

Case study

Three schools in Denmark selected different themes as the basis for developing a health policy. They are all members of the Network of Health Promoting Schools in the County of Southern Jutland. Guderup School focused on their general classroom teaching based on their experience with health education; Løjt Kirkeby School mainly emphasized environmental factors and relationships, and Kværs School focused on both health education and environmental factors.

Guderup School had already developed, tested and evaluated several educational programmes. These included peer educational programmes in which older students taught younger students. The evaluation indicated that this had a great effect especially on the older students' knowledge and attitudes towards health. The school decided to discuss the experience gained through this with teachers in order to generalize from the learning. As a result nine criteria were agreed that would apply to the whole school. These included 'students should be equipped to take action that leads to development and change' and 'parental participation in teaching should be increased.' Students were asked their views on all the criteria and these were fed into meetings of the Educational Council. The school then used the criteria as a basis for joint theme weeks.

In Løjt Kirkeby School, following an investigation into bullying, the Health Committee agreed to focus on initiatives to improve the general working environment of the school. They adopted a vision, including that 'a good social culture is promoted at the school' and that 'habits and norms are investigated to determine the barriers to a good social culture.' Based on this vision, an educational values game was designed in collaboration with teachers to explore: mutual support, solving conflicts and consistency. The game was played by staff and the School Board and resulted in possible actions or measures being identified to address different problematic situations. The next step would be to develop a game to be used in each class.

The Educational Council of Kværs School decided to strengthen playing and physical activity in the school's teaching and daily activities. The justification for this was that teachers had noticed that students had inadequate motor skills and also considered that learning potential and physical competence are closely related. Following a seminar on the theories of playing and games and their significance for learning, the Educational Council decided to investigate the play culture at the school. Two questionnaires were designed – one for students and one to investigate how teachers used playing and games in their teaching. Informed by the results, the Council decided that they would strengthen play and physical activity during breaks and in teaching. The class teachers were asked to present the results of the survey to their classes and to elicit ideas from students on how to strengthen playing and physical activity. An action plan has been drawn up for future work.

The values of the health-promoting school have been instrumental in both the processes and results for all three schools. The values include WHO's definition of health, the principle of pupils' active participation in the learning process, the settings perspective and the objective of developing empowerment and action competencies among the pupils

Reflection and coherence

Looking back on what we have done, what changes are needed in practice and in visions, values and objectives?