



Nyköping Junior High School

A path to cultural diversity in the school and in the community

Nyköping is a municipality and coastal town located about 100 km west of Stockholm, Sweden, with a population of about 51 000 inhabitants. During 2010, the municipality's education office conducted an analysis of the situation regarding the local junior high schools, based on the perception that the quality of the schools was insufficient. The analysis showed, among other things:

- There was a very clear segregation in the municipality, which became apparent when looking at the school situation. One example was a school where nearly 80% of pupils had parents born abroad, compared to another school where the corresponding figure was 2%.
- The Swedish school system provides something called the "free school choice" which means that the parents have the right to choose a school for their children. Borgmästarhagsskolan, which had the most resources of the four schools had developed and ran popular profiles that pupils could choose to specialize in, music and sports, which attracted primarily more "well off" parents and their children. Over time, this affected the previously mentioned segregation.

Overall, it was concluded that **something radical needed** to be done to remedy the serious structural problems identified. What happened then was almost unique and unprecedented within the borders of Sweden. Politicians of all sides chose to endorse a very aggressive **strategy of integration, inclusion and equality** that the civil servants created and put into place. It was decided to close the four school districts that were spread out in the municipality and invest in a new, common organization center located in the city center.

As a starting point a new building was built. The main idea of this decision was that **all pupils, regardless of their background, circumstances, gender or address would go to the same school** and be given the same opportunities to succeed. It based its approach on the idea that children who are different learn from each other more than children who are similar. Until January 2014 construction of the new school building progressed and the four organizations were preparing to become one.

During the first year that has passed for the new school, we, along with the municipal school administration initiated a clearer framing of what the school is doing and we can point out some key success factors that are important for continued success:

- We take into account the students' background on the basis of such socio-economic conditions, gender, educational needs, disabilities and mother tongue as far as possible and create "equal" classes where differences are evened out.
- Another important factor is that we place great importance on creating a organization that is close to the pupils with "schools in the school," where specific teacher teams are responsible for their "own" pupils in a given part of the respective buildings.



- A third factor is the focus on results with clear objectives, as well as a systematic approach to monitoring and reviewing. Based on any needs that are identified, we work constantly to find ways that pupils should be able to take the next step in their learning and get the support they need to achieve the educational goals.

Nyköping Junior High school is not completely finished. It is **the symbol of a change process** that started and has great ambitions which are unlikely to come to an end. We have a situation that is bursting with diversity and exciting exchanges in ways that we have not previously seen or experienced. We of course have lots left to do, an awful lot to learn and areas of development that we have not yet explored. But we never forget the steps that we have taken.

