

Support by parents

Pre-task - Denmark

Introduction:

The future 7th grade teachers at Herstedlund Skole were told that the four 6th grade classes had to be put together and divided into 3 new classes. Since a school reform have made it possible to focus on methodological, practical and technical aspects of teaching, the teachers decided to reinvent the school day of the pupils. The teachers will create a more flexible schedule and thereby structure a school day differently.

There are three different aspects of major importance to the change to the schedule.

- The deletion of the formal class structure and the creation of one dividable unit
 - All four classes are turned into one. Students are from hereon divided by different standards, those being ex. gender, maturity, proficiency, skills, personality etc.
 - The creation of study groups consisting of 5-6 pupils
 - Every teacher will be the primary adult for 12 students each. These groups are not the same as the study groups
 - Both groups are chosen by the teachers
 - One of the parameters for this choice is for instance whether the teacher has a prior and good relationship with the parents.
 - They have divided the pupils into 3 categories, indicating how much work will be done with the pupil which is not school related. 3 is the most
- The change to the schedule
 - The classes are sought to be more interdisciplinary, both in curriculum, but also between teachers
 - A history teacher can be part of the teaching of mathematics, looking at the development and historical aspects of mathematics.
- More technology
 - This is not for sure, but all students are hoped to be given a computer. This will ensure that a lot more of the teaching can be done and stored at the computers
 - This includes texts, assignments, tests etc.

The school

The school is located in a socially disadvantaged area. Out of 68 students, $\frac{1}{3}$ of them have different challenges that need extra attention to put in to consideration. These challenges are for example: Parental imprisonment, different diagnoses such as dyslexia, ADHD etc., parents who are not proficient in the Danish language or doesn't have any education or job. Previous experiences at the school show the importance of parental support. At one meeting only one parent showed up.

As a part of the Danish Public School (folkeskole) law, the parents must participate and support their children and the teachers. This goes as follows:

The school shall cooperate with the parents to provide students with knowledge and skills to: prepare them for further education and make them want to learn more, make them familiar with Danish culture and history, giving them an understanding of other countries and cultures, contribute to the students understanding of man's interaction with nature, and promote individual students' all-round development.

Everyone in Denmark knows that parental involvement is vital for a child's well-being at a school. If a parent acknowledges a child when they bitterly return from school, blaming it all on the teacher or just the school, you reinforce the notion of: It is also only the fault of the school. Therefore the emphasis on positive parental involvement is crucial to the culture at a school.

Summing up the notion to this problem is *inclusion*: Inclusion is action from all parts. Children, parents, the board, the teachers etc.

The problem

But how? How can you establish and maintain a good atmosphere and generally involved parents in the daily and ongoing life at the school?

Facts

- 68 pupils
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ have two mother tongues
- Teachers have 118 hours per year allocated to stuff other than teaching and preparation
 - These could be meetings with parents

- Mother-clubs
 - Mostly for muslim families
- Teacher meetings
- Etc.
- Almost no previous back-up from the parents
 - Although a lot have shown a positive interest in this project
- There are no funds available for the parents
- A cafe for making your homework, a study-cafe, is being set up. Here it is advised that the parents come and help out if they can. Just bringing a cake is important.

The next part is the English translation of the project description done by the school themselves.

Project for 7th grade at Herstedlund 2014/2015

Introduction

We wish for our future 7th grade classes to upgrade with the new school reform and make it our own and more importantly, the students'.

We want to introduce a new way of going to school. Our vision is to give the students a different school day where space for each individual is created and the students can experience a greater connection.

The goal of the project:

In the county of Albertslund, following school-strategies are given:

- The school must challenge all pupils so they can reach their potentials.
- The school must lessen the significance of social background in relations to academic results
- Trust and well being in the school must be strengthened through respect for academic knowledge and in practice.

Demands of results:

- At least 80% of the students must achieve a high level in reading and math in the national tests.
- The share of the best students must become bigger year after year.
- The share of students with bad results in the national test in reading and math must be reduced year by year.
- The well-being of the students must increase.

Furthermore, we would like to set up the following goals:

Long-term goal

- We expect that 80-85% of the students will go on to higher education.

Short-term goal

- We expect that 20% of the students will raise their levels in the national test in 2015

compared to their level in the test of 2014. Furthermore, we expect that the group of students in the highest level category will increase their level by 10%.

Background:

From the first day of 4th grade, our team have put emphasis on the students from all 4th grade classes had to get to know each other and work across the classrooms. This has been a great success. We have worked across the classes in multiple projects and the students have repeatedly shown that they function well together. In our current team as teachers of 6th grade, we have got to know each other well professionally as well as personally during the last 2 ½ year. We all feel that we have a great team work build on great respect for one another regarding both each other competences for each subject and for relations. Our professional competences are wide ranging and meets the needs that are required in 7th grade.

The new school reform means an opportunity for new possibilities. We wish to take advantage of those. As we are on the verge of having to divide the 4 classes in to 3, we think that it is obvious to think outside the box.

Hypothesis:

We believe and think that the support from parents is crucial in order to make the project work. We are embarking on a new journey in terms of both in teaching and socially. The students will be a part of flexible teams and will therefor be a part of many different relations even in one single day whether they are part of their different teams and/or during breaks. In the beginning of the project, it is likely that some students might feel insecure or confused about what and/or where they have to be and with whom. It is therefor more important than ever that the parents continue their close and positive dialogue with the teachers of the project. We need to know if someone is not thriving or feeling insecure in general.

The 7th grade teachers will be attached to approximately 12 students and each teacher will become the contact-teacher for these students. This will mean that the teacher will meet with his or her students once a week for an hour, which will be time and opportunity to work with the thriving of the students etc.

We will try to create a community across the teams and create a secure and manageable environment for each student, but we need for the parents to support the project. We will make common parents-teacher and school conferences, social events where we will greatly draw upon parents. Everyone must be involved, and everyone can offer and help our project succeeded. We will work to heighten social well being, so as to create a motivating learning environment and further strengthen students' education, skills and knowledge.

Materials and method:

The future 7th grade will not have set classes like usually known. Instead, we will make flexible teams or groups where the students are divided according to competences – academic, social etc. Each student has different strengths and weaknesses in each subject, which we will exploit. We will mix the different subjects by, for example, having the Danish teacher be part of a Math lesson with a specific focus on reading or the history teacher being part of an English lesson with a focus on English history. The possibilities are endless.

3x20 minutes of the school day will have each their function. The students will get material that is specific for their level. One of the 20min will be focussed on reading, one on Math and one focussing on language (English, German or Danish as a second language). The students will work independently though with the support of the teachers or their study group.

We want to make IT an integrated part of the students' school day. Our goal is that each student will use their it-equipment every day and see it as a natural part of their school. They must be confident with how it works and how to use it. The IT must expand the students' knowledge about resources so that they can get curious about developing their own education and teaching. We want to try new things like flipped classroom, where the students can sit at home or in their study groups and watch a video with the days' teaching. After seeing the video, they will work with the teacher as their guide. This will, among other things, give the students an opportunity to receive the teaching in their own tempo and go back if they need certain information once more. The teachers will divide the students into study groups. All groups will have a strong representative of each subject so they are able to help one another. We will work to make sure that all students will be present at the school in the voluntary homework-time (after school) and work in their study groups. Furthermore, we would like to invite the parents to come and help. If a parent has difficulties with the academics he or she might be able to help with the social part. We wish for the parents to feel as a part of the project so we will always have their full support.

Results:

We expect to be able to offer a higher focus on each student. By dividing the students, we will become better equipped to meet each student's need for differentiated instruction. We will adapt the level on each team and the students on the different teams. Each student will sit alongside with peers who are on the same level and thereby experience a greater sense of security. We expect that this will raise the academic level.

We will also raise our focus on the students' social well-being. Conflicts will of course arise and taken care of. The parents' support will be crucial here as well. It is important that the parents mention the school and the projects in a positive way around their children. The parents can of course contact the teachers anytime to get a clarification of any problems.

We expect that high social welfare leads to a motivating learning environment and that it further enhances the students' education, skills and knowledge. Finally, we expect it can all culminate in a better performance in exams than we currently expect.

Economy:

We need for each student to get his or her own Chromebook. This will be a cost of approx. 200,000 d.kr. Our choice has fallen on Chromebooks, as you can use them to access all the educational resources we already use - both purchased and free. So there is no need to use apps that are designed specifically for the device. The start-up is fast and they connect to the network in no time. The only thing required by the IT department is a functioning wireless network. In addition, Chromebooks have, unlike the tablet, keyboard, which is a great advantage in schoolwork. Finally, Chromebooks only cost approx. 2/3 of the most used tablets.

We see continuing education of teachers as a necessity. One example might be in the form of courses in flipped classroom, and more. This knowledge of course given to everyone in the

team, and to other interested. We expect a cost of at least 10,000 per year.

Summary:

With the new school reform, we see the possibility of optimizing the individual student's education. We want the future 7th year, to dismantle the traditional base classes and instead be based as one year and provide flexible hold. The students will be divided according to their academic skills, social skills, linguistic skills etc.. We will work to raise the social well being, so as to create a motivating learning environment and further strengthen the students' education, skills and knowledge.

We will make IT an integrated part of the students' school day. The students will be equipped with their own Chromebook. The students should use their IT equipment as a natural tool, and students must broaden their own resources so that they have a curiosity about what is happening and can help to develop their personal teaching.

We will try using new approaches to teaching. For example flipped classroom. We will mix subjects and look at each subject with new glasses.

Students will be divided into study groups, which the teaching staff will put together. The aim is to create a rewarding learning environment in which the students will work at the school in the voluntary homework-time in their study groups.

The ultimate goal is that all students receive the best education, and thereby gain opportunities and desire to embark on and complete their education.