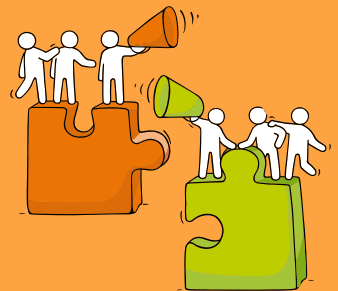
KAIZEN MINDSET ABOVE MEETING STANDARDS

TEAMWORK ABOVE INDIVIDUAL EXCELLENCE

FEEDBACK ABOVE GRADES

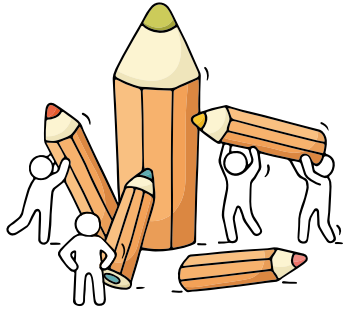**RESPOND TO CHANGE ABOVE FOLLOWING A PLAN**

The items on the right are valuable, but we value the items on the left more.

Scrum at School

# Responsibility for students

above Control by teacher

Students entering the classroom who start working on their own, giving themselves and each other homework and keep working even if the teacher is ill. This seems too good to be true. 'It's really like this, even in my classroom,' surprised teachers say. The Scrum board provides overview and structure and Scrum@school makes the learning process purposeful and effective. These sturdy scaffolds ensure that students like to take their responsibility. And that feels better than waiting until the teacher tells them what to do. Their **OWNERSHIP GROWS** and their motivation increases.

If you want students to take responsibility, you have to give it to them. A Scrum team organises its own task division, planning and approach. It keeps tracks of whether it is on schedule and processes feedback into improvement points. Scrum's Ceremonies and Instruments allow a lot of control to be left to the team. Awkward? Certainly! Always successful? No, it's not. Is that bad? Certainly not, because mistakes are informative and the Sprints are short so that teams can improve quickly.

A great pedagogical challenge is to give the teams more and more responsibility. First, for how they handle the work (plans, division of tasks, discussing work, processing feedback). And finally also for what they do: split tasks, define the content of the Sprint Backlog and Product Backlog and work on their own learning goals.

The **GAINS** and **PROFITS** are great. Students grow, gain more self-confidence and develop self-regulation and self-organisation. Teachers relax and have time to do what they were meant to do: teach. Students and teachers really work together. You can see and feel the focus, relaxation and togetherness in a good scrumming class.
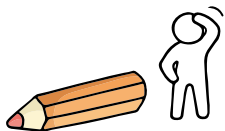
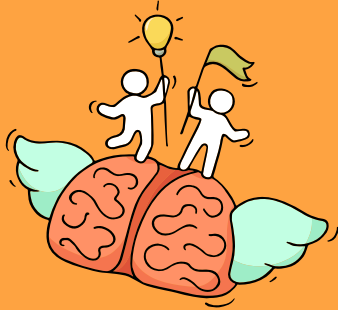**THE OWNERSHIP OF STUDENTS GROWS AND THEIR MOTIVATION INCREASES**

Kaizen mindset

above Meeting standards

The Japanese auto industry became big with the **KAIZEN MINDSET:** a little bit better every day. Improving in small steps ultimately yields great results. In education terms (and thanks to Carol Dweck), this is a Growth mindset combined with **IMPROVING IN SMALL STEPS.**

What matters? Not what you can already do, but what you learn and contribute. If you walk into gym class on your hands but learn nothing new, then you didn't understand. If you share your expertise with your peers, you do. It is more important that students learn and grow than just meet the standards. That they want to improve and perform. That they not only take on tasks they are already good at, but take on tasks they want to be better at. They shouldn't be asking: what do I need to learn? But also: what do I want to learn?

It takes little time to explain a Kaizen mindset to students, and even less time to remind them regularly. If teams get the **TASTE OF IMPROVEMENT,** they will search for their zone of nearest (proximal) development. Within Scrum, Review and Retro make sure that this happens all over again at the end of each Sprint.

'Are we really allowed improve this?' students ask pleasantly surprised and excited after an interim delivery of the work. Often teams will ask for feedback themselves before handing in their work. And students always become **MORE CRITICAL OF THEIR OWN WORK,** which improves their results.

Gains and outcomes: lifelong fun learning and growing.
Be careful: Kaizen is contagious; teachers also get infected…

WHAT MATTERS? NOT WHAT YOU CAN ALREADY DO, BUT WHAT YOU LEARN AND CONTRIBUTE
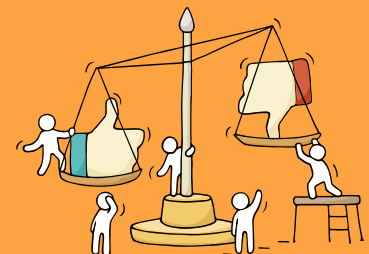
Teamwork

above Individual excellence

People are social beings; they need to belong, contribute and be appreciated. For teenagers, the first necessity. **SOCIAL LEARNING** in safe groups fits perfectly with the adolescent brain. Teamwork is an important 21st Century Skill. Good team players (general interest over own interest) are needed and wanted.

Based on additional qualities, teams can let students **SHINE TOGETHER** and get the best out of their team and themselves. Students learn from each other's qualities and develop new qualities. Cognitive, personal and social development go hand in hand. Definition of Fun and Retrospectives ensure teams work better together in every Sprint.

This is what a good teacher says to Scrum teams. 'It's good to excel at something, but better to be able to work together. Share your knowledge to improve the whole team. Ask for help and explanations from your team if you do not understand something. Work with someone you can learn from. Learn from other people's qualities.
Give each other feedback and address each other. You might go faster by yourself, but **YOU WILL GO FURTHER TOGETHER**.'

Gains: students talk freely about their **QUALITIES** and points of improvement. Students appreciate differences and dare to collaborate with strangers. This creates room in the teams for personal choices and interests. And teams love to help realising personal learning goals of their team members.
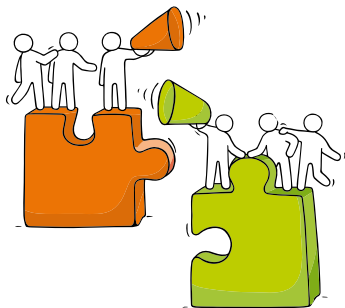Wish to see students blossom? Let them work together properly!

**STUDENTS
LEARN FROM
EACH OTHER´S
QUALITIES**

Feedback

above Grades

Ever discussed a difficult test in a classroom? All attention goes to the score. Students who analyse their own mistakes are rare exceptions. Frustrating, but understandable. Because: grades stop you from learning. Teachers who want students to keep **IMPROVING THEMSELVES** will test in a formative way and postpone grading as long as possible.

According to John Hattie, proper feedback is one of the most powerful interventions to improve learning. **FEEDBACK LOOPS** are firmly incorporated into the Scrum process. After each Sprint, the teams deliver an intermediate product and receive feedback. With that feedback, they think about how they can improve their work and work methods in the Review and Retro, directly into the next Sprint. This is how Scrum@school promotes learning.

The teams receive feedback from their teacher, contractor or their peers. **PEER FEEDBACK** ensures learning squared: both parties learn from it. Certainly if the teams first think about the criteria, define a Definition of Done and create test questions for each other. A good teacher stimulates students to give each other valuable feedback: friendly and **RESPECTFULLY**, but also **STRICT** and clear.

If a grade culture prevails at school, it may take a while. But in the end, scrumming students will start to see feedback as **VALUABLE**. In fact, they will start asking for it. The gains? The fun of learning and improving. And also... better grades!

STUDENTS START TO SEE FEEDBACK AS VALUABLE

above Following a plan

Scrum@school is used within a curriculum for subject classes, but also for open projects with a real client. In both cases it is important that students and teachers not only purposefully work according to a plan, but also respond to change in an alert, prompt and flexible manner. In other words: **AGILE** practices, also in class.

This is important within the subject classes because the insight of students in the subject matter and in effective learning strategies grows. It would be stupid to hold on to an awkward, unproductive process. The question is: **WHAT DO WE NEED AS A TEAM?**
And not: what does the method say?
Within projects, agility is necessary because students increasingly have a better understanding of a client's wishes and become **MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE**. It would be unwise to hold on to an initially imperfect plan.
And in both situations it is logical because personal development is different for everyone.

Scrum assumes that the team will be faced with changes during the work and that **ADJUSTMENTS** will be needed each time. Scrum's iterative, short-cyclical character makes it easy to respond to changes. Each Sprint ends with gains, reflections and improvements and starts with adjusting the previously made plan. Each Sprint improves the plan and the Scrum process.

A nailed-down test schedule can cause friction; some air and room will help tremendously. This is how Scrum teachers and their students keep a finger on the pulse of the learning process, which will benefit everyone. Students and teachers become **FLEXIBLE**, start experimenting and create room for **NEW INSIGHTS** and own learning goals. This is how agile practices provide quality improvement and fun while working.

**WHAT DO WE NEED
AS A TEAM? AND
NOT: WHAT DOES
THE METHOD SAY?**

WWW.SCRUMATSCHOOL.NL