

Norway

Valby Oppvekstsenter (early-development centre and primary school)

This learning environment consists of an early-development day-care centre and a primary school for children aged 1 to 13. Learning is regarded as a comprehensive and continuous process in which children act as active learners from the earliest stages, to smooth the progress from day-care centre to school. Learning is organized in groups, which remain constant during parts of the week, but the size varies according to the children's needs. Teachers regularly spend time with small groups of children to facilitate interactions. Pedagogy is inspired by social-constructivist ideas and opens to alternative philosophies if useful for the children. Great emphasis is placed on staff professional development, which is organized by having teachers cooperate with a colleague project mate to do assignments, develop and reflect on good interventions and later share improved practice with the rest of the staff.

Main Focus of Innovation: TEACHERS, ORGANISATION

General Information

Name of the ILE: Valby Oppvekstsenter (early-development centre and primary school)

Location/Address: Sølvstråveien 42, 3261 N-Larvik

Website: www.valby.larvikgs.no

Rationale

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

Valby Oppvekstsenter (early-development centre) is participating in a project initiated by the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training called "Fra ord til handling" (From word to deed) with our own project "Et hode høyere enn seg selv" (A head taller than yourself). This project focuses on the "Early effort" concept. Children from one to 13 years of age experience that the entire learning progress from day-care centre to lower secondary school is a holistic process. The intention is to make the connection so clear that the concept of a transition from day-care centre to school will be made redundant. In a comprehensive and continuous learning progress the focus is on having the children act as learners from the earliest stages.

PROJECT IDEA:

Children are goal oriented. They see themselves as learners and enjoy their own progress in a learning environment that is dominated by intensity, enjoyment and motivation. Basic skills are reflected as different aspects of a child's competence. The teaching is structured so that feedback that will promote learning can be given when the child needs it. To effect changes in the whole staff we have developed the model described below.

HISTORY CLASS – a model for staff innovation activities

Each of the teachers chooses a project mate (colleague). The project mate is given an assignment, and joins a two-hour session where the teacher tests the assignment. Immediately afterward, the two involved teachers reflect upon the choices made – the experiences – and the possibilities of finding good interventions. These are then shared with the rest of the staff. See Attachments 1 and 2.

The Valby Educational Growth Centre has established a working method where individual skill development becomes systematised and teaches the pupil how to be organised.

This method has been tested in the past and is used in the transition program between the school and the kindergarten.

The project buddy program (Prosjektkameraten) helps make new learning processes and development continuous processes.

Project buddies allow each individual educator to adapt to new learning techniques and new challenges.

Teachers who continue to learn are the most important factor for a child's learning process.

See Attachment 1, Folder.

Evidence

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

We are working on documentation in cooperation with one of our external supervisors, Inge Vinje, associate professor at Vestfold University College. He can be contacted if necessary. So far in this connection we have collected documentation from the staff, but processing is not finished.

Many mentions in the press

Many PowerPoint presentations

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)

Children are goal oriented. They see themselves as learners and enjoy their progress in a learning environment that is dominated by intensity, enjoyment and motivation.

Basic skills are reflected as different aspects of a child's competence.

The teaching is structured so that feedback promoting learning can be given when the child needs it.

The common value basis (the goal) for children in the day-care centre and the school (1 – 13 years of age) gives the children holistic continuous schooling.

In the short term, the children shall experience progress, including in the measurable achievements in school.

In the long term, our institution shall prevent pupils from dropping out of upper secondary school.

In the long term, lifelong learning shall be meaningful for each person.

The child as a goal-oriented learner: That they see themselves as learners and enjoy their own progress in a learning environment characterized by a desire and motivation to learn.

Basic skills are reflected in the different aspects of the child's competence.

Learning activities and teaching is organized so that motivational feedback can be given when a child needs it.

This common platform of values (the goal) for children in kindergarten and schools (from ages 1 to 13) gives them comprehensive and uniform learning.

In the short run, children should feel that they are progressing, even when this relates to measurable results at school.

In the long run, the educational centre should help lower drop-outs from upper secondary schools.

In the long run, lifelong learning should be meaningful for each individual.

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?

The project aims to embrace all children in the day-care centre and school aged 1 to 13. It also focuses on the staff so they can undertake innovation in their own learning and the learning of each child.

Facilitators

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

All of the employees are facilitators.

The project is led by Marit Gravklev, results manager.

Many are trained as educators (general subject teachers, pre-school teachers and a child welfare educator).

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?

The teaching is organized in groups which remain constant during parts of the week, but the group size varies according to the children's needs, what is to be learnt or trained, and how it is to be learnt or trained. The teaching is organized with interaction between the facilitator and children, i.e. on a regular basis the facilitator spends time with a small number of children.

We have not chosen one particular pedagogical direction, but largely remain within the social-constructivist area (Vygotsky, Dewey, Bruner and others). We do not reject any educational direction if we see that it can be useful for individual children.

The staff has benefited greatly from working with "Læringsola" (The sun of learning) by Professor Tom Tiller. It is attached as Attachment 3.

Framework plan for day-care centres

The Knowledge Promotion Curriculum 2006

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 takes place in the school and the day-care centre in different learning groups in varied learning arenas. The employees learn as colleagues, in teams and at the staff meeting.

History of ILE

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

We have initiated these activities ourselves.

The centre was encouraged to apply for project funding from "Fra ord til handling". The purpose was to speed up learning for children and the employees (as described above).

The school was new in 2000. Starting a new school is in itself a project. During the launch phase the employees agreed on the following:

- * All the children are the responsibility of each employee
- * The fact that adults are different and do things differently is good for learning – variation
- * Everybody should be allowed to step on everybody else's private patches – no private exclusivity

In 2006, we became an early-development centre operating a day-care centre and a primary school. The project "Et hode høyere enn seg selv" builds on experiences we have gained from being a new school and then an early-development centre.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

Funding is by the local authority and some project funding from the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training.

Learning Outcomes

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

Well-being and motivation for learning, good feedback from parents and good learning achievements as measured by national tests and national examinations.

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)

The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, "Kom i gang med skoleutvikling" (Get started with school development), report from the start-up process at Valby school in week 3, 2008.

www.valby.larvikgs.no

We have videotaped learning situations in pupil groups and day-care centre groups.

Many mentions in the media. Various presentations. Meeting dealing with "early effort" with Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg on 12 February 2008.

Other information you consider to be relevant to describe the ILE

We have two external supervisors assisting us with the process.

Tom Tiller, professor at the University of Tromsø

Inge Vinje, associate professor at Vestfold University College