



Improving Literacy and Numeracy Skills

Comenius project 2010 – 2012

Summary of partnership

The project is a partnership of the five countries: Denmark, Germany, Norway, Romania and Slovenia. Norway is the coordinating partner. The main focus is on pedagogical and management issues, but the pupils are involved in some of the local activities.

The project addresses the common challenges for European schools in finding the best teaching

methods and tools within literacy and numeracy. It focuses on exchanging good ideas and on sharing best practice. Assessment is emphasized as one of the most important tools for raising the pupils' skills within literacy and numeracy, and the schools quite different ways of assessing pupils' skills will be an important issue of discussion in the thematic project meetings.

The schools participating are coming from countries with quite different history, culture and educational systems. The project will therefore give the pupils, teachers and headmasters valuable intercultural knowledge. Both through the mobilities and the local activities these issues will be addressed.

The project will be evaluated through both qualitative and quantitative indicators.

There is established a cooperation with the Pedagogical University of Denmark that will ensure the quality of the evaluation.



Our first project meeting at Tollose

Summary of newsletter

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Pro domo European Projects

Everything has changed. While we were once separated by natural barriers, national borders and political ideologies, we have, over the past 20 years, become linked by technology, commerce, and mass media. Our borders have not broken, but they have blurred.

While some saw intrusion, we saw opportunity. The opportunity to meet each other on an even keel, the opportunity to understand each other's points of view, and, most importantly, the opportunity to share new methods of teaching.

Unfortunately, many of us have been subjected to

different changes. The last few years have brought budget cuts, and with them, significant blows to our morale. Not only do we have to do more for our students, we must do it with far less.

As with any other social system, the success of our educational systems is dependent upon two factors: new ideas, and the hard work of passionate, dedicated people who take it upon themselves to make those ideas a reality.

The team of School no.2 Independenta, Romania

Preparatory visit of the planning staff at Brumunddal / Norway

Markus Hahn, Grundschule Baiersdorf / Germany

Sun, 31st January 2010



Arnstein in headmasters' office

All of us had been very excited – today the first headmasters meeting of five European schools to prepare “Improving literacy and numeracy skills” in Norway started. Marianne and Yvonne (headmaster and deputy headmaster of Tollose school / Denmark), Mihaela (school nr.2 Independenta / Romania), Anastazija (OS Kapela / Slovenia) and Markus (Grundschule Baiers-

dorf / Germany) met at Arnstein's home. Arnstein, headmaster of Morkved skole Brumunddal and project coordinator, had prepared a very warm welcome and a delicious dinner. We had great discussions on our expectations and project ideas.



The planning staff in front of Morkved skole, Brumunddal.

Mon, 1st February 2010

“Arnstein and his teachers presented to us “Classroom in Action,” a special teaching method used at Morkved Skole.”

Early in the morning we drove to Morkved skole. All of us were very impressed, when we visited some lessons at school. Arnstein and his teachers presented to us “classroom in action” a special teaching method used at Morkved skole. We could see the schools' library and visit the department for pupils with special needs. Morkved skole has special train-

ing courses for those pupils and tries to integrate them as often as possible in regular classes. After a short break pupils invited us to the gymnastic hall for a show. In the afternoon we had a beautiful trip by car to Harahorn, a

very nice traditional Norwegian Hotel, situated in the mountain area.



Pupils working on their literacy skills.



View from Harahorn

Tue, 2nd February 2010

After a delicious breakfast at Harahorn hotel, we had the first workshop on the project program. We discussed and expressed the objectives for our project:

to improve the schools' methods for early learners education in literacy and numeracy

to develop better learning strategies based on good practices

to improve the schools' work with assessment in literacy and numeracy

Wed, 3rd February 2010



Dinner at Harahorn hotel .

In the morning we worked on the application for our "literacy and numeracy" project. We were very lucky, that Alf from Ringsaker Kommune was with us, because he helped us in a very effective and goal-orientated way to find accurate formulations. We discussed the topics of our project meetings and what

has to be done between the meetings at local and common level in our schools. Late afternoon we went back to Brumunddal. Some of us were very excited because of the snow flurry on the road, others expected to see an elk (a moose). "Back home" to Brumunddal, we had a final meeting at Rica Hotel to reflect

our intensive work we did.



From our sleigh ride.

education
to promote intercultural competences and knowledge for pupils and teachers
to achieve better learning outcomes for the pupils in a longterm perspective

In the afternoon we established the responsibilities of each school during the project period and choose cultural events, that accompany our project aims best. In early evening we took a sleigh ride in the snow.

Thu, 4th February 2010

It's time to say good bye. We went back to our home countries with a lot of impressions and ideas. Everyone is very curious about the first teachers meeting in Denmark in September 2010. "Thank you very much" to Arnstein and Alf for the hospitality and of course for the

great preparatory work you



A sleigh ride in the snow.

"Some of us were very excited by the snow flurry... others expected to see a moose."



The planning staff at the Harahorn Hotel.



Norwegian Children say "Welcome" in their way



Newsletter from Mørkved school, Norway



Mørkved School, view from courtyard

We have had a very good school start this year! The first week before the children came to school all staff went to Sweden for a two days seminar. We discussed how to develop the positive atmosphere among

us, and how to give each other positive response when we need it and deserve it. We also visited a local theatre and were inspired by the director in how to work with our own performance this year. We will tell you more about our theatre in a later newsletter.

In September and October we have local and national tests for almost all the children in literacy and numeracy. The staff is working hard to achieve good results, and there is a lot of work for us all to manage the tests and report our results. It is too early to tell you about the results in the national tests, but we think we should be satisfied in mathematics and English, but not so completely in Norwegian. We will tell you more about that too in a later newsletter. The results from the local tests are quite good. Our school are normally among the schools with highest score in our municipality, and we have 15 schools here.

We participate in a national project to improve the use of our library as a learning centre. Focus this year is how to read nonfiction texts to really understand what the text is trying to tell us. We have a group of teachers which is coordinating the project, and we can see we make progress every half year. In the beginning of November we shall meet other schools from different places in Norway and try to learn from each other.



LP model from Mørkved School

A local project together with three neighbour schools is focusing on the same issues. In this project all our teachers from 4th to 7th grade are participating.

We have no math project at the moment, but we try to find out how to improve our teaching also in mathematics. Both in numeracy and literacy we are inspired by the New Zealand's schools. Their pupils have very good score in international tests, and we try to learn from them how to teach so that the children learn more. They call it Early Years Literacy Program and Early Years Numeracy Program. Check it out!

Every teacher is working with the learning environment, so the learning conditions shall be good. We have nice pupils and a good staff, so we should have the possibility to improve. In October every year the teachers meet all the parents with their child individually to talk about the child's learning. It is important for us to cooperate in a very proper way with all the parents, and we do. The parents are interested

in our school, and they support their children.

Now we are waiting for winter, and most of the children like playing in the snow. Our outdoor conditions are good with a lot of space for activities, and especially our little hill is popular in winter times. This period is also a really good working period for literacy and numeracy. We have nine weeks between our holiday week in October and the Christmas holiday in December, and we will focus on literacy and numeracy in order to improve the children's learning outcome. But we also prepare ourselves for Christmas with a calendar in every class-room, celebrating St. Lucia, and singing Christmas songs.

Best wishes to you all from us in Norway.

Arnstein Nærleie
Headmaster

"[...]I am a person who want to share possible success factors with everyone [...]"
Arnstein Nærleie



COMENIUS: IMPROVING LITERACY AND NUMERACY SKILLS OSNOVNA ŠOLA KAPELA, SLOVENIA

Osnovna šola Kapela (Primary School Kapela) is situated on top of Kapela hill, in Pomurje region, in the North-Eastern part of Slovenia. We live in a rural area near Radenci, a well-known thermal spa location. The school has approximately 200 students, aged 6-15, and 24 teachers.

We have joined this project because we want to raise literacy and numeracy standards of our pupils on the whole. We find literacy and numeracy competences crucial in teaching children for life as these two competences influence pupils' success in all subjects, not only in mother tongue and Mathematics.

Improving literacy has been our tendency in some of our previous projects. In The Hidden Treasure project (Skriti zaklad) our pupils had been using the translation method in mother tongue subject to translate stories from German into Slovene. Raising literacy standards was also one of the aims in our first Comenius project on "Eurotales". We are aware that so far only the minority of better pupils have benefited from these methods. When it comes to national assessments our pupils still don't do well enough in both literacy and numeracy.

There are two national

assessments in three main subjects in Slovenian primary schools. The first assessment is when children are 11 and the second is when they are 14. Children acquire numeracy and literacy gradually from the first grade on. They are expected to read and write by the end of the third grade. One of the better solutions in Slovenian school system is placing pupils into different ability groups in the three main subjects – Slovene, Mathematics and foreign language. Different kinds of differentiation are used in our school from the fourth grade on.

Our school is well known for participating in numerous projects and it is one of our specialities to motivate pupils for project work. On special activity days we prepare workshops which, as much as possible, teach pupils for life. We also try to involve parents as much as possible and workshops are sometimes prepared for parents and children. With younger pupils we try to do daily reading of fairytales, reading in sequels and so on. Teachers also use didactic games when teaching both literacy and numeracy skills.

Teaching is also individualised so that special programmes are prepared for the gifted and for the pupils with learning disabilities. Teachers use



Slovenian group in Denmark
From left: Angela Stajniko, teacher; Lucija Kret, teacher; mag. Anastazija Avsec, headmaster, Bernarda Roudi, teacher and Vesna Ketiš, teacher and project coordinator.

special techniques when working with this group of pupils.

The first mobility in Denmark was a special experience for all our teachers who attended it. The teachers were much impressed by the school's technological equipment, the pupil and teacher friendly process of learning, and also the school's interior. We (the visiting teachers from Slovenia) all feel the privilege of seeing how a Danish school works, because it is a system much different from our own. Due to continual evaluation of the work in Denmark it was not difficult for each of us to see and »take home« some of the efficient teaching ideas, transferrable into our school environment.

A presentation of the mobility (the workshops and the project content) has been done for all our colleagues, and the visiting teachers have suggested some improvements for the school's work.

Improving numeracy skills in Denmark by using tests

To improve numeracy skills we have always tested our pupils in math. Nearly every math book has a little test after every chapter, which the teacher can use. Otherwise, the teacher makes the test himself. Dorthe Pedersen teaches math and science at Tølløse Skole. This year she is working as supervisor for her colleagues in math and science.

Five years ago, we decided to buy our tests. It was important for us, that the tests were independent of our schoolbooks. The new tests are standardized and follow the National Curriculum.

Now we use the test once or sometimes twice a year. The pupils can use all the time they need (usually between one and two and a half-hour) and the teacher is allowed to read aloud.

After the test the teacher finds a few subjects for each pupil, that they haven't learned yet.

When the individual pupil has mastered a new subject, we will make a small test to see the progress.

As a teacher you have to teach and challenge all the pupils, and you have to differentiate the teaching because the pupils have different skills and the difference between a pupil much below average and a pupil much above average in the same level can be enormous (some times more than 3 years).

Of course all this is easier said than done, especially

since sometimes there are about 25 pupils in a class. Nevertheless, as a teacher you must differentiate the class for the individual pupil. Occasionally an extra teacher in the class can help differentiate the class for the individual pupil.

You have to be aware of some possible pitfalls, when using these tests:

Some of our pupil can't cope with several questions at a time, and you have to give these pupils a few questions at a time during the test. Some teacher cuts out the individual questions and gives them to such pupils' one at a time.

Other pupils have enormous problems with concentration, and if possible, you have to get a teacher to help them with their concentration.

The daily state of mind might be bad. The pupil might have had a bad day or morning, which might influence the test results.

None of these problems necessarily means the pupil has problems with math.

Finally Dorthe explains:

"It's like building a house. If you are missing a brick, then it's necessary to fill in the missing brick. If the basic math isn't in order, you have to fill in the missing math."

It is also important to note that the number of questions in each subject determines how trustworthy the test results are. More questions means better statistics.

Cooperative Learning

A way of improving both numeracy and literacy skills is by Cooperative Learning, which is an approach to organizing classroom activities into academic and social learning experiences. Pupils must work in groups to complete the two sets of tasks collectively. Everyone succeeds when the group succeeds. Cooperative Learning has 5 basic elements:

- **Positive Interdependence** requires that group members feel connected to each other in the process of accomplishing the goal.

- **Positive Interdependence** encompasses 9 sub-categories:

- **goal** - the expected outcome of the activity
- **incentive**; the reason the group wishes to complete the task
- **resource**; the tools needed to complete the task
- **role**; roles assigned to pupils to ensure each person contributes
- **sequence**; steps to completing the task
- **simulation**; the alternative mindset needed to complete the goal
- **outside force**; something limiting the time or used as a driving force
- **environmental**; that every group member is in close proximity to one another



Mathematic assessment

"It's like building a house. If you're missing a brick, then it's necessary to fill in the missing brick. If basic math isn't in order, you have to fill in the missing math."



Cooperative learning

identity; that the group feels connected in one team. Individual Accountability means that every group member is responsible for being able to demonstrate understanding and comprehension of the learned academic expectations and social goals.

Face to Face Interaction suggests that the group must participate by communicating and discussing the goal. Social Skills include listening, body language, sharing, accepting ideas and differences, etc. These are the skills needed prior to or

being developed during the group work. Processing is when the pupils assess their efforts as a group and can pin point areas of improvement in their social skills. When doing activities in Cooperative Learning it is important to do a Contact Activity to ensure that the group has a basis for comfortable communication and feel open to one another. Benefits include higher self esteem, achievement and retention of academic information:

- social support

- positive school attitude
 - positive attitude towards educators and classmates
 - on-task behaviour
 - collaborative skills
- increase in level of reasoning
- Considerations include:
- sometimes manipulation

- of groups may be necessary
- some pupils may not respond well in forced group situations
 - time consuming
 - it is important to be alert and promoting success



Library as a learning center

Working with LæseTek (Center for Reading and Reading Technology)

This year Tølløse School is working with LæseTek to improve numeracy and literacy skills of the pupils in quite another way. The project aims to develop learning environments that insure inclusion of pupils in reading difficulties by implementing reading and writing supported by IT and e-books. LæseTek also provide education for our dyslexic pupils. The department has employed specialist teachers and candidates educated in audiologopædi. Holbaek Municipality has since 2008 equipped selected dyslexic pupils with IT backpack. It is LæseTek's task to implement the IT backpacks in the pupils' school life and to support and train the pupils, parents and teachers. The municipality has

purchased a license to the reading and writing support programs: Vital, Vitex and ViseOrd. All pupils and teachers at primary schools in Holbaek are therefore able to use reading technology and e-books.

We are working with the possibilities of good reading and writing support programs to be so good, that pupils in severe literacy difficulties can compensate significantly from the written law requirements they meet.

Combined with instructions in more traditional compensatory strategies (DK: VAKS, abbreviation: Choose Coding Strategies) the benefit by using reading and writing support technologies will optimize.

“Benefits (of Cooperative Learning) include higher self esteem, achievement and retention of academic information.”



View from Copenhagen

The History of Grundschule Baiersdorf

Grundschule Baiersdorf is a primary school from grade 1 to 4 with 24 teachers and about 300 pupils in the age of 6 to 10. Baiersdorf (7600 inhabitants) is situated about 30km in the north of Nürnberg in the district of Centre Franconia in northern Bavaria.

The School building was built in

1959 and had been totally renovated in 2005 to 2007, a transformation into a low energy building included. In 2008 there was built a new sports hall, in 2009 school yard and sport facilities had been renewed.



Grundschule Baiersdorf

Opportunities for Students

“We think that school has to be a learning space as well as a living space.”

We think that school has to be a learning space as well as a living space, so our main focus is on the pupils' individual needs. We encourage and challenge children according to their skills and try to develop their self- and achievement motivation as much as possible. In grade 3 and 4 pupils attend once a week special training courses in literacy

and numeracy. Optional working groups are offered to the pupils in the afternoon like computer, theatre, school choir, basketball, ballet, badminton, self-defence, school yard gardening and ice skating.

Teaching time starts at 8.15 and ends at 13.15. Pupils can attend the after school care club until 16.30.



Sweets for the children on the first day of school.



New classroom books for pupils

Independența, Our Town

Independența is a locality in the county of Galați, Moldova, România. The village of Independența was established in 1879 through the allocation of land to newly-married couples from the county of Covurlui to the estate of Maxineni village, and by displaced residents from the villages of Maxineni, Peneu and Braina, which were located in the flood plain of the Siret. Located in the south-west part

of the county, 25 km from the city of Galați, the village of Independența is crossed from NW to SE by DN(National Road) 25 Galați – Tecuci, a paved road. Parallel to DN 25, the railroads from Galați to Tecuci pass through the village, creating a setting that's favorable to the economic development of the settlement. From the point of view of the administrative-territorial organization, the

village of Independența consists of a single locality; it is classified as a mid-sized municipality with a population of about 4,930 residents, the category with the largest percentage (39%) of the 56 villages in Galați County.



The town Hall

Romanian project team, thoughts and expectations

Vasilica Perjeru. I have been teaching for 12 years and I'm currently teaching the third grade. I hope to learn new ways of improving the numeracy and literacy skills of my students.

I'm **Elena Costin**, and I've been a primary school teacher for 14 years. I'm looking forward to interacting with other participants, sharing our ideas, and improving our communicative skills.

Lenuța Stratulat: I've been teaching since 1996. By being in this project, I hope to learn about new educational systems and to exchange ideas with teachers from other nations.

I'm **Antigona Antoneta Ene**, and I've got 14 years experience as a primary school teacher. By participating, I hope to enrich my knowledge of teaching, and that my students will enjoy the new methods that I apply.

Ana-Maria Stegaru: I am 30 years old, and I've worked with

children for 10 years.

I wanted to participate in this project to meet other people, and to learn other ways to achieve success in this dear profession.

My name is **Mihaela Simion** and I'm in my third year of teaching computer science at school no.2 Independența. I'm excited to test and put into practice new approaches to teaching.



Extracurricular activity

Experience from Denmark

I think that by incorporating new methods of learning and assessment into my school, we will prove to be a model of modernity and adaptability for our volatile society."

Adrian Mihăilescu

Maricela Paraschiv: I've been a teacher for 10 years. From the project, I expect to learn how to better evaluate myself and my students, and to use active-participation methods in class.

Doinița Sîmpetru: I've got 12 years experience as a teacher. In Denmark, I saw large differences in our educational systems and teaching methods. It was very interesting, and I want to adapt these methods for our school and our students.

I'm **Veronica Suvac**, and I've

been a teacher for a long time. I joined this project because I want to improve my ability to select and use the most effective training methods.

Ionela Constandache: I've been a teacher for 11 years. I want my classroom to be a warm and inviting place, where children are able to enjoy learning. I hope to learn new and innovative ways of doing this.



Mihaela Mihăilescu:

I am interested in improving my students communicative skills and critical thinking abilities. More, I want them to commit themselves to continuous lifelong learning.

Ionica Chipser: I am a teacher for 12 years and I teach at fourth grade. I wish that through participating on this project to learn more alternative teaching methods which are used in different countries. I think I'll learn more from their success learning.

Staff team



- **Norway:** Mr. Arnstein Naerlie, headmaster and project coordinator,



- **Denmark:** Ms Marianne Jeppesen, headmaster, Ms Yvonne Pedersen, deputy headmaster and contact person



- **Germany:** Mr Markus Hahn, headmaster and contact person



- **Romania:** Mr Adrian Mihailescu, headmaster, Ms Mihaela Mihailescu, teacher and contact person



- **Slovenia:** Ms Anastazija Avsec, headmaster and contact person

We're on the web!

<http://www.comenius-friends.eu/>

Contact Informations

Norway: Morkved skole, Postboks 253, N – 2381 Brumunddal , Telephone: +47 62 33 63 60

Fax: +47 62 33 63 61, Email: ane@ringsaker.kommune.no, Website: www.ringsaker.kommune.no/gs/morkved

Denmark: Tollose Centralskole, Sportsvej 3, DK – 4340 Tollose, Telephone: +45 72 36 74 50, Email: mar@holb.dk, Website: www.tollose-skole.dk

Germany: Grundschule Baiersdorf, Bodenschatzstraße 9, D – 91083 Baiersdorf, Telephone: +49 91 33 32 41, Fax: +49 91 33 60 39 48, Email: schulleitung@grundschule-baiersdorf.de, Website: www.grundschule-baiersdorf.de

Romania: Școala Gimnazială Nr. 2, Tudor Vladimirescu street nr. 185, RO – 807165 Independența , Telephone: +40 749 083 791, Fax: +40 236 826 932, Email: scoala2indep@yahoo.com, Website: http://scoli.didactic.ro/scoala_gimnaziala_nr_2_independenta

Slovenia: OS Kapela, Kapelski Vrh 95, SLO – 9252 Radenci, Telephone: +38 62 566 90 61, Fax: +38 62 566 90 65, Email: o-kapela.ms@guest.arnes.si, Website: www.os-kapela.si



Romanian students' results by applying assesment methods seen in Denmark

