

Norway

Breidablikk Lower Secondary School

Ruselokka is a lower secondary school in which students (age 12-16) choose among several learning “paths” that use different instructional methods to teach the regular curriculum, with a focus on, for example, nature and outdoor, media, or music. The school year is divided into six-week periods that focus on a certain topic taught through different angles. Each period also comprises one week in which the students work intensively on their own interests, following an individual learning plan the students make together with a teacher. There is a special trajectory for students with maladjustments or drop out problems, who are taught in small groups. Activities for these students include work on a farm to enhance their motivation and improve their social behaviour, punctuality, etc. The school has several innovative projects like a yearly school musical with up to 150 students and a building project in which groups of students design their own houses in cooperation with professionals from the business world. Learning spaces are large and flexible, and include outdoor areas that were in part constructed by students and teachers. Student groupings are flexible depending on the paths that the students choose.

Main Focus of Innovation: LEARNERS, TEACHERS, CONTENT, RESOURCES, ORGANIZATION

Other Keywords: learning space

General Information

Name of the ILE: Breidablikk Lower Secondary School

Location/Address: Frøyas vei 33, N-3216 Sandefjord

Website: www.sandefjordskolen.no/breidablikk

ILE submitted by: Breidablikk Lower Secondary School

Rationale

Why do you suggest that it should be included in the project? How does it respond to 21st century learning challenges?

Breidablikk Lower Secondary School in Sandefjord, Norway, has 500 pupils and a staff of just over 50 teachers. We are applying for participation in this project because we have developed – and would like to continue developing – a model for lower secondary school which aims to motivate young people to start early with efforts in lifelong learning. This is a new and different way of organizing a Norwegian lower secondary school, which in its entirety has been developed in cooperation between pupils, parents/guardians, the school staff and the school administration.

Our pupils are encouraged to use their own interests and particularly their motivation for learning as their point of departure so that at an early stage they understand that learning in school is connected to learning in the world outside school. When pupils move up from five primary schools and come to Breidablikk lower secondary school, our focus is initially on inclusion and socialization. The pupils are also introduced to three paths where they can then choose among six varied interests. The pupils choose their path initially towards the end of Year 8. The choices (see below), which are made together with parents/guardians and education counsellors, may be changed every six months for those who so wish. This is emphasized to help pupils learn more about themselves and their own development potential.

FRØY is most like the traditional Norwegian lower secondary school, but with greater focus on experiential learning.

FRIGG provides four alternatives:

- 1) Nature, environment and outdoor school
- 2) Sports, health and lifestyle
- 3) Media and communication
- 4) Music

ODIN is a small school section undertaking alternative teaching with theory and practical work in equal parts. There are places for ten pupils from Year 9 and Year 10. There is a special application procedure for admission to Odin. The pupils sit for the same examinations as the pupils in Frøy and Frigg.

(Frøy, Frigg and Odin – the names of old Norse gods – are abbreviated as FFO.)

Odin has a social educational aim; to give students who do not thrive and learn in a big school setting, smaller and psychologically more secure surroundings. These students have been maladjusted in Year 8 and / or 9, they might have started to drop out of school lessons and have shown signs of no learning. At ODIN - while as they are learning the school subjects, they are also working at an ecological farm feeding animals, doing wood work, going on field trips etc. to enhance their motivation and learning at the same time as they are taught to be punctual, polite and well behaved. The small and secure surroundings give these students a new start and a safe learning environment.

All the paths also focus on developing basic skills to develop the pupils' cognitive skills to learn and understand more. Importance is attached to using new digital aids as learning tools, and through surveys and national and local tests, the results are systematized and placed in digital folders in the learning platform Microsoft Learning Gateway. Norway's rather mediocre achievements in the PISA and TIMSS surveys are taken seriously. Pupil awareness is raised in cooperation with parents/guardians and the teacher to use one's own starting point to promote understanding in all subjects to achieve better adapted teaching. We call this focus EUREKA.

Another aim in the new curriculum is that pupils learn more about themselves and their strong sides at an earlier stage, thus preparing for a plan of possible future occupational choices. One problem in upper secondary school is that one of four drop out without completing their education and training, which has major socio-economic consequences. We intend to counteract such a development through our school model. We are now working to include the FFO- EUREKA model in holistic thinking about educational choices and lifelong learning to create more interaction between the school, the surrounding world and the community in which the young will participate in the twenty-first century.

The school has also developed a building project for the subject called Educational Options which includes all pupils in Year 8 and Year 9. This project introduces the pupils to many educational programmes and vocational groups. Groups of pupils design and build their own houses in cooperation with teachers and professionals in the business world. The project has received much attention in the local community (see web links: Press mention), nationally (see reference to the periodical "Rådgivernytt" (School Counsellor News)) and from various industries (see the periodical "Byggmesteren" (Master Builder)). A design programme to be used for this purpose is now being developed by our teachers.

Every year the school stages a musical, which will have up to 150 pupils involved. This has great impact on the school's social fellowship and provides ample opportunities for each pupil's sense of mastering. Each autumn ten to twelve performances are given for other schools and an adult audience.

This way of operating a school gives the pupils better adapted teaching and a basis for making clear and reflective education choices. Increased learning pressure, mastering, motivation and positive identity development are key terms in the model which focuses on learning in a global and local perspective. The world is continuously undergoing change, and the participants in the society of the future must be proud of and contribute actively to their own identity and their own knowledge to promote good development for themselves and the world around them. Thus having confidence in oneself and being aware of one's own strong sides and interests are important aspects in cooperating on processes that yield development of knowledge for the new times. We believe in a school environment that encourages different ways of learning, and takes the inherent physical, mental and emotional abilities of each pupil seriously, seeing these together with social demands for competence in various fields. We believe this develops content in the term: Best practice.

The three paths, Frøy, Frigg and Odin, follow the same curriculum as all other lower secondary schools in Norway. In this way there has been no need to apply for an exception from the Norwegian School Laws. But the way each topic is being taught in one path differs in some ways from the other paths. The whole school year is divided into six separate six – week periods. Each period focuses on a certain topic which covers some of the aims of the curriculum and is being taught through different angles; the musical angle, the sportive angle, the out - door – angle and the media and communicative angle. In Year 8 students have the possibility to learn to know all the different paths and angles, since each term emphasises a focus on one of them. In the end of Year 8 the students choose which path and angle they want to follow for Year 9. They are given the possibility to choose another path and angle twice a year (December/ June).

In this way the students will not only learn the aims of the curriculum, but also by different means, both theoretically and practically. In the end of each six - week period the students do performances where they demonstrate to other students what they have learnt and how they have solved the tasks. The aim is to give each student/ student group an opportunity to share their learning outcome with other students to make them see and reflect on a new way of learning the aims. Our experience is that this creates a good atmosphere, interaction and a well balanced relearning session. In this way there is a good interaction between the paths. Many of the students enjoy seeing what the other students have been working with - and how they have met the different challenges of the aims. We are working on refining the interaction even further to include more cooperation with local businesses and hired experts. In this way students learn to know different professions and understand what they need to be qualified to achieve their future professional skills.

Evidence

Is there any evidence or indications showing that this initiative achieves the outcomes that it is aiming at?

As the project still is relatively new, we cannot document development over time, but evaluations so far indicate that motivation for increased academic effort occurs through practical approaches. If the choice of interest has been addressed but the content is too theoretically focused, the evaluations indicate that this results in a decline in motivation. Having an influence on the content of assignments appears to be important to the pupils. New evaluations are undertaken continuously in dialogue with all the stakeholders in school. When it comes to the completion rates in upper secondary school, statistics show that pupils from Breidablikk lower secondary school are among those with the lowest dropout rate in our county.

Breidablikk Lower Secondary School started this project two years ago, so it is in fact very new, and the evaluations so far were aimed at adjusting the project to various goals within the project. A full scale evaluation will be performed at the end of the project period in the fall 2009.

As soon as these evaluations are complete. We have mentioned the low drop-out rate in the Upper Secondary School. So far we can also see a slight improvement in the exam results compared to former school years. Our aim is to achieve even better results in the year in progress.

Learning Aims / Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE

What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired? (These may include outcomes related to learners' social, interpersonal, or meta-cognitive development)

Core learning aims:

HERE ARE SOME OF THE CORE LEARNING AIMS FOR FFO–EUREKA

(These include social and educational-psychological learning objectives to be further documented in time-determined result measurements):

1. All pupils shall be given the opportunity to choose three years of quality-assured school adapted to their background and abilities. (FFO)

1-0: The schooling shall focus on group integration for pupils coming from five primary schools to Year 8, and the choice of which path to take in accordance with mastering and motivation areas in Year 9 and Year 10. (FFO)

1-1: In the course of April in Year 8 all the pupils must choose their own interest groups as the basis for their schooling based on their own interests, strengths and mastering areas and conclusions from the development/performance reviews.

1-2: The school shall develop the design of the traditional analytical approach to teaching in subjects that are the basis of the FRØY path through the exchange of experiences in the teachers' learning arenas.

1-3: School shall further develop the design of the practical aesthetic (holistic) approach to teaching in the subjects that are the basis for the schooling in the FRIGG path through the exchange of experiences in the teachers' learning arenas.

1-4: School shall develop the design of the practical approach to teaching in the subjects that are the basis for the schooling in the ODIN path through the exchange of experiences in the teachers' learning arenas.

2. In close cooperation with pupils and parents/guardians, the school is working systematically to improve the pupil's reading and mathematical understanding in subjects in all the years to ensure that the pupil has optimal development based on his or her own abilities and resources (EUREKA).

2-1: All the teachers shall use research findings from the research project initiated by the Department of Teacher Training at Vestfold University College, (Reading subject texts as a basic skill in subjects) as the basis for developing the school's work methods in reading and mathematics teaching under the EUREKA umbrella.

2-2: Teachers and pupils shall jointly develop individual goals and interaction aims for enhanced reading understanding in pupil folders in the digital learning platform MLG. Each pupil's results shall be reviewed during the development/performance reviews held in the spring and the autumn, and new goals shall be set.

2-3: The school shall document improved reading understanding and mathematical understanding for the whole group of pupils in the autumn of 2009. The results from national tests, survey tests and the assignments from the PISA survey form the basis for systematic development of understanding of reading and mathematics in all relevant subjects in all the years.

Learners

Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there? What are their ages?

Our school has approximately 500 pupils in the 12 – 16 age group. All who are in our school catchment area or who actively apply for admission to our school can learn in accordance with the FFO – EUREKA model.

Facilitators

Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles?

We have a teaching staff of around 50 educators. The administration consists of the principal and three deputy heads/department managers for each year. The project group is composed of managers and teachers with different functions, a total of 12 contributors who divide roles and tasks in accordance with expertise and needs.

The project group has varied academic backgrounds from the university and college level. The administration also has experience from domestic and foreign business and organizations. All have active roles in the project, and the administration allocates time and space for innovation to develop project goals in accordance with input from the whole staff.

Organization of the ILE

How is learning organised? How do learners and facilitators interact? What kind of pedagogy do they follow? What curriculum is used?

Breidablikk lower secondary school has flexible learning landscapes. Approximately 170 pupils in each year are divided into large and small groups. These are flexible groups, as the pupils may choose another interest every six months. The school year is divided into periods lasting six weeks, with each period having an interest week. The pupils may then work intensively on their interests as their approach to various learning goals in various subjects.

How do learners and facilitators interact?

Pupils and teachers plan the interest weeks together. All join in evaluating plans and programmes that are carried out. The aim is also that the interest weeks should be developed to include career aims in "My plan for the future". Parents/guardians and educational mentors are important counsellors. Through the interest weeks the pupils will also learn more about most educational choices in upper secondary school.

What kind of pedagogy do they follow?

The school's educational basic model is a synthesis of cognitive and socio-cultural learning where many educational masters such as Piaget, Dewey and Vygotsky are sources of inspiration. Learning new ways of interacting in the adult communities of practice is important for inspiring the pupils to new learning. The FFO model grew out of an idea from one of our teachers. The administration provided time and room so that a group of teachers could develop in collaboration with each other and the administration. Etienne Wenger's organization theory on communities of practice (1998) has given inspiration for developing the school as a learning organization.

What curriculum is used?

The national curriculum: Knowledge Promotion (LK 06). The Ministry of Education and Research.

Learning Context

In which context does learning take place? What does the physical learning environment look like? Are community resources used to facilitate learning and how?

Learning is undertaken in good premises in our school which has recently been renovated and expanded with learning landscapes that are adapted to the purpose. We also use the outdoors. The nature, environment and outdoor school has prepared an outdoor area in the neighbourhood with a lean-to, outdoor stage and pine benches we have made ourselves. The sports class uses indoor and outdoor areas at the school and also visits various sports arenas in the vicinity. Learning can occur anywhere, and visits to local businesses and hired experts in different fields give many learning opportunities. The local business community provides good supporting players. We have participated in the Directorate of Education and Training's school development project "*Kunnskapsløftet – fra ord til handling*" (Knowledge Promotion - from Word to Deed), and for two years we have received external funding to develop the project. In addition, the funding distributed to local lower secondary schools in the municipality and the varied/rich human capital of the teachers and the administration ensure our school has the resources to develop.

History of ILE

Who initiated it? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?

When our school's renovation and refurbishing project was completed in the autumn of 2006, we found we also needed to focus on renewed content in lower secondary school. Our teachers saw the need for change and development of the way our school was run and provided input, and the administration was open to the signals and helped the project group to start planning the change processes in the spring of 2007. The project is evaluated on an on-going basis, and changes and adjustments have been made on the basis of the evaluation results. The model has great potential for further development which we are keen to implement in cooperation with schools and researchers locally and globally.

Funding of the ILE*How is it funded?*

Kunnskapsløftet - fra Ord til handling has funded external expertise for two years to give the project new input for organization development and reading understanding. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) (a privately owned competence-development company) has given advice on organization development, and Vestfold University College has contributed research on reading skills. The school's primary income is provided by the local authority.

Learning Outcomes

What are the learning outcomes achieved by the ILE, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes? How is learning assessed?

We choose to refer to the assessment of our activities in 2008.

EUREKA in FFO – 2008 (from the annual report):

Main conclusion: 2008 was a hectic and active year with much learning and inclusive learning processes on all levels.

We have assessed the main activities in relation to the various target groups, learning and development for the project management, teachers, pupils and parents/guardians.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT:**The administration and project management:**

- have adopted a more distributed management model ensuring better integration between the management and the staff
- have convened a broadly composed project group cooperating on project development and progress
- have cooperated closely on strategy, process, target satisfaction and project development
- have been the prime movers for brand name building of FFO – EUREKA to ensure identity and belonging/sense of ownership (anchoring)
- have through cooperation with the university college and county counsellors found ways of developing the project that might yield input for a new lower secondary school model with more practical and theoretical options (the Breidablikk model).

EUREKA (reading understanding)**Teachers:**

- have gained insight into new research on reading understanding (Vestfold University College)
- have used knowledge on new research to focus on pre-understanding and metacognition in various subjects in their own EUREKA hour three times a week, and in their teaching
- have been introduced to Marie Carbo's reading style programme (Aabrandt)
- have attended courses in the new natural science plan and using the natural science textbook Trigger (Vestfold University College /Ole Andre Sivertsen)
- have been given courses in using the digital tool "*Kartleggeren*" (the surveyor)
- have worked systematically with developing reading and have used the results of the Carlsten and Langeland reading test and national tests in Year 8
- have been trained in the use of Microsoft Learning Gateway 2007
- have been trained in using new digital tools (Vestfold University College)
- have assessed the EUREKA project in December 2008 with input for further ways of working.

Pupils:

- have worked with deeper understanding of reading in all subjects
- have worked with reading strategies in all subjects in a separate EUREKA session three times a week in the autumn of 2008
- have gained knowledge on their own understanding of Norwegian and mathematics using the digital tool "*Kartleggeren*" and been given assignments in fields where their efforts need reinforcement.

Parents/guardians:

- have been informed about the project at parents' meetings, in FAU (the parents' board working committee) and SU (the cooperation committee)
- have been informed about the situation for their own children and their development possibilities through the development/performance reviews each spring and autumn
- have given input on future goals for FAU.

FFO: (choice of interests)**Teachers:**

- have gained new knowledge on ways of interacting in a learning organization such as FFO – EUREKA (PwC)
- have drawn up a new agreement on working hours in cooperation with the administration where a three-hour session each Wednesday is allocated to exchange of experiences and reflection
- have cooperated on using learning arenas with the exchange of experiences in subjects and across subjects
- have prepared a new annual plan where the FFO structure is included in learning goals in all subjects under the curriculum LK-06
- have through discussion and dialogue verbally evaluated the content and progress of FFO with input on adjustments
- have, with the administration, been encouraged by the good feedback and results while the project has been in progress
- have evaluated progress in writing every six weeks in a six-month report
- have documented in writing all teaching plans with a practical approach to competence objectives

Pupils:

- have in Year 8 been informed about the various interests as the basis for the choices to be made in Year 9 and Year 10
- have in Year 8 carried out practical approaches every six weeks as demonstrations of the different paths they will take in Year 9 by choosing an interest path in Frøy and Frigg with an optional new choice every six months
- have completed interest weeks with focus on their own interests
- have evaluated their interest weeks every six weeks and given input for improvements
- have during each interest week presented their projects to other pupils, teachers and the school administration.

Parents/guardians:

- have participated actively with input during development/performance reviews / parents' meetings / FAU /SU
- have discussed, given grounds for and approved their children's choice of interest
- have been thoroughly informed about the model several times, both verbally and in writing

Documentation describing or evaluating the ILE

Is there documentation on this learning environment? Is there a website? Films? Research reports or evaluations? Other forms of documentation? (please supply references or links)

Annual report on the project prepared by PwC.

Film about the project: FFO – EUREKA.

Web address:

- <http://www.sandefjordskolen.no/breidablikk/ffo/index.htm>

Press mention:

- <http://www.sb.no/article/20090205/NYHETER/636030120>
- <http://www.sb.no/article/20090205/NYHETER/561927072>
- <http://www.sb.no/article/20090203/NYHETER/875969346>
- <http://www.sb.no/article/20090203/NYHETER/821937283>

Periodicals:

- Form no. 1 / 2009: Two articles on *FFO / kunst – og håndverk* og *Byggeprosjektet* at Breidablikk lower secondary school (FFO / art and handicrafts and the Building project)
- Bedre skole no. 4, 2008: *Lesing av fagtekster som grunnleggende ferdighet i fagene*. On research on reading understanding in lower secondary school (Breidablikk lower secondary school has provided empirical findings for this report)
- Rådgivernytt no. 1 / 2009: From the seminar in Stavern for school counsellors in Vestfold county 18 – 19 November 2008: *FFO - EUREKA*
- Byggmesteren no. 7 / July 2008: *Bygger seg til læring*

Other information you consider to be relevant to describe the ILE

We feel it is exciting to develop our school in cooperation with other schools in the OECD that have similar visions and aims because we feel that our school model not only can give new perspectives to Norwegian school development, but it can also give input to the development of learning arenas in other countries. We would also appreciate to learn from the experience of others when it comes to how to develop schools that are adapted to future participation in society and working life. Our overriding objective is to ensure that today's young people have confidence in themselves and are curious to gain deeper knowledge in fields they are interested in. The Breidablikk model aims to strengthen basic skills and identity development for young person's during an important phase of their lives so they can use their full potential in tomorrow's society.

We hope we can participate in the project with our school model. We believe it can be further refined as an innovative learning arena, and are interested in providing our empirical findings to researchers to obtain further input for continued development of the practices of Breidablikk lower secondary school in accordance with the OECD project aims.

Yours sincerely

Arne W. Gregersen	Marit Rundberg	Grethe Kahrs Andersen	Vegard Jensen
Headmaster	Deputy head	Deputy head	Deputy head

Source of inspiration model

The communities of practice model / global learning understanding in the 21st century:

Wenger, E. C. (1998). *Communities of Practice. Learning, Meaning and Identity*.

New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E. C. *Learning for a Small Planet*. <http://www.ewenger.com/research/index.htm>