

Project-Based Learning at Hellerup School, Denmark

Institution Information

- Hellerup School
- Teaches ages 6-16
- Copenhagen, Denmark

Practices Identified

- Unique architecture design for open, collaborative education
- Project-based learning
- Big focus on teacher collaboration and development



Practice Description

Hellerup School in Copenhagen teaches pupils aged 6-16, incorporating project-based learning with 21st Century learning design. Teaching alternates between several weeks of fixed lessons and then several weeks of project-based learning, with the teacher setting goals for each project. The projects are of real-world importance and connected to the local area. For example, pupils completed a sustainability project on building windmills in the harbour outside their school. They learnt the physics and maths of developing windmills, but also developed skills in consultancy and communication by pitching their plans to residents of the new apartments next to the site.

The space is designed in such a way to support the pedagogy. Project-based learning does not suit a traditional classroom layout. At Hellerup there are no classrooms but rather a series of contiguous, multipurpose spaces arrayed around the central stairs, which themselves double as social meeting areas or lecture seats. Furniture and temporary folding walls form moveable enclaves and nooks. This makes the school space open, flexible and trustful - there are no closed doors. Likewise, the flexible space reflects the daily school day, although the students' schedule is punctuated by brief periods of teacher-led instruction, much of the day is flexible. Students carry out coursework in the manner and pace that suits them.

The school has a big focus on teacher collaboration and professional development. There are 4 hours a week timetabled for teacher CPD, yet what this entails is largely self-directed by the individual teacher. On top of this, six full 'focus' planning days are scheduled per year for secondary teachers. On these days pupils come to school first thing to collect their task from the teachers. They have the day to complete it out of school (or they are free to use the space in school too). They hand it in electronically at the end of the day. Freeing up the teachers' time to dedicate to the CPD.