

# For kids' sake, connecting parents to Dutch schools with open data

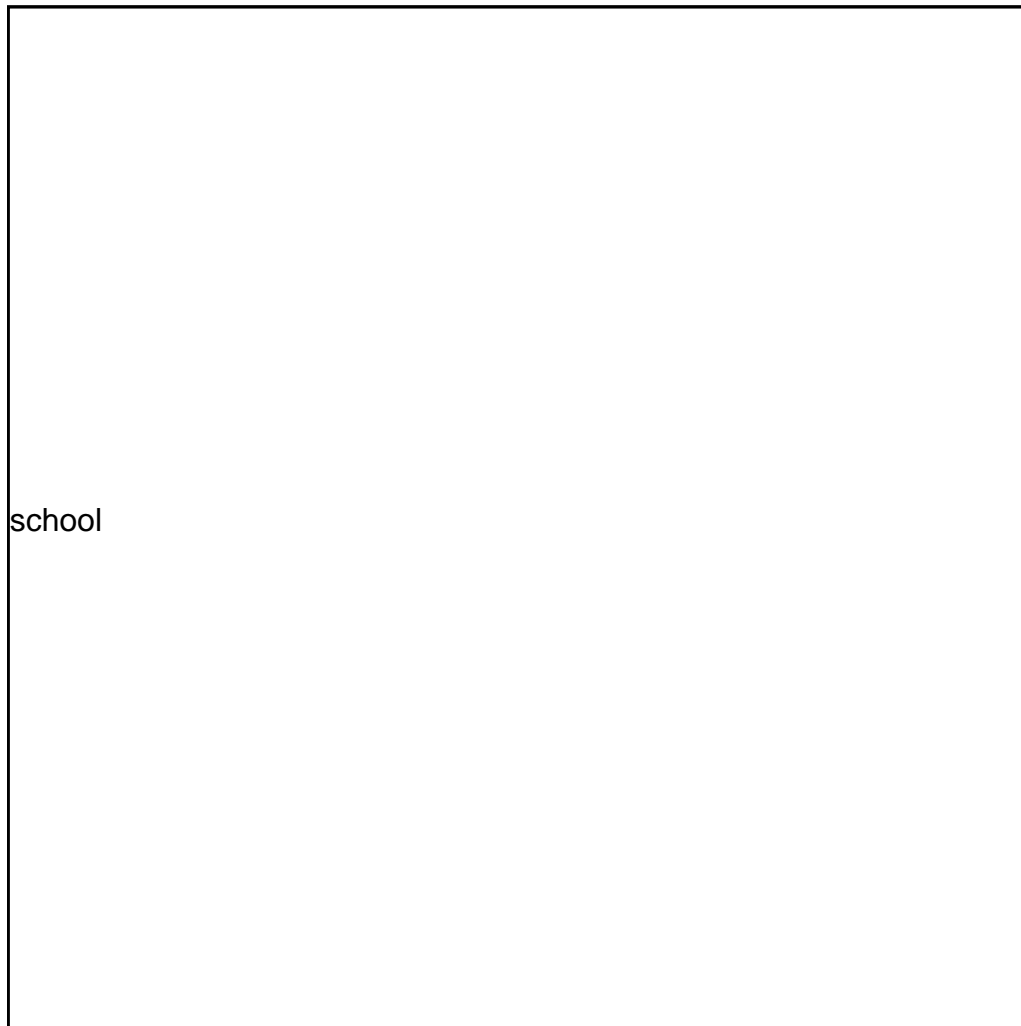
Submitted on 05 Mar 2014 by Arjan El Fassed

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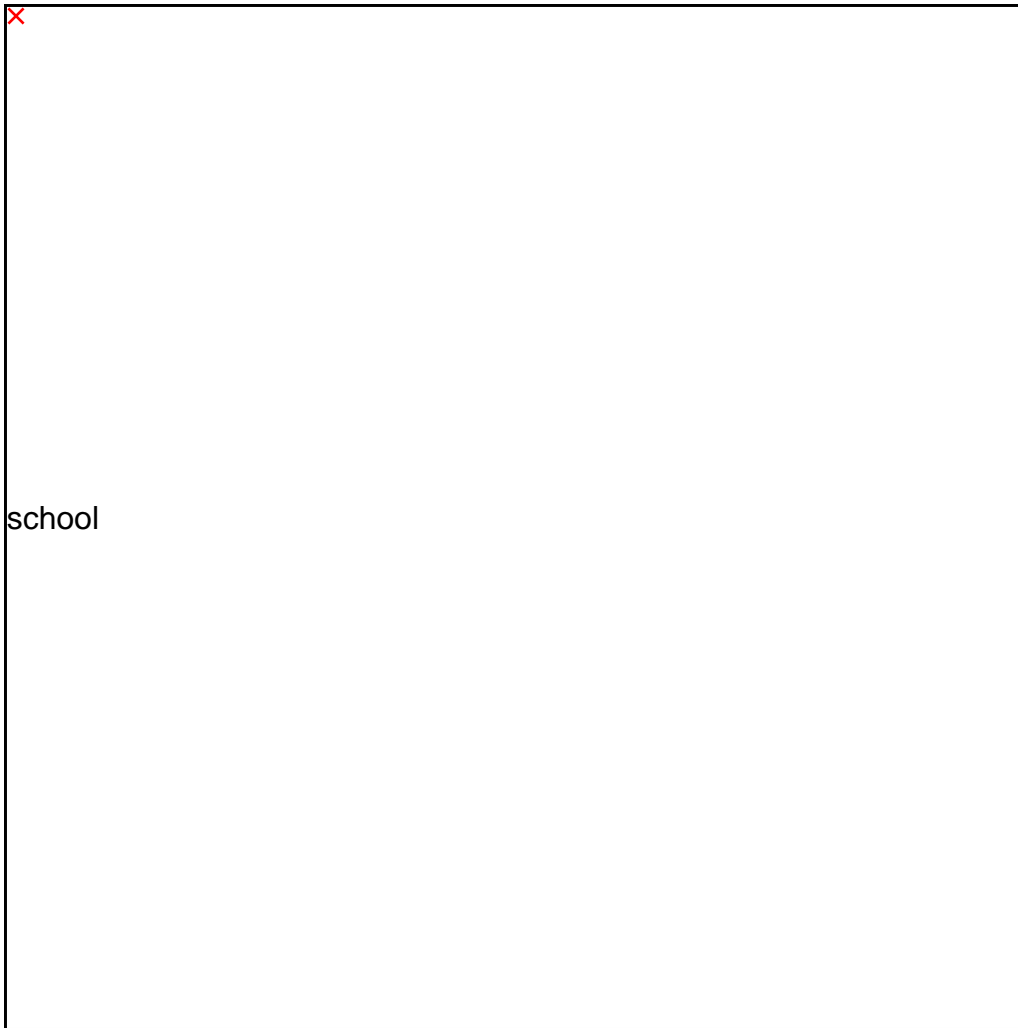
In the Netherlands it hasn't been easy to find the right school for your children. The education system is confusing for many although the Dutch education system emphasizes parents' free choice. Parents find it hard to find the right schools. Although a huge variety of information is being collected from schools until recently this data was hardly open, difficult to find, let alone available for re-use.

## What schools?

Parents are confronted with a wide variety of state-run schools. These schools are non-denominational and provide secular education but they can offer teaching based on a certain philosophy or pedagogical approach such as Montessori. The municipal council or a public legal entity governs public schools. Special schools are denominational such as Roman Catholic, Protestant or Islamic. Both types of schools, public and special (religious), are financed by the government and receive equal financial support. Although school inspection reports on individual schools could be requested – comparing quality information of schools was impossible.



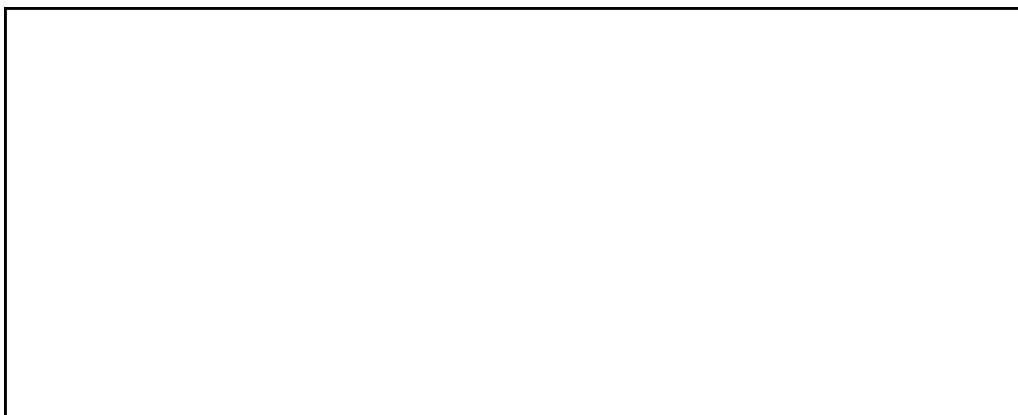
school

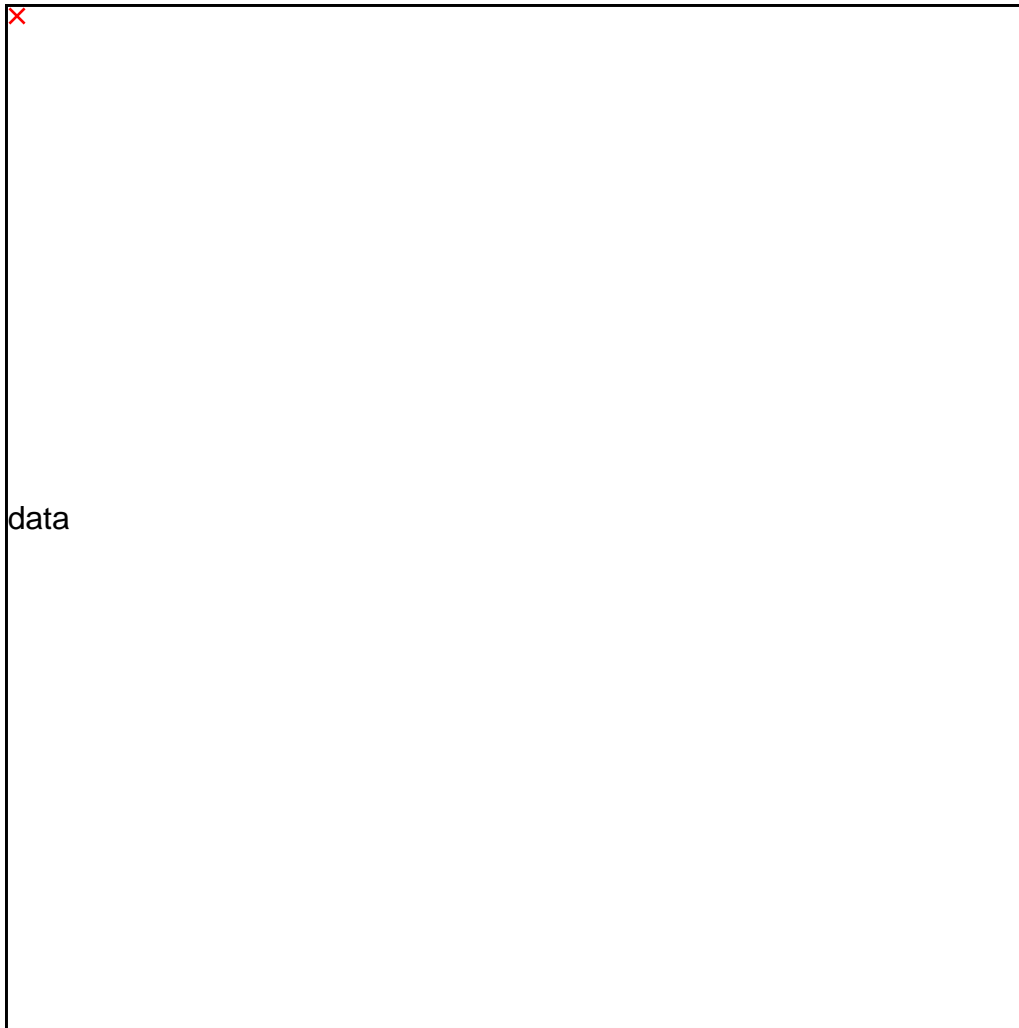


In 2011 that started to change. Bringing together dataholders of governmental and semi-governmental educational institutes, such as the Ministry of Education, the Education Inspection, various educational councils and developers of the ‘[Hack de Overheid](#)’ community, Open State stimulated discussion among data users and data providers. They addressed various questions on ownership of the data, privacy and re-use. Mapping various agencies that create, collect and use educational data, [Open State](#) started to raise awareness and called for unlocking data.

### **Apps for Parents**

At the same time the education department of the city of Amsterdam commissioned an app challenge. The goal of the challenge was to provide parents with tools that help them to make a well-informed choice of school for their children. To help developers, Open State brought in parents and teachers to provide insights in both the needs and the ways in which data should or could be interpreted.





The first round entailed the stimulation of apps based on data that was already released. During the second round municipal educational policies and needs of parents were translated into a set of demands. One of such demands was to inform lower educated parents and immigrants to the Dutch educational system. Moreover, developers were asked to come up with strategies that would stimulate parents to look beyond simple school test results. Parents want to look for the best school that fits their children's needs.

A variety of tools were build, such as [schooltip.net](#), [10000scholen.nl](#), [scholenvinden.nl](#), and [scholenkeuze.nl](#). The various apps have been displayed on an [education portal](#) focussed on finding the right school. The [portal](#) is used to stimulate discussion among parents about data that they can and want to view. Currently, the various apps help on average 50.000 parents a months in finding the right school and allows them to compare its performance.

### **There is an API for that**

Since bureaucracies take ages to unlock information, developers needed one easy entrance to the data. Therefore, Open State decided to build a community-led [Open Education Data API](#) in which all available Dutch open education data can be found. Since the information of the Education Inspection is not open data, scrapers were built to pull in up-to-date data. The API helps app developers with a huge set of open education data and at the same time it stimulates governmental education agencies to release education data faster and in the right formats. At the moment advocacy for more data and pulling the data in the API is in full swing. New challenges are being created to stimulate improved quality of apps.

*This post by Alette Baartmans, programlead [Open Education Data at Open State](#) appeared earlier on the blog of [Open Knowledge Foundation](#).*