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***The richest museum of Leiden:  
An educational project of the  
National Museum of Coins and  
Medals in the Netherlands***

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# **The richest museum of Leiden: An educational project of the National Museum of Coins and Medals in the Netherlands**

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First, for those of you who've never been to our town and don't know our museum, I'll briefly outline our work. Next, I'll describe the Museum & School project, which is being run jointly with the other museums in the city of Leiden. I'll then sketch out our 'Richest Museum in Leiden' project, which is part of the Museum & School project, and will conclude my talk with a few figures.

## **NATIONAL MUSEUM OF COINS AND MEDALS**

- Established 1816 by King William I
- Collection of more than 200,000 objects (coins, medals, banknotes)
- 25,000 visitors.
- Plans for a new museum

So, first let me present our Museum. It's an independent museum which is largely government financed. It was founded 1816 by King William I. It offers the most comprehensive survey of Dutch currency and medals in the world, and also has a very fine collection of objects from other countries. In total we have more than 200,000 objects. Each year we have roughly twenty-five thousand visitors.

Good, after sketching the framework, I'd like to pass to today's subject: how can we get children interested in culture and museums?

## **BACKGROUND**

- The government policy «culture part of curriculum.»
- City of Leyden takes initiative.
- Six main museums develop «Museum & School».
- Needs of teachers leading.
- Sponsored by Department of Education, City of Leyden and VSB Bank (four year period).

The Dutch government has asked the same question, and has decided that culture must be included in the educational curriculum. In Leiden, where there are six large museums within the city boundaries, the authorities asked the museums to become involved in this policy.

The result is the Museum & School project, an educational project for primary school children. What's special about the programme is that the wishes of teachers were made central. They were consulted on every part

of it. And the project has been well received by authorities and sponsors alike.

## **MUSEUM & SCHOOL**

- All children of Primary Schools in Leyden.
- Coordination by project office.
- Each museum has a specific programme for each level.
- Visit one museum each year.

Museum & School is a programme for all the primary schools in Leiden and the surrounding towns.

Organisation takes place at a joint project office run by the six museums, who have co-ordinated their programmes. Each museum serves a different age group. Each year the children visit the museum appropriate to their age group, so when they finish their primary school career, most of them have seen all six museums. I have summarised the project's learning objectives.

## **GOALS**

- Arouse Cultural Interest.
- The museum as a source of information.
- A place where you learn and have fun.

First of all, we want to arouse children's interest in culture, and secondly, we want to help children find out that museums are a treasure-trove of information. But, our most important objective is that we want children to discover not only that you can learn a lot in museums, but also that you can enjoy it. We now come to our educational programme, 'The Richest Museum in Leiden.' This is intended for children in the 9-10 age group.

The project has been designed so it can be used in classroom arithmetic lessons. With coins, bank notes and medals, you can easily get children doing sums. It consists of a preparatory lesson in class, followed by a visit to the museum. This leads to reinforcement activities back at school. All this is supported with teaching material for the pupils, and an instruction manual for teachers.

## **OUR «MUSEUM & SCHOOL» PROJECT**

- Children 9-10 years old.
- Part of Mathematics programme.
- Preparation at school.
- Project work in the Museum.
- Follow-up at school.
- Study material and teachers' guide.

In the preparatory lesson, the children work in small groups. On their desks they all have the workbook on the history of money. First, they take turns to read the text out loud. Together, they then set to work on the sums. Each group writes their answers on a large sheet of paper, and these are discussed by the whole class. The Dutch educational system pays a lot of attention to collaborative working skills, which is why it's also addressed in our museum lesson. The answers to the sums are also printed in the teacher's manual. After reading about the development of money in their workbooks, and hearing all sorts of things about the museum, the children set off!

This is where they meet our actor/educator. He takes the children back to prehistory, when the only system was barter, and then he leads them up to the early origins of money. Out of his treasure chest he takes gold, primitive money, and the first coins. It's all original, and the children can handle it and pass it round the group.

## **FACTS AND FIGURES**

- 1,850 pupils (1,100)
- 70 schools (45)
- Free publicity/Goodwill.
- More non-traditional Visitors.

Finally, the actor plays a captain on a large sailing-ship. The children go aboard. The ship sinks in a bad storm, taking a cargo of gold and silver to the bottom. After all, as we all know, money doesn't make you happy! Then it's time for the work assignments. First weighing, then measuring, and then examining bank notes. And after a visit to our exhibition, the programme ends.

Firstly, on the number of children who've taken part in the project: if we look at the figures for the last three years, we see that this has been growing. While we received 1,100 children in our first year, this year we expect a total of 1,850. And while 45 schools were involved in year one, this year that figure will be 70.

More and more schools are participating in the programme, as it's both educational and fun. But there's another important reason. It's successful, it's well organised and fits well into the school curriculum.

## **FINANCE**

- Development costs: 50,000 Euro (25% sponsored by VSB Bank)
- Exploitation costs: 30,000 Euro (50% sponsored by Department and City of Leyden)

Neither are there any financial obstacles. The schools can take part free of charge - even the transport is paid for. This is all possible thanks to generous contributions by government and sponsors.

I'd like to give some figures. The Museum runs up costs, too, of course. Per year, these amount to 30,000 Euros. But then, we get a lot back - for example, more visitors to our museum, including children who'd otherwise be unlikely to come.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

- A new learning experience for children.
- Teachers are very enthusiastic.
- Image of museums in general is altered.
- Opinion about coins has changed.
- Museum will continue the project.

First, the 'Richest Museum in Leiden' offers children a new learning experience, and their teachers are very enthusiastic about it. Next, this is the first museum visit many of these children have made, and it's something they'll look back on with pleasure for the rest of their lives. And finally, they've seen how fascinating coins and bank notes and medals can be. And they've caught a glimpse of the world behind it all.