

NORDIC NETWORK

The Newsletter of the Nordic Network of International Schools

Mission

The Nordic Network is a collaborative network that serves international schools in the Nordic and Baltic regions.

The network seeks to enhance communication and collaboration between its participants to improve student learning through best practices in international



NORDIC NETWORK EVENTS

2016 Nordic Network AGM and Leadership Conference hosted by Reykjavik International School.

The Annual Leadership Conference has been a feature of the Nordic Network calendar for several years. The 2016 conference took on a new look by combining it with the Nordic Network's first Annual General Meeting for Member Schools. The AGM and Leadership Conference was hosted by Reykjavik International School on the 29th and 30th of September, 2016. RIS is the latest addition to the Nordic Network international school family, becoming an Associate Member School in October, 2016. The Head of School at RIS, Ásta Roth, and her team, did an excellent and very professional job organizing and hosting this event.

Thirty two representatives from our seventeen Founder Member, Regular Member and Associate Member schools were present at this two day event. The first day was taken up with the AGM and two presentations **from** Robin Schneider and Dr. Richard Caffyn. Robin is Deputy Head of School at the International School of Helsinki. His presentation was concerned with cultural understandings between students, teachers, parents and school. The second presentation came from Dr. Richard Caffyn, Principal of the International School, Telemark. Richard's presentation was about Vampirism in International School Leadership. Our thanks go to Robyn and Richard for volunteering to do these two very interesting sessions. .

Day two was a full day workshop by Henrik Schmidts from Novo Nordisk leadership. This exciting and very informative professional development session was well received and appreciated by those present

For those who stayed on for a third day, an optional half day sightseeing tour was arranged. The tour took the participants to a geothermal power station and Thingvellir, a national park 40 kilometers north east of Reykjavik. Thingvellir lies in a rift valley that marks the boundary between the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates. Althing, the national parliament of Iceland, was established at Thingvellir in 930, and held its sessions there until 1798.

Feedback from the delegates attending the first combined AGM and Leadership Conference has been very positive and it is our

NEWS FROM MEMBER SCHOOLS



Grand Opening

Billund may be a town of just 6000 people located in the middle of Danish farm country, but when an international school opened its doors here three years ago, the world took note. Camera crews from outlets including the BBC and CNN were on hand to record the moment when just over 60 students walked into their new school for the first time. It was attention sparked not because of anything the school had done—yet—but because of what it hoped to do and, especially, because of its backer: The LEGO Foundation.

Billund is home to arguably the world's most beloved toy manufacturer. As the LEGO Group has grown over the last decade, company owner and LEGO Foundation Board Vice Chair Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen began to dream of a school. Even before the International School of Billund opened, its goals were ambitious: 1) to make Billund an even more attractive place to settle, both for Danish and international families and 2) to demonstrate the power of learning through play in a real-world setting.

Building the Capital of Children

At a recent celebration of ISB's newly-renovated facilities, Kristiansen admitted that success was never a guarantee. "When we were gathered here in 2013 for the opening of the school, I have to admit I had a concern," he mused. "Not a big concern – but still! Would we be able to attract enough children?"

As it turns out, there was no need to worry. Within two years, ISB was accredited as an International Baccalaureate World School for the Primary Years Program, and later, as a candidate school for the Middle Years Program. The student body, meanwhile, has quintupled: by the end of this academic year, 320 students from close to 50 nations will fill the halls of the former public school that ISB calls home. Roughly half of ISB families are connected to the LEGO Group, while the rest work

intention to have this event as a regular feature in the Nordic Network calendar.

20th Anniversary Conference

The 20th Annual conference will be held at Oslo International School on Saturday the 20th and Sunday the 21st of May.

The official conference web site is:

www.nnconference.com

This is constantly being up-dated as new presenters and sessions are added. To register for the conference please go to the conference web site, complete and submit a registration form. We look forward to seeing you at the conference in Oslo.

Leadership Conference and Annual General Meeting 2017

This year's Leadership Conference and AGM will be held at Vilnius International School on Thursday the 21st and Friday the 22nd of September, 2017.

There is no registration fee for Founder Schools and Member Schools. Leadership from Associate Membership Schools may also attend the conference without paying a registration fee should space permit. Further details about the Leadership conference and AGM will be available later this school year.

Sports News

Nordic League Football Tournaments

In October, 2016 School teams from Year 7 -9 girls and boys took part in a football tournament hosted by the International School of Helsinki. Teams from the International School of Helsinki, Oslo International School, and Stockholm International School took part in the tournament.

The senior section of the tournament, for students in Year 10 to IB2, was hosted by Oslo International School. Teams from the International School of Helsinki, Oslo International School, Stockholm International School, Skagerak International School and Stabæk Girls Football Team entered the competition.

Nordic Network at Reykjavik International School

When the Reykjavík International School was asked to host the Nordic Network Leadership Conference and its very first AGM, we were honoured. RIS is a young, small international school greatly appreciative of the expertise and knowledge the Nordic Network has so willingly shared.

The Nordic Network AGM and Leadership Conference was held at RIS on the 29th and 30th of September and featured brilliant presentations by Robin Schneider, Dr. Richard Caffyn and Henrik Schmidts. Two productive and informative days, with Iceland showing its best Autumn weather.

We were pleased to introduce so many of our guests to an Icelandic thermal pool, a typical Icelandic recreational and social pastime. Whether to swim or just relax in one of the many "hot pots", pools hold a special place in Icelandic culture and we were pleased to share this. Another highlight was the dinner held at Harpa, Reykjavík's signature concert venue. The northern lights also did not disappoint our guests and a tour of some of South West Iceland's main attractions rounded the conference off.

for a variety of Danish and international companies in the region. And, most significantly, many of the new families who once would have settled in nearby cities are now choosing to make their home in family-friendly Billund instead.

Learning Through Play in Action

Now, then, comes the time to focus on the second, and potentially more consequential part of ISB's mandate: putting the concept of "learning through play" into action. Much is known—in the Nordic countries, especially—about the importance of play in children's development. Yet little research has explored what it might mean to put play at the centre of schooling. What is the relationship between play and playful learning? How do teachers, curricula and a school community create a culture that supports a playful pedagogy for all ages? Those questions are at the heart of an ongoing action research project and collaboration between ISB, the LEGO Foundation and Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Documentation has always played an important part of the International Baccalaureate framework used at ISB. But with the Pedagogy of Play (PoP) project, it has taken on new significance as teachers use their own classroom experiences to formulate and test hypotheses related to play and learning. One year in, and the results are already becoming visible. Students are helping to redesign their classrooms, teachers are rethinking lesson plans and colleagues are supporting each other in trying new materials and tools. One example is a brand-new ISB endeavor known as Passion Day—a recurring opportunity for students to choose their own hands-on activities while teachers provide support, but not instruction.

Earning Its Stripes

The ultimate aim of ISB's work with Project Zero is not only to challenge the way the world thinks about play and learning, but to offer tools, resources and illustrative case studies to *others* who wish to bring more playful learning to their schools. Already the project is being referenced in university classrooms and educational conferences.

Building this pedagogy of play will be a long process, with plenty of mistakes and reiterations. But taking the long view is where ISB strives to excel. As Head of School Camilla Uhre Fog explains, "If, when students leave ISB, they carry with them an unwavering curiosity and lifelong love of learning, then I will know we have succeeded." And ISB will have earned the recognition it was entrusted with those three years ago.

International School of Billund

Sidsel Overgaard

Senior Communications Manager



After years of battling a lack of space and facilities, staff and students at Esbjerg International School celebrated the re-

RIS had its Nordic Network membership visit just prior to the conference, conducted by Mr. Graham Miselbach and Mr. David Osler as well as Derek Hall. The school is now a full member of the Nordic Network, of which we are very proud.

Reykjavík International School thanks all the participants at the conference and the Nordic Network for the advice and guidance they gave for making the event such a pleasure which we shall fondly remember.

Shortly after the Nordic Network Leadership Conference, the Reykjavík International School had an accreditation visit by NEASC CIE, for which we believe we were much better prepared, thanks to the Nordic Network membership visit and of course the AGM and Leadership Conference. Again, we are very thankful.

We are looking forward to continue to grow our relationship with all the member schools of the Nordic Network. See you all in Oslo in May for the 20th Anniversary of the Nordic Network.

Allra bestu kveðjur. Bless, bless,
Yours Sincerely,
ÁSTA V ROTH, HEAD OF SCHOOL
REYKJAVÍK INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

opening of the school in September 2016 with several guests of honour, including the Minister of Education, and close colleagues from other international schools in attendance.

Some problems are good to have

The school rapidly grew from 7 students in 2008 to the point it needed to purchase purpose-built school facilities from the municipal government in 2011 for its then 62 students. By 2013, over 250 students were enrolled in the school and the original purpose-built facilities were no longer large enough nor adequate. This was a problem we would have welcomed in 2008! Fundraising efforts began in earnest in 2013 and were completed in January 2016. We broke ground in March 2016 and the job was complete in the mere minutes before the re-opening ceremony! The size of our facilities are now nearly doubled.

Changing is learning

The development of EIS continues as it is now a PYP Candidate school and is expected to soon become a MYP Candidate as well.



Vacancies at Esbjerg International School

Secondary Science teacher

Whole school Art (tentative)

Contracts begin 1 August 2017. Contact careers@eis.school for more information.



Embrace diversity, explore the world!

Student Government at ISGR

This academic year ISGR Middle years campus decided to enter into the spirit of the democratic process by forming a student government. Whilst we have a student council that is primarily responsible for school spirit activities we wanted to create a student body that has true autonomy and a mandate to make decisions. To this end the student government representatives consult directly with both principals on a monthly basis, (we

have a national section and an international section), and have been given their own budget of 10,000SEK

Our representatives will be trained in how to run meetings, take minutes, how to balance a budget and how to make budgetary proposals. At the same time we aim to develop our student council to be the voice of the students at ISGR, taking issues that concern our student body to our student government, who will then make appropriate decisions on behalf of their electorate.

We tried to stay as close to the spirit of the democratic process as possible. Interested candidates needed to state what they represented, give a speech to their peers and create a poster that encapsulated what they stood for. Each grade was allowed to vote in just one government representative, quite the challenge when some grades have three classes.

Voting booths were set up, a teacher was present to check off voters and prevent voting fraud.

We were pleasantly surprised to see very high voter turnout, which may have had something to do with the other election that was going on at the same time over in the United States...

We look forward to seeing how the student government develops over the coming year and are very interested in hearing of experiences you may have had at your schools, so please contact me if you have any advice or reflections to share: graham.miselbach@isgr.se



Professional Development

A number of Danish International Schools got together for their first coordinated INSET (In service training day). The working title of the workshop was "Self-assessment and Feedback" and Østerbro International hosted the day, where more than 150 International teachers were signed up.

The day was hugely successful, with two presenters from KompetenceHuset covering various topics associated with self-assessment and feedback as well as working with focused work groups. The work groups were created to ensure socialization across the schools, as well as enabling groups to share best practices and resources. It is the intention that this will become

an annual event.



Reykjavík
International
School

Student Art Work

Reykjavik International School was extremely proud when it was announced that the annual Leadership Conference of the Nordic Network was to be held at our premises in the City of Reykjavik. To celebrate this occasion we decided to create a piece of art, symbolising the togetherness of the Nordic countries and the close association between international schools in this region. The idea we came up with was to use a jigsaw as our theme. A jigsaw with all its disparate parts does not make a whole picture until all the pieces are fitted together. This we realised, would make a great symbol for the Nordic Network: a range of different schools but with similar philosophies and common ideals which when all put together become a strong, unified educational force. And so the concept of a jigsaw began to take life.

The oldest children in Year 11 were given basic information about what the jigsaw design needed to include i.e. all the member countries and their flags but then they were given a free rein to decide how these could be incorporated into a painting.

After careful consideration they came up with the design you see below and, if you had been at the Conference, on the main wall in the school.



They utilised the logo of RIS which was inspired by the ancient Chinese puzzle Tangram consisting of seven units combining logic, reasoning and spatial processing skills.

The logo is also reflective of the creativity, joy and diversity reflected in our international school and references the mountains that surround our uniquely gorgeous Icelandic landscape.

This we felt perfectly reflected the combining of our international schools and the learning and social skills we try to instill in our pupils to make them into global citizens.

We at RIS are very proud of the finished result. We are a small but growing school and it means a lot to be a part of the prestigious Nordic Network; this is why we have placed the RIS logo at the centre of the design as we very much wish to play an increasing role in the work of the Network.

Thank you all for your warm welcome to this family of schools and we extend an open invitation to please come and visit us in Reykjavik.

Alison Jenkins, Lead Teacher,
Reykjavík International School