Skjeberg Folk High School

Recycling provides profits in the South

There is a bit of competition between classes at our school: which is best at achieving the school’s environmental goals! All pupils are active in the Eco-Lighthouse program. We have full waste sorting, automatic light dimmers, water saving showers and so on; and through the Peace Corps we have cooperative projects with African countries. We combine ecology with a global perspective.

Two pupils of the 2009-2010 class, Siri Sørlie Jørgensen og Maiken Grønnevik Smith tell us this. Teacher Tore Bjerketvedt continues: – Two projects in particular provided our school with the decisive incentive to work with sustainability. The first came from the South through an exchange program of the Norwegian Sports federation in which sports volunteers from Africa come to work with the Peace Corps here in Norway. During the course of the year, Mr. Kangwa Kaluba introduced us to the EduSport Foundation (Education Through Sport) in Zambia. Kangwa’s personality and EduSports’ ideas about using sports to improve the living conditions of young people led us to start a special education program including a study visit to Zambia.

The second incentive came from the owner of the school, Østfold county, when the school was invited in autumn 2007 to be certified under the Eco-Lighthouse label system. The school is now committed to follow requirements in important areas such as energy, waste, aesthetics, working environment and procurement. This affects all aspects of the school, from management and teaching to daily routines and finance. The school is now in its second year as an Eco-Lighthouse. Central activities are waste sorting, energy conservation and a safe working environment for teachers and pupils. The group who are going to Zambia have the task of collecting all empty bottles and wastes in the boarding house and collecting the waste deposit money. The money goes towards scholarships for young people in Zambia.
Sustainable education projects
The school’s charter emphasises caring and empathy, environment, integration and equity between rich and poor. – We want our pupils to reflect on their own role and responsibility, says Bjerketvedt. In addition to the trip to Zambia the following can be noted:

Each Thursday evening the school arranges a joint event for all classes. These events are often used to present and debate various aspects of sustainability including issues of environment, equity and conflict resolution.

A sports volunteer from Zambia lives at the school every year from August to December. He or she participates as an ordinary member of the boarding house and in parts of the educational program, and in addition teaches at a local primary school as well as at the Folk High school itself.

Pupils are encouraged to collect all metal can tops in special containers. These are collected and the aluminium is delivered to an organization that produces prostheses for children and adults in developing countries.

The school’s theme courses address various themes related to sustainable development. – One of the courses is called Traditional Food. Tore who is our environmental coordinator has a farm, so the class goes to his farm and learns how to grow and make food starting from scratch. We are also working now to include environmental theory as a subject, Siri and Maiken tell us. And in the class called “Redesign” they work on re-using and transforming various recycled clothes and other consumer products.

The UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development
"Learning to change our world” – thus was the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005 – 2014) launched. Sustainable Development should provide today’s needs without reducing the capacity for future generations to fulfill their needs. It requires a better balance between ecological, economic and social considerations. The goal of the UN decade is to strengthen awareness and knowledge in order to enable us to think and act in new, sustainable ways.

The target is both schools and society at large. Governments are urged to “promote public understanding and broad participation, including cooperation with civil society and all stakeholders”. Broad public information should play a central role, combining theory and practice in values-based decision making. UNESCO is the international coordinator: see: www.unesco.org/en/esd as well as: www.thebalancingact.info

Themes for discussion:
What is needed in order to initiate similar work where you live?
Does your own municipality have plans for the local sustainability work?
What is the policy and practice of your municipality for citizen participation?

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On tour in Zambia (photo ?)

Dialogue, food and redesign
In a theme course titled ”Project Diversity”, pupils build relationships with young refugees who live in the nearby municipalities of Rygge and Horten. They undertake a variety of activities together.

– By participating on this project I learned that Norwegian young people are polite and friendly once one gets to know them, writes Heran on the school’s home page. Pupils at the school say that they have gained a far greater understanding of what it means to be a refugee, and much more knowledge of what integration implies.