

REBUS

Trip to a better school environment

If we bring about a change in attitudes to our way of relating to the physical environment in the long term, the actual driving forces are participation and the ability to have an influence. If we listen to young people, and have the courage to draw on their experiences and opinions, we will build confidence that leads to greater respect for each other and for the school and pre-school environment. We achieve this through collaboration between children and young people, school staff, the architecture educationalist and property manager.



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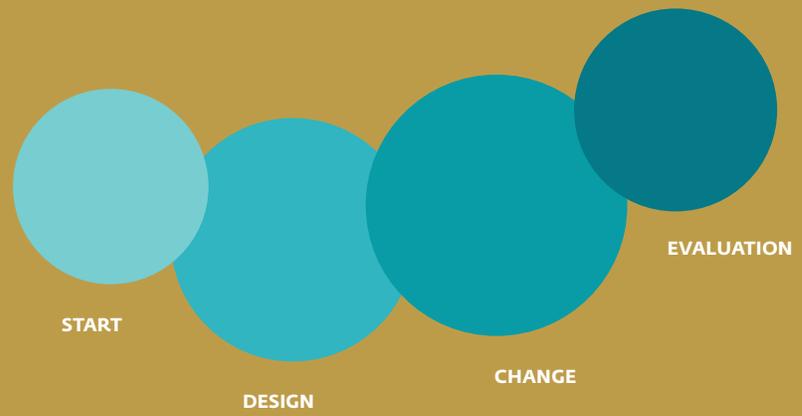
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Preface



How can children and young people help to shape their pre-school and school environment? How can everyone be involved? As part of an EU project, we have been working for three years on a collaboration to develop Swedish, Norwegian and Danish experiences. We have tested different working methods which have resulted in both successes and challenges. The results have become a general model for how to involve children and young people in the process of developing the physical environment in which they spend several hours every day.

The EU project was named REBUS – Trip to a Better School Environment, and the journey itself has been the important part. We have also named the model we have since developed REBUS – Trip to a Better School Environment and it can be used for changes of all sizes in which children and young people have a say in the design of their local environment. The model is structured as a set of guidelines and comprises four phases. It links the physical environment to the educational aspect of the operation. The recurring quotes are taken from the EU project REBUS.

Many of us have been on the journey, and with all our diverse skills and experiences we have both challenged and complemented each other in the project.

We would like to thank all the children and young people who have been involved in REBUS. Without your participation and commitment, there would not have been any pilot projects or guidelines.

Taking part means you're involved, taking part with others. You can help by taking part. You're part of a group. You get to help decide, or at least give your opinion.

Pupil, Year 6

We would also like to thank our REBUS partners who have been involved from the start in 2010. The pre-schools and schools that have taken part in the pilot projects and devoted their time and energy, the property managers who have given advice and support regarding properties, insurance companies that have contributed their thoughts on safety, the architecture educationalists who have inspired a discovery of architecture, and last but not least the researchers who have also shared their knowledge. Many people have contributed interesting, valuable perspectives.

We would also like to thank Interreg IVA Øresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak which has supported our work to achieve our goal: guidelines for children's and young people's involvement in work for a better pre-school and school environment.

It is our hope that you will be motivated and inspired to start your own REBUS projects, large and small, which can create positive changes for children's and young people's physical environment.

*Eva Cassel, Sweden, lead partner
Mona Rasmussen, Norway, project manager
Rasmus Challi, Denmark, project manager*



Project partners

A REBUS project can be a way of increasing children's and young people's understanding of the planned and built environment.

Architecture educationalist

REBUS – Trip to a Better School Environment, is an EU project co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund through Interreg IVA Øresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak. The project goal has been to tie the region together by developing a common trans-border method regarding how children and young people, school staff, architecture educationalists, property managers and other administrations can improve the environment in pre-schools and schools together.

The aim has been to work with children and young people and increase their influence over how they can have a tangible effect on their physical environment. Many people and organisations have been involved in REBUS. Twelve pre-schools and schools have contributed with their concrete experiences. Five project partners are responsible for managing the project and developing the model, and they introduce themselves in brief below:

City of Gothenburg City Premises Administration

The City Premises Administration manages, adapts and builds premises and homes for the City of Gothenburg's operations. The administration works in close co-operation with customers and users. With premises encompassing an area in excess of two million square metres, the City Premises Administration is one of Sweden's largest managers of public premises.

City of Gothenburg Cultural Affairs Administration

The Cultural Affairs Administration includes the City Library, four museums, an art hall and a theatre. The committee distributes cultural funding to the free cultural scene and is responsible for naming streets and squares. Donations, which finance a large part of the public art in Gothenburg, also fall under the administration's area of responsibility. Culture for children and young people is a priority.

Kultur i Väst

Kultur i Väst is the region's cultural administration and has expertise in culture and arts, culture and health, culture and learning, cultural tourism and much more. Kultur i Väst's goal is for the development of the cultural scene in Region Västra Götaland to be characterised by accessibility, equality, diversity and internationalisation. Kultur i Väst works with children and young people as a prioritised target group.



Municipal Undertaking for Educational Buildings and Property in Oslo/Undervisningsbygg Oslo KF

Undervisningsbygg Oslo KF is tasked with developing, building, managing, running and maintaining school buildings in Oslo: in total 1.3 million square metres (2012) spread over 177 schools and 750 buildings. Undervisningsbygg does not, however, manage any pre-school buildings. Undervisningsbygg Oslo KF is Oslo's largest buildings manager, and one of the largest in Norway.

DCUM

The Danish Centre of Educational Environment, DCUM, is a government institution within the public administration. DCUM falls under the Ministry of Education. DCUM operates across the whole of Denmark and works to ensure a good educational environment at all educational institutions and a good environment for children in all day-care facilities. DCUM places particular emphasis on dissemination of information and guidance in children's and young people's physical, psychological and aesthetic environment at pre-schools and all educational institutions.

12 pre-schools and schools

Kernehuset pre-school (DK)
 Fiskebäck school (S)
 Haugerud school (N)
 Hellerud high school (N)
 Skattegårdsvägen 100 pre-school (S)
 Trekroner school and Solstrålen pre-school (DK)
 Trosterud school (N)
 Vadum school (DK)
 Önnared school (S)
 Øraker school (N)
 Östra Palmgrensgatan 38 pre-school (S)

Introduction

The aim of these guidelines is to inspire improvement in the physical environment at pre-schools and schools in collaboration with children and young people. They are primarily directed at teachers, educationalists, other school staff and property managers. It is hoped that children and young people will also benefit from them. We have attempted to create a general model for how children and young people can be involved in shaping their pre-school or school environment. The REBUS model can be adapted and used in projects of all sizes, from improving a distinct area to refurbishing a whole pre-school or school. Giving children and young people an opportunity to participate in tangible improvements strengthens their belief that they genuinely can have an effect. They also feel responsible for an environment that they have had a say in, resulting in nicer school environments.

The terms involvement, co-determination, participation and user-influence are frequently used nowadays, and they are strengthened by prefixing them with 'active' or 'real'. In the context of REBUS, we have discovered that it is not the terms that are important, but the inherent meaning ascribed to them. REBUS – Trip to a Better School Environment shows that the actual process of increasing knowledge about architecture, design, planning and democracy is just as important as the results. Having said that, however, we do recommend that a visible improvement is made.

Architecture educationalist

These guidelines are the result of an EU project in which Sweden, Norway and Denmark have jointly carried out 12 pilot projects based on children's and young people's suggestions for improvements at schools and pre-schools in the municipalities of Gothenburg, Oslo, Jammerbugt and Aalborg. It has been a cross-border collaboration.

What is a REBUS project?

A REBUS project entails an improvement in the physical school or pre-school environment based on the experiences of children and young people. The project is founded on collaboration between children, school staff, management, property managers and an architecture educationalist. It is characterised by knowledge of architecture and design which is integrated into a democratic process for developing the physical environment. An architecture educationalist has professional expertise in architecture and design, as well as experience and knowledge of engaging children and young people in projects. Architecture pedagogy is a method for involving children and young people in planning and concrete change together with teachers, educationalists and property managers. Several of us have been working with architecture pedagogy at schools and pre-schools for many years in collaboration with property management. If you would like to find out more, please do not hesitate to contact one of us!

The role of the architecture educationalist is to inspire young people to discover their local environment and offer them tools to interpret it. By examining the school environment together with the young people, the architecture educationalist and young people can create more sustainable improvements together by drawing on their respective professional expertise and experiences as users. We believe that enabling pupils to be involved and have an influence encourages them to take better care of their school environment. In REBUS the architecture educationalist has worked with teachers and educationalists, but has also collaborated with the property managers to ensure that the proposals for changes that have been formulated alongside the young people are feasible to implement.

Architecture educationalist

The participants in a REBUS project are:

- children and young people
- staff – teachers, educationalists, head teacher, service staff and caretaker
- property managers
- an architecture educationalist
- possibly parents

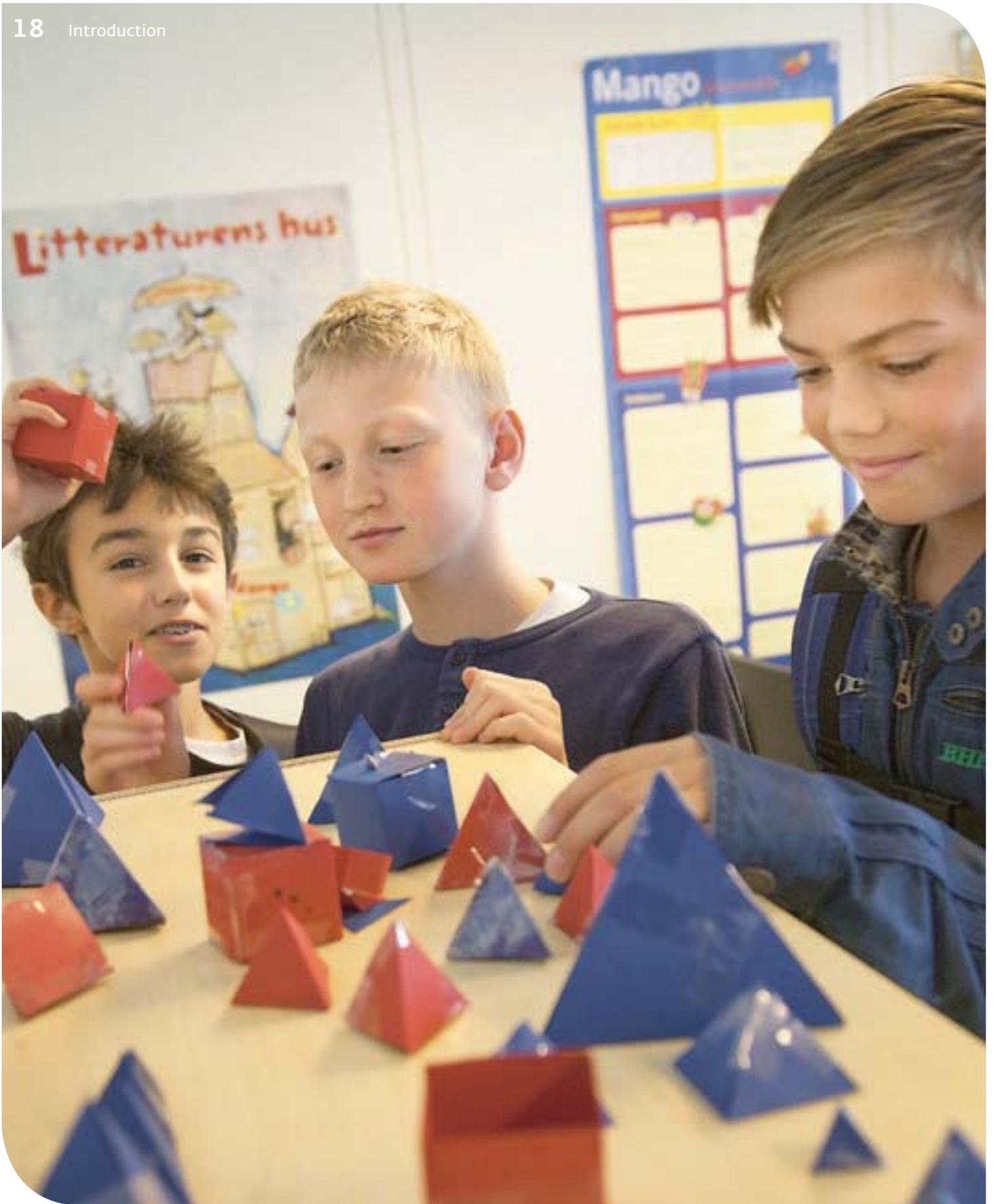
We believe that the more skills and experiences that can work together in changing the physical environment, the better the results.

A REBUS project is started by the pre-school or school, or by the manager of the property, as these are the parties responsible for the pre-school or school's physical environment. However, children, pupils and parents as well as staff may also take the initiative and put forward the initial ideas for a project.

To carry out a REBUS project and obtain sustainable results, it is a good idea to appoint a steering group. The steering group comprises representatives of all the participating parties and ensures the various phases of the project are started and completed.

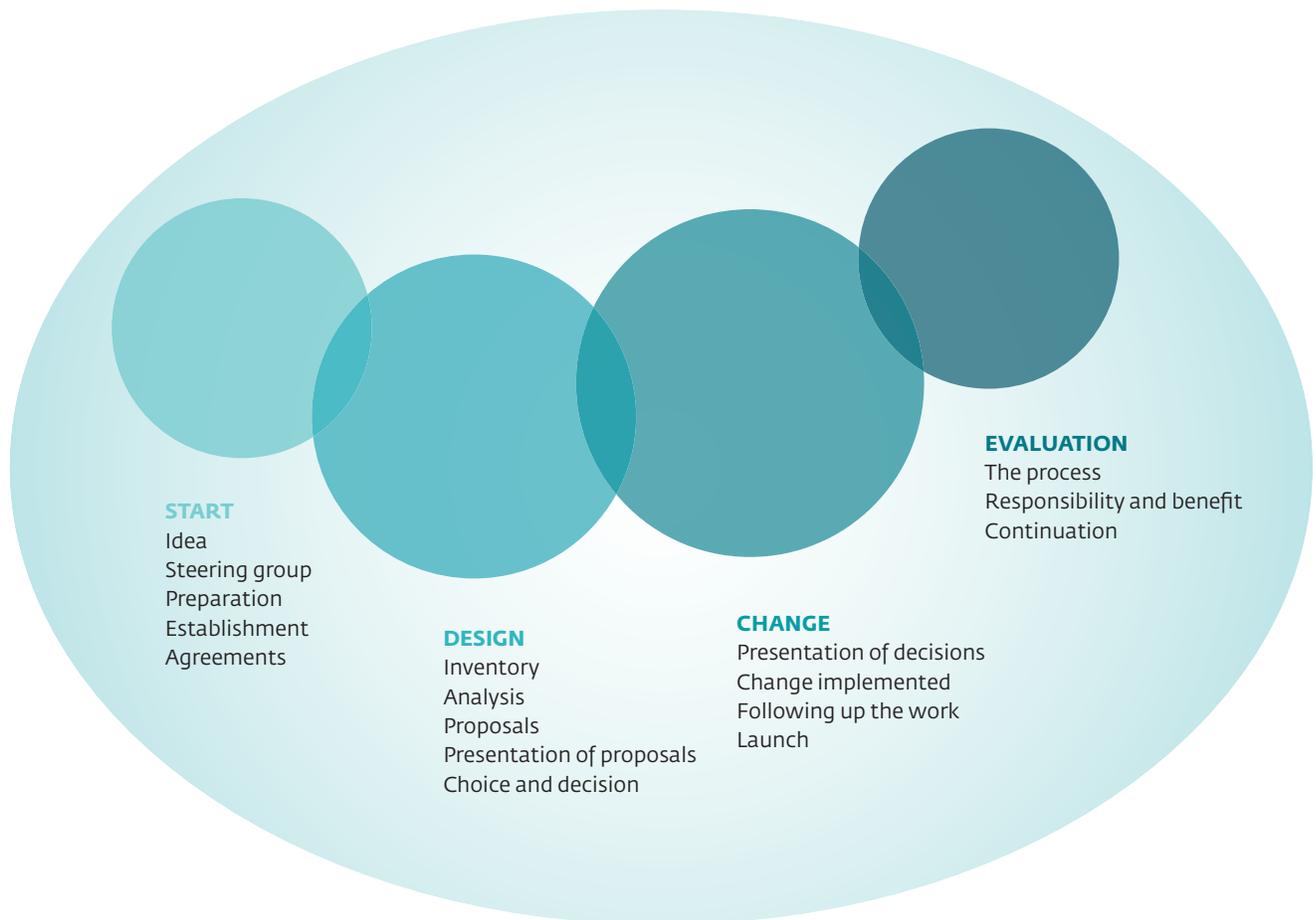
We wanted to take part in REBUS with our physical environment because the school needed to work with sustainable development and fundamental value issues. Since the project's primary goal was to identify a model for getting children and pupils to participate in work on the school environment, it was ideal for us. We also needed to increase the attractiveness of the outdoor environment, especially for Years 4-6. We chose to let the pupils and teachers in Year 5 take part in the project.

Head teacher



The REBUS project's work phases

A REBUS project comprises four work phases: start, design, change and evaluation. The chapters in these guidelines follow these four phases and give tips on how to develop a working process that assures long-term results.



Start

First and foremost, an idea or a desire to change the physical school or pre-school environment is needed, one that is firmly established among the school management. A steering group should then be formed to start to develop the idea in collaboration with everyone who will be involved. Also contact an architecture educationalist who can contribute his or her pedagogic knowledge about architecture.

Design

During the design phase, the various environments of the school or pre-school are studied, along with how they are currently used. What could be improved? It is important to outline a clear foundation before involving children and young people. This is the creative phase involving proposals, general design, models and sketches, for example. It is the architecture educationalist's field of expertise and most important task in the project. All the proposals that emerge during this phase are to be presented at the pre-school or school. This is where it is agreed which proposal to implement.

Change

Now it's time to cut the first sod! Or perhaps get the paintbrushes out. Sometimes the children or young people can help do the work, while other projects will have to be done by specialists. Whatever the case, it is important that the children or young people can follow the whole process and that the steering group monitors the work to ensure it proceeds as planned. Once the improvements are complete, some kind of celebration is of course appropriate!

Evaluation

The steering group should evaluate the results of the project. Have experiences been gained, good or bad, which are worth remembering? Who is responsible for inspecting and maintaining the completed changes? Are there any thoughts on more projects in the future?

Influence for children and young people

Children's and young people's influence on the physical layout of the school and pre-school environment has a major impact on the work, both in practice and theory. Children and young people have experiences of their local environment, and opinions about it, which often differ considerably from those of an adult. Consequently, the results will be better if they are involved throughout the working process. At the same time, they are involved and have a genuine influence. Children's and young people's participation in planning and improvement processes relating to their own school and pre-school not only entails positive opportunities, it is also a democratic right.

It was really good to be involved in REBUS. They actually listened to us! Nothing of what we said was simply ignored. We also had a lot of good discussions leading to potential solutions. Another thing was that we had such good contact with the adults we were working with that we could get in touch at any time, for example to ask if we could meet up. All contact was by text message or phone. We got to help decide which furniture we should have and where it should be positioned. We wanted the corridor to be brightly coloured, warm and inviting. We achieved that, and we and the other pupils were really pleased. We would definitely like to be involved in this kind of project again – but we'll probably be too old by then...?

Pupil, upper secondary school

There are many national and international documents about children's and young people's right to influence their physical environment. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 12, summary, states: Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken seriously. The views of the child shall be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Children's and young people's involvement is described in Norway's Planning and Building Act:

Chapter 1, section 2, regarding the aim of the Act, states for example that special emphasis shall be placed on securing children a good environment in which to grow up and that aesthetic considerations are important during planning.

Chapter 5, section 1 states for example that the municipalities have a special responsibility to ensure active involvement from groups which demand that such involvement be facilitated, including children and young people.

On the website of the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning – BOVERKET – it says the following (translated from the Swedish): For children and young people, as for all people, our physical surroundings play an important role in how we live our lives. But cities and other environments are often not planned based on the needs of children and young people. Only in exceptional cases has planning taken into account children's and young people's own knowledge of their area and situation. Both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Planning and Building Act give children and young people rights to influence their surroundings.

Other laws which are relevant to co-determination:

- Norway's Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education, which in chapter 1, section 1 on the objectives of education and training, states for example that pupils and apprentices shall learn to think critically and act ethically and with environmental awareness. They shall have joint responsibility and the right to participate.
- The Danish Act on Educational Environment for School Children and Students, which states in chapter 1, section 1, paragraph 3 that pupils and students, for example, shall be involved in and work with the management to create and maintain a good teaching environment, and that they shall help to ensure that the measures taken to promote a good teaching environment work as intended.
- The Danish Day-Care Facilities Act chapter 2, section 7, paragraph 4 states for example that day-care facilities shall give children co-determination, co-responsibility and an understanding of democracy.

It was brilliant to have a bit of a say in the decision-making. I think it's the first time this has happened since we started school. After a while we realised that it would really happen. Great! Having to go through all the theory first was a bit boring, but later on we understood why. We were amazed at how little we could get for the money we had for the project. Everything is so terribly expensive.

Pupil, Year 8

- Sweden's Work Environment Act states in chapter 6, sections 17-18 that every school shall have its own pupil health and safety representatives who shall work to improve the pupils' work environment. There shall be two pupil health and safety representatives per year group. The pupil health and safety representatives shall be elected directly by the pupils. If there is a health and safety committee, two pupil health and safety representatives may take part in the meetings with the right to express an opinion. Otherwise the pupil health and safety representatives shall take part in the health and safety activities in accordance with the Work Environment Act and the Work Environment Ordinance.

Below is the REBUS definition of influence

Children and young people have the right to express their views on all relevant issues and adults shall listen. This means that:

- children's views shall be taken seriously
- children shall be involved in the decision-making when adults make suggestions
- children shall be given support by adults when they take their own initiatives
- adults shall be involved in the decision-making when children make suggestions
- adults shall give children feedback

The results were very good, particularly bearing in mind that the work didn't always go as we intended. Now I think this has been an advantage in the long run. It meant that pupils managed to carry on even when they had setbacks, and they got a more in-depth understanding of the democratic process: that co-determination and participation don't always mean getting your way, but rather being heard and listening to other people's views.

Head teacher





REBUS in the school's curricula

The work on architecture, design and influence can be linked to the school's or pre-school's curricula. In the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish curricula and syllabuses, the project can be linked to ongoing work within the subject areas. The similarity between the three countries' curricula and syllabuses has been one of the prerequisites for REBUS.

Here are a few ideas about how a REBUS project can be linked to different subjects in school:

- **Mathematics:** Drawings and maps can be used both when taking an inventory and drafting a proposal. You could do your own drawings or build a model, which requires knowledge of scale and proportions. Use geometry to examine and experiment, for example by measuring lengths and calculating area and volume.
- **Art and Handicrafts:** Art and handicrafts are particularly suited to working with architecture, form and design, for example by sketching or drawing. You could explore different materials' properties and different spaces, along with what makes a room feel like a room. You could also work on presentation techniques.
- **Social Studies and History:** Why does our local environment look the way it does? Who decides how it will look, and how can we be involved and have an influence? The pursuit of answers to these questions gives an insight into historical reasons, democratic values, citizens' rights, health and safety regulations and much more, and this gives us knowledge about how our society works.
- **Languages:** Discuss your proposals and work on different ways to argue a point. You could find out information online and perhaps communicate with others, in other languages. Train meeting techniques.

Of course, the people who work at the school or pre-school are the ones best placed to see how a REBUS project can be linked to different curricula and syllabuses.

Before starting a project, it may be a good idea to let the children and young people themselves decide what the term 'participation' should mean during the process.

Architecture educationalist

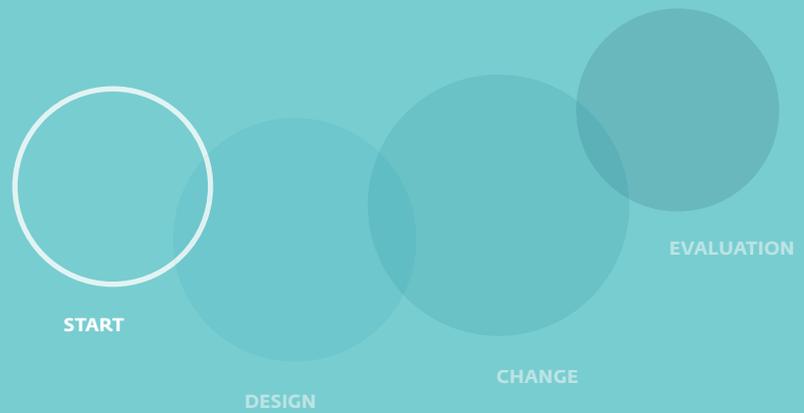
Added value

If we can bring about a change in attitudes to our way of relating to the physical environment in the long term, the actual driving forces are participation and the ability to have an influence. If we listen to young people, and have the courage to draw on their experiences and opinions, we will build confidence that leads to greater respect for each other and for the school and pre-school environment. We achieve this through collaboration between children and young people, school staff, the architecture educationalist and property manager.

Those of us who have been involved in the project at the school feel it has worked very well indeed. The project has served as a tool in work towards achieving the school's national goals. We have been able to bring several school subjects into the project, such as Swedish, Mathematics, Handicrafts, Social Studies and Natural Science. It is also important to identify work forms which support the school's endeavour to achieve the curriculum's values and which also convey the impression that this type of activity is part of our mission, rather than just an extra task in addition to all the others.

Head teacher

CHAPTER 1: Start



We took part in the project because a strong emphasis was placed on the working process, and it would be about getting children involved. It went well with the way we work. The project became an extension of a working approach we already used.

Pre-school teacher

This chapter describes the first step in a REBUS project. It involves sharing ideas, bringing the management on board and putting together a group of project participants. The aim of the first chapter is to show that it is important from the very beginning to make clear the fundamental conditions for the project.

The chapter is divided into five sections: idea, steering group, preparation, establishment and agreements.

Idea

There can be different reasons for wanting to start a REBUS project. Children or young people may want to use a room or a space in a new way; educationalists and teachers may see opportunities and be inspired to work with architecture in lessons; the pre-school staff or school management may want to improve the physical environment. No matter who comes up with the idea, other people need to be brought in so that the idea can be discussed and fine-tuned. It is of course essential that the school management are in the loop regarding the plans – and the property manager is an important person to have on board as well.

Some important frameworks for the project are established early on in the process:

- How do we get started?
- Who will be involved?
- How long will the project be ongoing?
- Are there economic funds available?

If we got a good idea about something we want to change in school, we would of course speak to our teachers and the class, and present the idea to them. We could probably also go directly to the school management.

Pupil, upper secondary school

Steering group

In order to establish the project, and make sure the process gets started, it is necessary to form a steering group. The steering group may consist of:

- children and young people
- teachers, educationalists and other school staff
- a representative for the school management
- an architecture educationalist
- property managers

A good point of departure is to let children and young people make up the majority of the steering group. When it comes to pre-schools, the educationalists play an important role as representatives of the children's views and can act as their spokespeople.

A whole group of children and their adults have acted as a steering group. As a result, the project has become an integrated part of what we were going to work with, something we agreed on. The important part has been documenting the working process. This has been an important task, and it has gone very well. Children and adults alike have been strongly committed to the task and have concentrated a lot on the documentation work.

Pre-school head

The composition of the steering group depends on the nature and scope of the project. The way in which children and young people are elected into the steering group may vary, for example there could be a democratic vote in the classes participating in the project. The most important factor is that the people in the steering group want to be there.

In Norway and Denmark, pupils are legally entitled to have a pupil council. Swedish law expresses that it is mandatory to have a forum for consultation at every school and pre-school. The pupil council works differently from one school to the next. For example, it could serve as a channel for conveying and establishing the project process and various decisions along the way. Decide yourself whether and how the pupil council should participate.

The steering group is somewhere where the children's views are put forward. They are not opinions that we adults force onto them, they are the children's own thoughts, views and ideas.

Service leader

Participation is when you get to help decide, and aren't just given information. You're not just involved symbolically because you're a child.

Pupils, Year 6

The steering group should have a mandate to make all the necessary decisions to implement the project in the start, design, change and evaluation phases. It should also maintain continuous dialogue with everyone at the pre-school or school about which decisions are to be made, and how the project is proceeding. Make sure that someone is elected to take the minutes so that all decisions are documented.

Preparation

For the project to be as successful as possible, the steering group must communicate with other groups at the school or pre-school to find out if there is anything that could affect the plans positively or negatively.

Engage the architecture educationalist in plenty of time. He or she can bring their own comments and professional knowledge about planning and building ideas. The architecture educationalist can see the big picture in the various tasks that have been identified, and can help analyse them. The initial analyses are part of the documentation for the project's start phase.

Here are some examples of questions that could be useful when preparing your project. The questions obviously vary depending on the type of project being planned.

- Have you chosen a theme or a place or is the project open, so that you can work with the whole school or pre-school area?
- Did the idea arise from an explicit need?
- Who will be involved?
- Should everyone be involved at the same time, or do the groups need to vary over the course of the project?
- Is it a joint project for the school and pre-school?
- Will you work with others outside of the school or pre-school?
- How long is the project allowed to take?
- Who is responsible for what?
- Are there other projects taking place at the school that could be important for REBUS?
- What are the maintenance plans for the property like?

Be clear about the fundamental conditions for the project in order to create as realistic expectations as possible.





If the proposals you produce are a bit too expensive but you feel you would like to implement them, could they perhaps be carried out in stages? It is, however, important, particularly for the children, that the project leads to tangible results and that it does not take too long. As a guide, a REBUS project should never take longer than one school year. The summer holidays are often an important boundary as afterwards the children move into a new year, have new teachers or finish pre-school to start school.

It may be a good idea to start thinking now about how to prioritise the proposals that have emerged, taking into account time and money. One approach is to categorise the proposals from the groups as follows:

- Proposals that do not cost anything and could be completed within three months.
- Proposals that cost money and could be completed within one year.
- Proposals that cost money and take more than one year to complete.
- Proposals that are currently too expensive (consider whether you can and have time to apply for more funds).

Establishment

Now the project has been prepared, it is time for the steering group to notify everyone at the school, including the parents. This could be done through a pupil or school council, for example.

Using the school website is a good idea, as it is a simple way of reaching a lot of people.

Sometimes when children say something to adults, the adults don't care. It feels nice and makes you really proud when adults listen and change something that you want.

Pupil, Year 6

Generally speaking the money has been insignificant in our process, but it's great that a result was really achieved.

Pre-school head

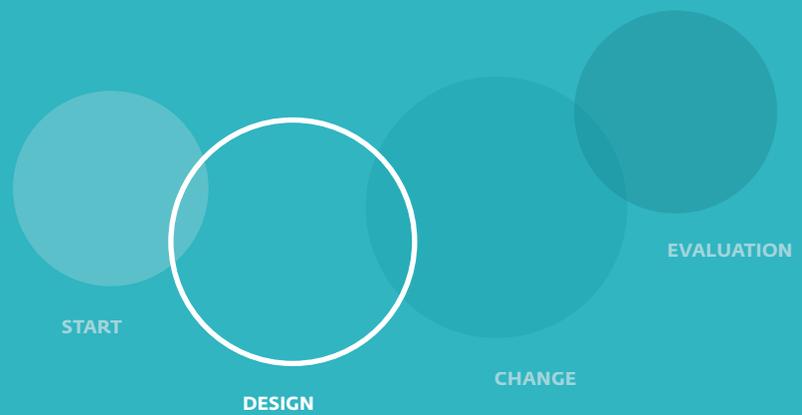
As a property manager I support the pre-school and school operation. This way a relationship is created between those who use the premises and those of us who own and are responsible for the buildings. It's also important as a property manager to know how the premises are being used. Then I can contribute my knowledge about the building and answer any technical questions during the course of the project. What is it feasible to carry out? Why isn't it possible? Are there any alternative solutions?

Property manager

Agreements

Clear agreements help ensure everyone has the shared goal in view, and that everyone knows who is responsible for the various parts of the project. Written agreements should be formulated in clear, simple language. The content of the agreements may range from finances to detailed agreements stating who does what and when. It may seem a long way off, but it is a good idea to consider now that an agreement can also concern who is responsible for the end result. Here too it is good if children and young people put forward their own proposals.

CHAPTER 2: Design



*REBUS days are great fun.
We do something completely
different to what we usually do.
We have a lot of fun when the
architecture educationalist and
the management representative
come and visit.*

Pupil, Year 3

There are no neutral buildings, rooms or premises. All kinds of rooms affect us, and we affect the rooms when we use them. This chapter is about how we perceive and understand our physical surroundings and how we can expand this understanding so that children, young people and adults in schools and pre-schools have a better foundation for influencing their environment positively themselves. In this phase, you should be inquisitive and creative. The chapter is divided into five sections, all of which help increase knowledge about the physical environment: inventory, analysis, proposals, presentation of proposals, and choice and decision.

Inventory

You decided on a set theme or a defined area in the start phase; now you need to study and examine what you are working with and what you can improve. A thorough inventory of the area or theme you have chosen to work with gives all the participants a common starting point and background for the work ahead.

Things to consider:

- Is there anything you need to be particularly aware of within the chosen area or theme?
- What is there already enough of?
- What is missing?
- What is already working well?
- What is not working well?

Take stock of the indoor physical environment: the building's rooms, fixtures, fittings, furniture and materials. Outdoors: play equipment, outdoor furniture, lighting and plantations in the play area or playground. The inventory may also look at how the indoor and outdoor rooms and spaces are used over the course of the day, both for teaching and during leisure time.

Children, young people and adults may use rooms or spaces differently. Thanks to their professional knowledge and experience, managers, technical personnel and people who work at the school often know a lot about how pre-schools and schools work when it comes to operation, safety, teaching forms and curricula, for example. Children and young people are experts at how they themselves perceive what it is like to spend time in the physical environment. They use their environment in a different way to adults, and perhaps also in a different way than intended. Another significant factor is whether you see things from a child's height of 100 cm or an adult's height of, say, 170 cm. It is important here to be open to each other's needs and perspectives.

The architecture educationalist can contribute by creating a greater understanding of how space, materials, technical design, form and function are linked, and can illustrate how even minor changes can have a major impact on how a room is perceived and used. Together with the teacher and educationalist, the architecture educationalist can provide children and young people with tools to express their views on the environment. In tangible terms, this entails seeing which functions the rooms or spaces need to serve and support. You might like to consider the following when making an inventory:

- How is the space intended to be used?
- Who uses the space? Age? Gender?
- How can the space help to create well-being?
- How can the space help to create a sense of community?
- Should the space invite activity, play or rest?
- Is the space accessible to everyone? And what needs are there?
- How is the sustainability, and what maintenance does the space require?
- What is the space like from a health and safety perspective?

If the inventory is made with pre-school children, more support is of course needed from the adults. The staff can use their professional knowledge and experience to identify which areas should be examined and encourage the children to speak about them.



A puddle on the grass where children gather and play can pose a problem for us adults who have to deal with wet, muddy children and their clothes, but for the children it's an opportunity for play and exploration. One theme in work on this situation could be creating a new place for water play in the playground together.

Pre-school teacher

There are various ways of visualising thoughts about a place and sharing them with each other. Here are a few suggestions on how you could make an inventory. The children and young people can participate individually, in pairs or in groups.

Interviews

Interviews can be used as part of the inventory process and lay a good foundation for the continued work, for example when planning a walking tour. They could also be a way of finding out how a space is used. Adults can interview children, children can interview children, children can interview adults.

A walking tour with adults

It can be helpful if a group of staff walk round the indoor and outdoor environments together. You could take turns to talk about the space and find out each other's perspectives. People often see more during a tour than simply talking about the space in the staff room.

A walking tour with children and young people

Choose a few places to visit and notify the children in advance that they will be going on a walking tour. Also prepare questions so that you can find out how the young people view their environment. Let them talk. The youngest children tend to use their whole body to show what they do in the space. Remember that a large group takes longer to go round and it is hard to let everyone have their say. Document the tour so that you remember what is said.

- *When it rains the water comes out down there, and you can stretch your arms out and catch the water in a bucket.*
- *Jumping in puddles is great fun.*
- *When you jump in puddles you get soaking wet.*
- *If you pour a bit of sand into the water it goes all gooey. That's good for building walls.*
- *For keeping stones nice.*
- *If you stand outside in the rain and stick your tongue out, you can get a little drink.*
- *For jumping in, pouring into a bucket, making a waterfall, making a hole the water can run into... a kind of water slide.*

Pre-school children – on what they use water for in the playground

Measurement exercises

If you want proper drawings of the school or pre-school, the property manager or architecture educationalist can help. It's exciting for the children and young people if they get to draw maps of the chosen area themselves. If you decide to work this way, you can measure up a few areas and draw them on a large piece of paper in the right scale, such as 1:50 (1 centimetre on the map equals 50 centimetres in real life). This exercise gives a good feel of how large or small an area is. If there is a proposal for, say, a football pitch, this is a good exercise to see how big it would be in relation to the school playground.

Maps and symbols

A simple map can be a tool for talking about an area. What is a map and how do you read it? Try to find your own location on the map. Follow the map and see if it corresponds to reality. Sometimes there is an aerial photograph of the area which can be used in similar ways to a map. Draw different symbols on stiff cardboard and cut them out into cards. The symbols represent different things, situations or atmospheres for the space you want to discuss with the children. Let the children choose a card in turns and place it somewhere on the map where they think it fits. Then go round and collect all the symbols together and talk about them as you find them: Why is this symbol placed here? What happens here? Draw the symbols on the map of the area and document the dialogue.

Observation studies

It may be worth carrying out observation studies of an area or a few set rooms or specific play equipment that is used. Use a map or drawing, take notes, film or take photographs. Ideally make the observations at different times of day. If several people are observing it may be a good idea to agree on a standard method to make it easier to compare results.



Film and photo documentation

You can take photographs for observation purposes and use the photos for documentation and as a basis for discussions. One advantage of photographs and film is that once the material exists, you can use it over and over again as needed. When people look at photographs or films of everyday situations, they often notice things they might not otherwise see. Here are a few examples of questions you might ask when you see a film or photographs:

- Who is doing what?
- What are the girls doing? The boys?
- Who are in groups?
- What activities are taking place?
- What are the adults doing?

During the inventory and analysis phase, the focus can be on a set area such as a school playground that is not used very much, where there are no spaces for children to sit and talk to each other.

Architecture educationalist

Another exercise is to ask the children and young people to take photographs of things they think are good at the school or pre-school, and also some of the things they think are not so good. Show the photographs to everyone involved in the process and let them discuss what they see. The same thing can be done with short video sequences. This exercise is a good way of encouraging children and young people to think about, and later to put into words, how they view their environment.

Model construction

Build a model of the school or pre-school. Use cardboard, corrugated cardboard, wood, or why not old milk cartons or other packaging? If the exercise is based on learning to measure and use a correct scale, build more exact models. Or make 3D models on the computer. There is free software available online.

Whether the project takes place indoors or outdoors, it can be a good idea to use a REBUS box from the start, something I used in the project. The box could contain small notebooks, writing and drawing materials and a measuring-tape. A ball of string is useful for measuring large distances. It's also good to have pavement chalk for marking asphalt and similar surfaces and a camera in the box.

Architecture educationalist

Analysis

Now analyse your inventory and decide how you wish to proceed. You have obtained a clear idea of how the room or space looks before you begin formulating proposals for improvement. After the analysis, the steering group should draw up a plan for the work ahead and how the project will be carried out.

The following questions may be asked during the analysis:

- What advantages and drawbacks have you discovered in the environment?
- What needs have emerged during the inventory?
- Does the inventory motivate a change in focus?
- What different materials are there and what characteristics do they have?
- How will the area become a pleasant space to spend time in?

Proposals

You have examined what you need to change and the consequences of the various suggestions. Now you need to formulate tangible proposals for which changes should be carried out. Also consider if you can establish the proposal work and project work in different subjects, or in themes in pre-schools. Also, is it better to sometimes work in groups or individually?

The most important aspect has been the process, i.e. the way in which children and adults have worked. When I look at the process I notice that we have made many changes along the way. We tried to inspire the children and experiment with other possibilities.

Pre-school teacher

Taking part means you're involved. That you have an influence and that there aren't a lot of other people saying no before you've even finished speaking.

Pupil, Year 6

A furniture plan for the dining hall, say, can look great on the computer, but it can also be exciting to make the plan on a large piece of white cardboard. Cut out the furniture in coloured card and place it on the drawing so that everyone gets a chance to move it around before you choose the final solution.

Architecture educationalist

There are many different ways of working to formulate proposals. These include building models, drawing, making collages, work sketches, drawing models on the computer or using some other creative way to visualise your ideas. You may have drawings and models from the inventory that you could expand on in this stage. Allow plenty of time for the proposal process and let everyone's ideas be seen. Nothing is ruled out at this stage.

Once your proposals have been formulated, they need to be evaluated and discussed. Choosing one thing may mean rejecting another. When the project started you agreed on the finances and other conditions. It is therefore important to measure what the different proposals might cost and to assess whether they are feasible in reality.

The architecture educationalist can contribute his or her knowledge of the physical environment and what the choices you make entail. What initially seemed like a very good idea may not turn out to be suitable for the area in question. The architecture educationalist also knows which materials are suitable for different contexts. For example, a wooden wall may feel smooth and soft or appear rough and rustic. In some cases there are rules on what materials may be used for different purposes.

However thorough your preparation, it may turn out that the proposals you have come up with are too expensive or complex to implement. Discuss this in the steering group and inform all the participants why you must carry on with new proposals instead.

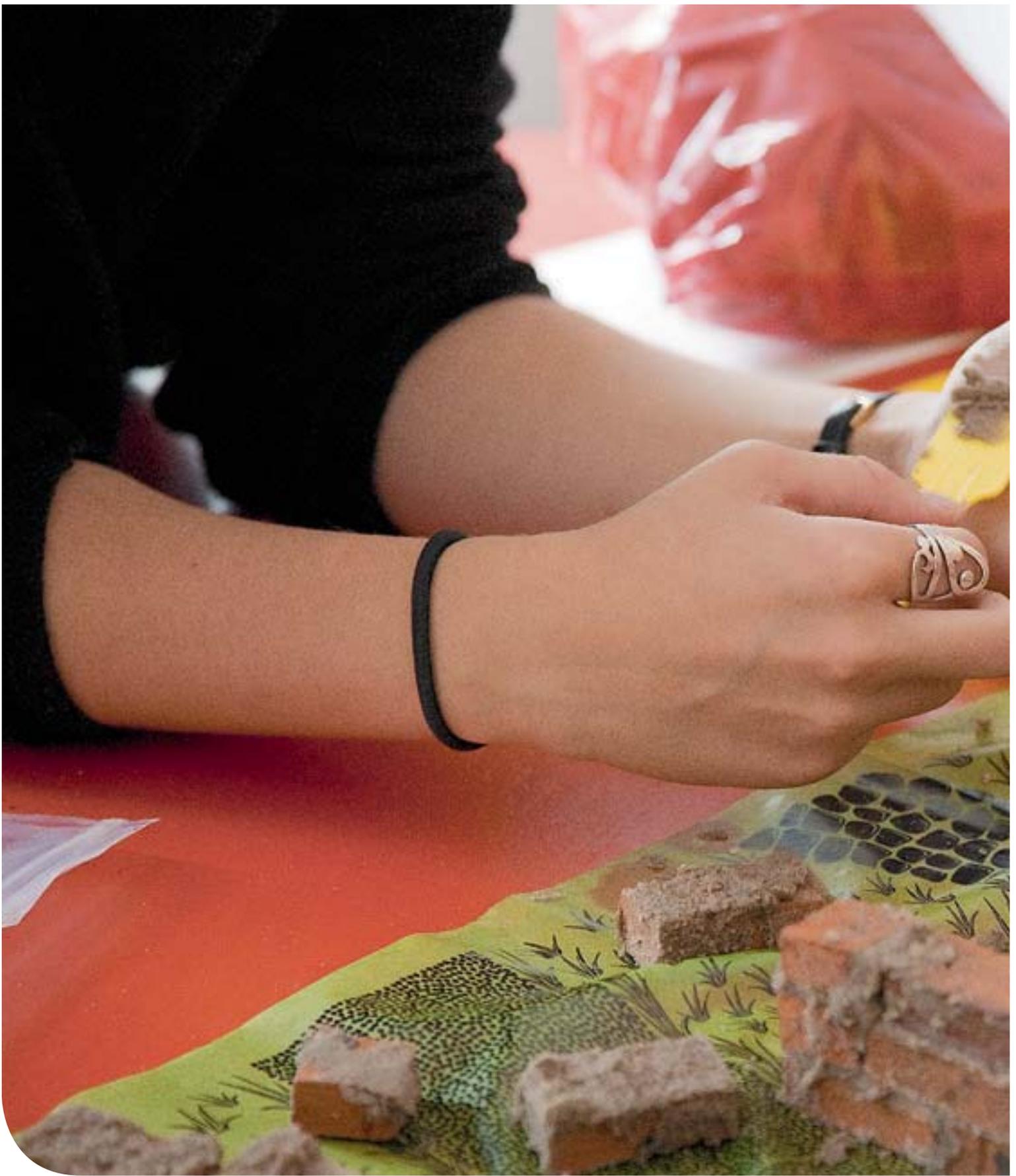
Presentation of proposals

The proposals need to be presented to everyone involved, everyone at the school, parents and perhaps also decision-makers. Ideally present your proposals in the form of an exhibition, which is a great way of showing the wealth of ideas in your work.

Things to consider for an exhibition:

- What preparations are needed?
- What will you exhibit and how?
- For how long and where will the exhibition be on display?
- Will it cost anything to have an exhibition?

Try to arrange the exhibition so that visitors can understand it without you having to be involved. Ideally write brief explanatory texts and place them next to the exhibition material.





I'm surprised that children aged between 3 and 14 can work so well together. When the children get to join in and have a say they show a completely different level of commitment, they really have something to contribute.

Service staff

During the presentation, also talk about how the project will move forward, for instance by describing how you select the suggestions that will be made reality.

Choice and decision

There are various ways of choosing which idea is to be realised. For example, everyone at the school or pre-school can vote for their favourite suggestion. Or perhaps you would like to go ahead with a combination of the various proposals you have come up with? The steering group discusses and evaluates the proposals and has the right to decide, but it must always communicate its decision.

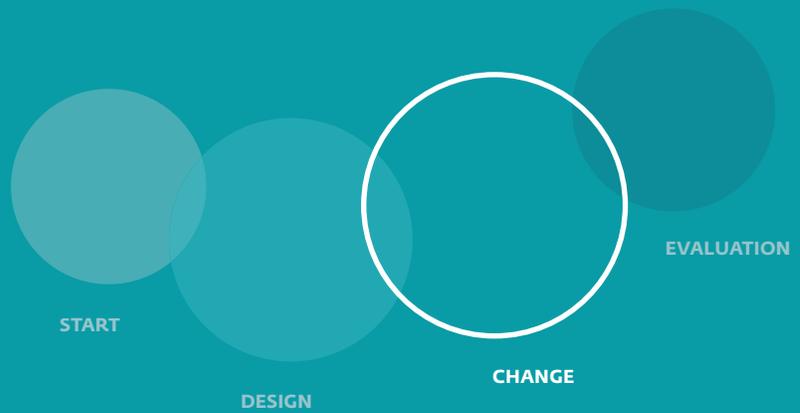
It is essential that all the proposals are properly worked out and realistic to carry out – both technically and in terms of funding, health and safety.

Remember to check all the planned measures with the people who own and manage the buildings and land.

We experienced both prosperity and adversity during the project. The pupils' work to identify proposals for what to do with our school playground became a fairly long process which focused on everyone's participation and influence. Once the pupils had agreed on a 'swing for friends' and everyone was satisfied, we encountered some practical problems. The excavation work was too expensive and we couldn't put the swing where we'd planned. The pupils and teachers had to sit down with the architecture educationalist again and think about what could be done instead of the swing. It wasn't that easy, but it was an important part of the learning process.

Head teacher

CHAPTER 3: Change



When children and young people are interested in their environment and take part in its improvement, the hope is that they also care more about their school. I think this feeling is strengthened if they also get to know more people within the pre-school or school's different groups of staff.

Property manager

We spend time in the same spaces, but perceive them differently. When children and young people take part and change their local environment, they join in and have a say! This could make them proud of their school, feel concern for the environment and a sense of responsibility. This chapter describes the presentation of decisions, implementation of the change, following up the work, and launch.

Presentation of decisions

It is now time to present your decision to everyone involved. Motivate the decision so that everyone can follow your thought process and reasoning. No doubt one suggestion has been chosen over another. It may be easier to understand why if you explain the reasons for the decision. Also talk about how long everything is expected to take.

It's exciting to work with the physical environment, but it gets boring if things are going too slowly or if nothing's happening.

Pupil, Year 3

It is also the responsibility of the steering group to think about, and communicate to everyone involved, questions such as:

- Why did you choose this particular proposal?
- How much money do you need to implement it?
- Who will be helping to implement the proposal?
- Which measures do contractors or tradespeople need to help out with?
- How and when can children and young people help carry out the work?
- When will the measures be implemented? When will they be finished?
Will the measures be carried out in stages?
- What do you expect the results to be?

Discuss how much you can do yourselves, how much children and young people can be involved in the implementation, and how much outside help you need. The property manager has knowledge about safety and sustainability, which is essential if you plan to make any changes to the building.

It's important as a teacher to be involved in the process so you know what's happening. You learn both from the good and the not so good experiences. My work includes organisation, bringing everything together and keeping the work on track.

Pre-school teacher

Change implemented

If the measures are minor and straightforward, or of the kind that children and young people can help carry out themselves, it may be sufficient to meet at the site and decide what to do. Then you can also talk about or practically test how different choices affect the result. For example, the furniture could be moved around and you could make colour samples before making a decision.

Sometimes special professional expertise is required, which only contractors or tradespeople have, in which case it is necessary to be more precise. For example, there could be rules on quality and safety or something else which mean pupils cannot be involved. A professional can help design a technical solution, build, estimate material consumption and costs, for example, but sketches or scale drawings may be needed. If so, children and young people can still participate and carry out some of the work, for example by planting trees and flowers for outdoor projects, making cushions or helping make purchases. They can also learn a lot from external professionals. For example, a gardener might talk about plant species, pruning, wind and watering. This type of collaboration, where the professional sets the framework and the children and young people are involved in the actual execution, strengthens the idea of a joint project.

If children and young people are unable to carry out any tangible work, they can still participate in a dialogue with the tradesperson. This way they can explain how they visualise the project.

Following up the work

Once the measures have been carried out, the steering group discusses the results. Go through the measures at the site and see if the results are as expected. If not, why not? Does anything need to be changed?

Draw up a strategy for how to use, look after and maintain what has been improved. Do you need to make an introduction for other children, young people and staff? Before you start using what you have helped to change, you can carry out an inspection, if necessary, along with professionals.

Launch

Ideally have a launch, perhaps with someone cutting a ribbon, to celebrate your work and results.

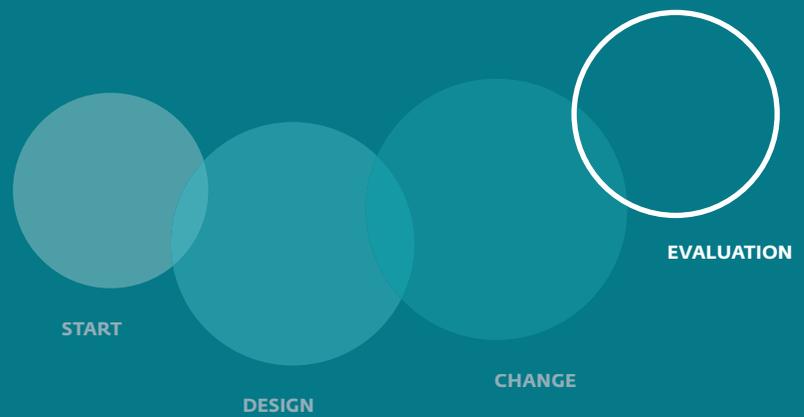
Here are some tips for the launch:

- Invite decision-makers and local politicians to come and look at the excellent results.
- Invite parents, tradespeople and others who have been involved in the project.
- Contact your local newspaper which may want to write an article.
- Make an exhibition illustrating the process up to the end result. Use drawings, photographs and models, for example.

There were enthusiastic cheers when we finally got to see the results of what we were all involved in deciding on. And it turned out so well. Now we just have to tell our little brothers and sisters to be careful with what we've created.

Pupil, Year 7

CHAPTER 4: Evaluation



This chapter is about how to evaluate the process and the project. The sections in the chapter focus on process, responsibility and use, and continuation.

The process

As the entire process draws to a close, it is time for the steering group to sum up what has happened in the project. Here are some questions that might come in handy during the evaluation:

- Who started the project and who was involved?
- How long did the project take, dates?
- How much money was available for the project?
- Which proposal was prioritised and why?
- Who was assigned responsibility for maintenance and inspection of the results?
- What experiences – good and not so good – have you gained ahead of future projects?

Ideally save photographs and minutes of meetings, for example, to help you remember what has happened during the project.

Responsibility and benefit

In order to make the results of a successful project more sustainable in the long term, agreement needs to be reached on who looks after what has been done. This must be clear to everyone who has been involved. The local authority's allocation of responsibility may be of assistance. Is it the school or the property managers who are responsible for looking after the measures? If it is the school, elect someone to be responsible. Another important aspect is to discuss what happens in the event damage occurs.

One important condition for the project is that it is clear who does what. Another factor to consider is the budget; everyone must know its limitations before different proposals are put forward. Good planning and communication between the school and property manager are crucial.

Property manager



Ideally the pupil council, or another suitable group, follows up the results at least once a year. If it emerges that something is not functioning as planned, this needs to be discussed to find a solution. Everyone should know who to report any faults to, for instance. A clear division of responsibility is important for the results to last long into the future.

We finally got our change implemented – a water chute, which is used a lot. Some things might not be where they were originally intended, but I think it works anyway. We’ve talked about how it can be used in both the summer and winter. The water chute offers many possibilities, and the pumps in particular are popular. It’s fun to see the children playing with the slide even when there’s no water in it.

Pre-school teacher

Continuation

Your REBUS project is bound to have whetted your appetite. Start a new project where you can draw on all the experiences you have gained.

Good luck on your next trip!

Experiences from the pilot projects

The process in the pilot projects has been very good, and this is thanks to the strong commitment from children, young people and school staff. When it came to developing and presenting ideas, the children, young people and adults have been open to learning more and looking at their local environment through fresh eyes.

The work in the steering group was perceived as educational, and children and young people got to participate in the same way as adults. Children and young people have said that they feel they have been able to influence their environment, and this has also increased interest in taking part in the REBUS project.

The main aim of the REBUS project has been to develop a model in which the key areas are participation and physical environment. The work in schools and pre-schools has been ongoing for 18 months which may be considered a long time, but development of the method does take time.

We have also seen that continuity in the process is important for everyone involved.

The REBUS project has been a small-scale project in which each school and pre-school was assigned 5,800 euro to make small improvements to the physical environment.

All parts of the process have been appreciated, but most of all the children and young people have appreciated being listened to and taken seriously.

Pupil café with new colours and furniture



Fiskebäck school is a nine-year compulsory school with approximately 520 pupils. Several different groups took part in the various phases of the project. The inventory was carried out by a Year 6 class of 30 pupils. The design phase took the form of an optional subject, in which 20 pupils from different Year 6 classes took part. The tangible change was carried out by the pupil council which comprised 16 pupils from Years 6-9. An architecture educationalist and two teachers monitored the entire project.

In the project the pupils carried out an extensive inventory of the school's communal indoor areas. After working with proposals for improvements to different areas at the school, a vote was arranged and the decision was made to refurbish the pupil café.

What we did

As the project focused on the school's communal areas it was important that the proposals were broadly anchored among pupils and adults.

In order to gain a better overview of the situation, the steering group drew up a list taking into account the school's activities and other pupils' needs. The pupils gathered and documented the information in the form of interviews, photographs and sketches. Based on this material they worked to develop proposals for improvement.

The pupils went on study visits to three other schools, to see and be inspired by indoor environments with similar functions to those the pupils wanted to work on in their school: pupil cafés, corridors, changing rooms, canteens, school libraries and other indoor meeting-places.

The proposal work was carried out in groups and presented using different techniques chosen by the pupils themselves. For example, one presentation was carried out digitally, another in collage form. There were also drawings, sketches and 3D models. At the final presentation before the school vote, the different proposals were shown in a single PowerPoint presentation. All pupils in Years 6-9 then voted for the proposals they thought the project should continue with.





In the final part of the project, the pupil council comprised the steering group. During this phase the group could quickly inform their classes and the rest of the school about the decisions they had made. They met a colour consultant and learnt more about how different colours affect a room. They then produced their own templates which the painters used when painting. Before the new sofas were ordered, the pupils visited a furniture company where they could compare different models, materials, colours and prices.

How it turned out

The pupil café was refurbished with new sofas, repainted in new colours, and the walls were decorated with silhouettes of the pupils who took part. Many different groups of pupils worked on different parts of the project. This meant the project was well established among the pupils at the school.

Fiskebäck school, Sweden

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Water play in the playground



Kernehuset pre-school is an older pre-school. Its outdoor environment is characterised by a pleasant playground with many exciting little nooks, old trees and good opportunities for children to play and be challenged. The pre-school has places for 60 children aged 3-6. Around 20 children took part in the project, mainly the oldest – the pirates aged 5-6 years.

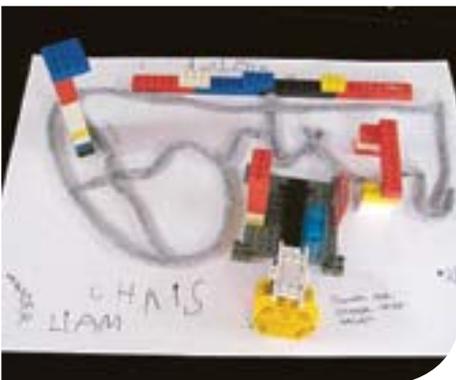
Kernehuset's staff had not chosen a particular place or theme from the outset. The project began with staff making observations on how the children used the pre-school's indoor and outdoor environment. They listened to children's accounts of the different places and mainly considered whether or not the places could be used in a different way to enhance the children's benefit and enjoyment. In light of all this, the theme of water in the playground was chosen.

What we did

Every Tuesday morning from September to June, all 20 pirates worked on the theme of water with two responsible adults. The process began by talking about water in all its forms, for example what children use water for, and what the playground looks like when it rains. The adults' role was primarily to encourage the children to think about and develop ideas about water.

The children worked in different groups. They played, discussed, drew, built models, made presentations and took part in votes. They experimented on site with materials in order to find a good location for waterplay in the playground. The children wanted to create a lake and a water chute with a waterfall. That then became the theme of the continued work.

Once it had been decided what would be in the children's waterplay, the proposals were described again and it was discussed how the future water chute would work. The children made models of their ideas in natural size from guttering, plastic bowls and clasps. During this period, the children also began to come up with more concrete proposals for the water chute's location in the playground. Several places were discussed in a lively





manner with the children. The choice eventually settled on an area that was named Lilleby.

Based on the children's drawings, models and accounts, the architecture educationalist designed a proposal for the water chute. However, the 5-year-old building contractors rejected the first proposal, so it had to be revised until it met their expectations. To give the water chute the organic shape the children wanted, it was cast in concrete on site by a building company.

At Kernehuset the children did not take part in any meetings due to their age, but the entire pirate group did act as a large steering group, which developed concepts and made decisions in its part of the REBUS project.

How it turned out

The water chute was launched at the pre-school's annual summer party. The water chute gave the children new possibilities for play and development. The chute is used all year round, as a race track, a water chute and a motor activity track. The chute part itself is cast in concrete in different parts, fitted to several wooden tubs where the water collects. The children use these parts as washbasins or lakes with waterfalls.

Kernehuset pre-school, Denmark

Jørgen Horskærsvvej 5
DK-9430 Vadum, Denmark
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A cleaner school environment



Haugerud school has 340 pupils in Years 8 to 10. All Year 9 pupils – four classes of pupils aged around 15 – 120 pupils in total, took part in the project.

Even at the very first meeting between pupils and teachers taking part in the project, it emerged that there was a broad general consensus on what was good and not so good at the school. The latter dominated, and the inventory also showed that there was more than enough material to work with.

Great emphasis was placed on democratic work in the project.

What we did

All the pupils went round the school with the architecture educationalist, both indoors and out. A representative from the property management also took part. The inventory was thoroughly documented with photographs, which formed the basis for continued work on what the pupils wanted to change at the school. The school was shabby, and the pupils clearly showed that painting the classrooms and communal areas and replacing all fixtures and fittings were high-priority wishes. Once the inventory was complete, it emerged that the school needed to be renovated internally. What essentially happened was that a different project came into focus. The renovation included painting classrooms, new furniture, a new laboratory and renovating the canteen.



The theme of the pupils' project therefore took on a new direction: the focus would be on keeping the communal areas clean. The original inventory showed that there was a severe lack of litter bins almost everywhere at the school, and partly because of this the project developed into one about respect, the importance of keeping one's surroundings clean and tidy, and the shared responsibility for this. This gave the project an extra dimension, an added value, which went hand in hand with one of the school's key goals.





A small PowerPoint presentation was made to be shown in the four classes. It illustrated various types of litter bins, which were suitable for the school's communal areas. Based on factors such as design, user-friendliness and price, the pupils chose the litter bins that were most suitable for the school's communal areas.

The pupils in the steering group played an important role throughout the project, particularly during the discussion of proposals at many levels – from litter bins to a rest room for pupils.

How it turned out

The result was new litter bins and a cleaner school environment. Furthermore, pupils increased their knowledge of a democratic working process. Thanks to the ongoing REBUS project, the pupils found it easier to influence the extensive renovation work.

Haugerud school, Norway

Tvetenveien 183
NO-0673 Oslo, Norway
Tel: +47 2279 3380



New fixtures in the corridor



Hellerud school is an upper secondary school with a range of education programmes. The school has approximately 600 students aged 17-19. A few students from the media and communication programme and the construction engineering programme took part in the project.

In the project the students wanted to work with an unused assembly room outside the canteen and equip it with seats and an internal TV. The students on the construction programme would do the carpentry, while the media and communication students would be responsible for the information content on the internal TV. The room would be a place where students could read the daily menu, for example, and see which tests were on that day. The scope of the work, however, turned out to be too large when it came to the different work tasks. The decision was therefore made to concentrate on something more manageable: furnishing a corridor outside some of the students' classrooms.

What we did

Together with the architecture educationalist and a representative from the school management, the areas were mapped – an inventory which was documented with photographs and PowerPoint presentations. It was agreed that something needed to be done internally, and this became the starting point for project ahead.

The steering group comprised the students who took part in the project, the architecture educationalist and the property manager. Communication with the various classes proved difficult, not least because of the subjects that are part of the various programmes. Some are in conventional classrooms while others are in workshops.

The students from construction engineering came up with a lot of ideas about what could be done. The ideas were discussed back and forth between the students and the property manager. The students had high expectations, and consequently some of their proposals were too far-reaching in relation to the time set aside for the project.





The students, architecture educationalist and property manager visited a supplier that specialised in modern school fixtures. The students discussed with an interior designer what kind of furniture would be suitable. They had a major influence on the purchases that were made. They decided to invest in colourful new furniture for the corridor outside media and communication. To start with the corridor was dark and miserable, and very reminiscent of a conventional institutional corridor.

How it turned out

The students planned and designed a space where they could meet and relax. The launch took place in late autumn, and the students felt that the other students and the teachers were pleased with the results and that their project work was appreciated.

Hellerud high school, Norway

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Games hall became a flexible activity room



At the beginning of the project, Skattegårdsvägen 100 pre-school had approximately 80 children aged 1-5 divided into five groups. The work group comprised three educationalists and 15 children aged 3-5 from different groups at the pre-school.

The work in the project was carried out with the children and focused on the games hall, which is the pre-school's communal room and was previously used for indoor sports and play.

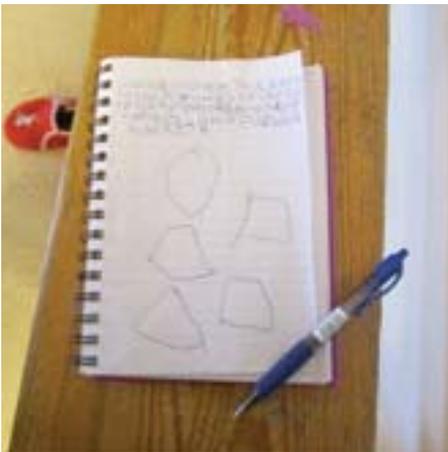
What we did

Together with the architecture educationalist, the work group examined different areas. They worked with the room's shape and proportions, size and scale, function and interior. The work comprised various exercises in the hall itself, as well as work with sketches and models. The children compared the shape of the room to the various geometric shapes – circle, triangle, square and rectangle – for example. They measured the room in various ways, first with their own bodies and then with regular measuring tapes.

They learned to orientate themselves in a scale model and in a plan drawing of the room.

The children had an opportunity to put democracy into practice. The work group held frequent short meetings, in which adults and children alike were able to put forward their views, discuss different solutions and jointly select proposals for improvement.

The pre-school hired a colour consultant regarding the colour scheme for the room. Through concrete experiments, the children studied how colour and light affect the room, and why colours are perceived differently. Why does a colour look different in the light from a window compared to further into the room where it is darker? Why does a blue shade suddenly turn green when the colours around it change? They also got to experience how different lighting in a room creates different atmospheres, and how patterns affect our perception of the size of a room. The children





themselves got to mix paint and test paint certain areas before they decided on four colour combinations which the rest of the pre-school voted on.

How it turned out

The games hall was given new furnishings, a new colour scheme and lighting. The project has created a new activity room that increases the possibilities for using the room to fulfil the children's need for play, creativity and much more. The pre-school groups have made decisions that benefit the entire pre-school's objective.



When the new room was finished the work group planned a launch. The entire pre-school, the children's parents and other participants were involved. The children made speeches, cut the tape, sang songs, served juice and popcorn, and gave a brief introduction on how the room can be used for dance, music, theatre performances and much more. The educationalists gave a multislide presentation so that everyone could follow the whole process from start to end result.

Skattegårdsvägen 100 pre-school, Sweden

Skattegårdsvägen 100

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Fantasy ship for pre-school and school



Trekroner school and Solstrålen pre-school are run together. The school has approximately 175 pupils in Years 0-7, and approximately 60 children attend the pre-school. Around 75 children attend leisure activities. The staff comprise around 40 employees. All the children from both the pre-school and the school have been involved in the project from beginning to end. The pupil council has always played a central role.

Trekroner school has a well-being group made up of pupils, parents and staff. In the REBUS project, this group became the steering group. The group met after school and work hours, and children and adults were equal parties. The pupils from the well-being group were also on the school's pupil council.

What we did

An important point of departure for the well-being group's work was how to involve all the children and how to find out their experiences of the spaces and their ideas for changes to the school's physical environment. The pupil council was responsible for this and in dialogue with others in the steering group it arranged a theme week, which began with study visits to other schools and playgrounds to source good ideas. After that there was a theme day about well-being and interior furnishing, during which everyone worked on the project. The municipality's educational consultant, who also participated in the steering group meetings, suggested an ideas wall, where everyone could write their REBUS ideas during the course of the project. The ideas wall was hung up and used both on the theme days and afterwards.



With a focus on which changes should be made to the school's outdoor and indoor environments, the pupils interviewed each other, the older pupils produced drawings and talked with the youngest children in the pre-school, they toured the playground and talked about what they thought was good and what they felt was missing. The educationalists observed the youngest children, what they did, where they liked to be and what they played with the most. During all the theme days, the children were divided into groups of mixed ages. This meant that each of the groups had children from the age of 3 to Year 7, as well as educationalists and teachers. It also meant that the older pupils could include the younger children.





The children visualised the results from the inventory and their proposals using illustrations. They drew, painted, made collages, built nice models from waste materials and also made 3D models of their proposals on the computer. The week finished off with a big exhibition, and the mayor cut the tape and gave a speech. At the exhibition, all the children voted for the ideas they thought were best and should be submitted to the steering group for evaluation.



After the theme days the pupil council and steering group worked on various elements from the submitted proposals. A ship was a particularly consistent theme. Trekroner school has previously had two different ships in the playground, but for various reasons they were no longer there.



Many different types of ship were considered – from pirate ships to fishing boats and sailing boats. The decision finally settled on a fantasy ship, which could be the basis for various games. Drawings and models were used to produce proposals for what the ship would contain. The proposals were discussed and compared with the project budget. Finally there was a vote on what the ship would contain: for instance, it was far more important to the children that the ship had a sloping deck than a slide.

How it turned out

The final designs were carried out by the architecture educationalist in collaboration with the school caretaker and pupil council. The drawings were submitted to the municipality and playground inspector for approval, and once all the details were in place and all the materials had been ordered, the children's parents built the ship on the annual work day. The ship has become a gathering-point in the playground and is used by the pre-school's youngest children and the school's older pupils alike. It offers opportunities for wild games with a lot of children, while a group can get on with calmer activities on another part of the ship.



An added bonus from the project was that the pupils in Year 6 became familiar with SketchUp 3D software. Since the project the year group has decided to use the software actively in its mathematics lessons when they work with scale, geometry and counting in new ways.

Trekroner school and Solstrålen pre-school, Denmark

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Focus on inventory and idea development



Trosterud school has pupils from Years 1 to 7. The school has approximately 370 pupils. Forty-six pupils from Year 4 and their teachers participated in the project.

The pupils became acquainted with design and architecture through image material from several different schools in Oslo. This provided inspiration for the process. The pupils were also given time to 'learn to see better', which enabled them to notice construction details at the school which they had never seen before.

The steering group, which was responsible for co-ordinating and communicating the project to the classes, comprised eight pupils, an architecture educationalist, the head teacher, one teacher and a representative from the municipality.

The architecture educationalist worked with terms such as democracy and involvement – how they work in practice and what benefits they offer.

What we did

The process got off to a successful start. Pupils, teachers and the head teacher were full of enthusiasm, and the school had allocated plenty of time for the work ahead.

A box of tools, which was called the REBUS box, was used in both classes. It contained coloured pencils, scissors, a ball of string for measurements, a ruler, chalk and logbooks. The box was a useful tool during the process and was used frequently, particularly when measuring the school playground.

The architecture educationalist worked with pupils and teachers, and introduced new words and terms such as outdoor environment, façades and interior. The pupils were given tools to help them better describe their observations of the physical environment, and they made precise notes in the logbooks.





The pupils visualised their ideas through drawings and models. They also took photographs to document the process. The boys were particularly keen on the work on the football pitch, where they wanted to make changes. For example, they wanted higher fencing around the pitch so the ball could not be kicked into the road, and they wanted goals to be put up.



The classes discussed all the proposals for changes and improvements. Most of the changes would benefit many people. Several proposals made by pupils and school staff would be too far-reaching, such as the request for new toilets. During the project the architecture educationalist had a meeting with one of the school caretakers to hear his views on the pupils' proposals for change.

How it turned out

Thanks to a well-documented process and a focus on inventory and idea development, each class finally chose four proposals which they presented to the steering group, after which the decision was taken to provide the school playground with new litter bins.



Trosterud school

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Apple orchard in the green area



Vadum school is a nine-year compulsory school with pupils in Years 0-9. Approximately 410 pupils attend the school. The intermediate level of Vadum school – approximately 160 children in Years 4-6 – participated in the REBUS project.

At the same time as the REBUS project was to be carried out, renovation was planned for the school. A distinct area was therefore chosen for the REBUS project which was not affected by the renovation, i.e. the green area. The green area is a lawn surrounded by the school's teaching premises. At the beginning of the project the green area was not used very much, and it had not been planned with pupil activities in mind.



During the course of the project REBUS meetings were held with the intermediate pupils, school staff and at times also a property management representative.

What we did

At Vadum school the project began with introduction and theme days in the classes. The physical environment in general was discussed and photographs were used for documentation, measurement courses were held, and pupils and teachers were interviewed. The pupils set up class charts where they noted what was positive and negative in the green area as it was at the beginning. Then all intermediate pupils participated in joint REBUS theme days. During these days, the pupils built models of the school's buildings and the green area on a scale of 1:50. They experimented with positioning some of the possible elements in life-size scale. All the models were presented, discussed and finally displayed in the library.





Later on in the process the concrete proposals were discussed in the steering group, which studied how well the proposals would fit in with financial restrictions. The pupils in the steering group have taken care throughout the project to think beyond their own private wishes, and to try to view the various proposals as something that could bring joy to many. This wish has grown stronger during the process, not least through practice, and it has given rise to many good discussions and considerations about what should happen with the green area.



In the end the steering group chose an apple orchard, where people could pick an apple if they got hungry. In the shade of the trees a hammock could be hung, pupils could chat with friends or just lie down and read a book without getting a football in the face. The pupils wanted the hammocks to be used both during lesson times and break times.

How it turned out

The actual process of establishing an apple orchard took one working day. Builders and pupils worked side by side. For example, the pupils worked with a gardener from the municipality and dug holes for the trees and then planted all the trees themselves. This part of the process taught the pupils many lessons about what needs to be considered when planting new trees.



As the newly planted trees were unsuitable for hanging hammocks or awnings as the pupils had proposed, posts were dug into the ground instead. The posts for the hammocks and awnings were cast into place by builders. They were positioned so as to create new spaces. The teacher can now stand in the middle and teach the pupils who sit in the hammocks.

After a hard day's work, the new apple orchard was ready to be used.



Vadum school, Denmark

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Obstacle course in the playground



Önnered school is a nine-year compulsory school with approximately 300 pupils. Fifty-six pupils from three Year 5 classes took part in the project, along with one managing teacher and three supporting teachers.

The project focused on the playground used by Years 4-9. The pupils made a detailed inventory of the outdoor environment and then presented three proposals for improvements, which the rest of the school then voted on.

What we did

The pupils worked individually during certain parts of the process. They used logbooks to write and draw in. The logbooks were a tool for documenting the process, but also for communicating with the architecture educationalist and teacher. The adults collected the logbooks at regular intervals to find out pupils' opinions.

After an inventory, the classes jointly selected some areas of the playground they wanted to improve. The pupils then worked in smaller groups to formulate different proposals for these areas. They did drawings, wrote and had discussions.

The pupils visited other school and public playgrounds, took photographs, and did drawings and sketches. The three classes each built a model of the school playground, each group showing its various proposals. The models were presented and displayed in the hall, where all pupils in Years 4-9 voted for the proposals they wanted to go ahead with. A priority list was then drawn up based on the results from the vote.

How it turned out

The project budget and additional funding from the school made it possible to implement most of an obstacle course and a climbing frame. In the end a 'playground day' was planned when pupils, teachers, the architecture educationalist, property manager and caretaker jointly cleaned, painted and planted the playground.





The pupils have on several occasions told others about their school playground and have presented their work on the project. Adult REBUS participants from Norway and Denmark, along with landscape architecture students from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, have been on study visits to the school. Several of the pupils have also participated in a major show, where they exhibited their material and talked about the REBUS project with interested visitors.



The pupils developed proposals for improving their school playground in a democratic way. They have used new knowledge of their local environment to prioritise proposals, see what different options cost and have had to argue for their proposals. Together they have produced a more creative playground with development potential.

Önnered school, Sweden

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New furniture in the courtyard



Øraker school is a senior-level school with approximately 340 pupils. Half of Year 8, around 60 pupils aged 14, took part in the project.

The 60 pupils focused their interest on the school's outdoor areas. This went hand in hand with the management's wish for a place for people who wanted to be outside and be active, and for those who wanted to sit on a bench in the sun. Several of the pupil groups wanted to work on proposals relating to a particular forest area and what it could be used for. However, it emerged that the area would probably be used to expand the school at a later stage.



What we did

After a well-documented guided tour, the pupils had very few wishes regarding changes to the school's interior. The review of the outdoor environment, however, showed that many pupils wanted to see changes outdoors: everything from a new basketball net, more flowers and a paintball course to furnishing an atrium.

The representatives for the steering group, and the deputies, were elected as realistically as possible based on local elections, for example: there were many representatives to choose from, a secret vote, 'ballot boxes' and strict rules on when voting slips were valid or invalid.



The discussions in the steering group were creative, and the pupils were good at expressing themselves and arguing their points. The meetings were good examples of democracy in practice. Everyone had a chance to put their views forward, but it was the proposal with the most votes that determined the choice. It was not a paintball course, but new furniture in the courtyard.

The head teacher took part in meetings with the steering group together with one of the school's teachers. This was very important for conducting the meetings and for ensuring the decisions that were made were followed up. A further two teachers took part in the project. It should be easy to contact the head teacher and teachers, either by e-mail or phone.



The architecture educationalist and some of the pupils visited a supplier of outdoor furniture, and the pupils took photographs and measurements, and noted down the price of the furniture they considered to be the best. A picture presentation was then made for all the pupils, the courtyard was measured up and all the work groups drew plans for the furniture. A fire safety officer from Undervisningsbygg Oslo KF provided information on where the furniture could be placed so as not to block any emergency exits.

How it turned out

Some of the pupils helped position the furniture in the courtyard, and they discovered that furniture in full scale – and three dimensions – is completely different to making a drawing in two dimensions and on a scale of 1:50. Consequently, some new decisions had to quickly be made regarding the placement of the furniture. All the school's pupils were invited to the launch of the new inner courtyard. Refreshments were served and speeches were given on the work process and the excellent end results.



Øraker school, Norway

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Bird theme



Östra Palmgrensgatan 38 pre-school has four groups with approximately 80 children aged 1-3 and 3-5 years. A work group comprising one educationalist and around 20 children aged 4-5 took part in the project.

Through the project the pre-school has developed and created more opportunities for the children to have activities on the adjacent land, which is owned by the municipality. There has been a collaboration with the Parks and Landscape Administration, and together play environments have been created between bushes and tree trunks, as well as a meeting-place. Another path for the pre-school's project work has been to work with the theme of birds when looking at the outdoor environment together with the children.



What we did

Taking the bird theme as a point of departure, the children examined their outdoor environment with the architecture educationalist and came up with proposals for making good places in the playground for birds.

Using aerial photographs and a map of the area, the children could see their playground as birds see it. They borrowed educational material about birds from the Gothenburg Natural History Museum and learnt more about birds. The children made a collage and sculptures and built models of birds and birds' nests. They made nesting-boxes which were put up in the new 'bird tree' in the playground.

How it turned out

Children and staff at the pre-school have discussed and developed their outdoor environment. During the process it became clear that the children needed more space to move outdoors. The collaboration with the Parks and Landscape Administration gave the children access to a green area outside of the pre-school playground, which they can continue to use for play and other fun activities also after the project.

Based on the pre-school's educational work and the children's needs, there is now a playground that works better and can be used more. The pre-





school can continue its work on the bird theme and develop it in various ways. It can build one or more bird-feeders to hang in the bird tree, or build a bird-bath somewhere in the playground.

The pre-school has several ideas on how they want to continue working with the bird theme. A web camera will be placed in one of the nesting-boxes to enable the children to monitor what is happening inside. Who is moving in? How long does it take for the eggs to hatch? What are the chicks fed on? How long is it before the chicks leave the nesting-box?

Östra Palmgrensgatan 38 pre-school, Sweden

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Project partners

Sweden

City of Gothenburg City Premises Administration – Lead Partner
City of Gothenburg Cultural Affairs Administration
Västra Göteborg district administration
City of Gothenburg Center för skolutveckling
(centre for school development)
Försäkrings AB Göta Lejon
Ale Municipality Tekniska förvaltningen (technical administration)
Kultur i Väst
Movium – the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences' think
tank for sustainable development
Hantverkscentrum/Målarmästarna (craft centre/master painters)

Norway

Municipal Undertaking for Educational Buildings
and Property in Oslo/Undervisningsbygg Oslo
Oslo Forsikring AS
Education Agency in Oslo

Denmark

Danish Centre of Educational Environment, DCUM
Department of Education (DPU), Aarhus University
Jammerbugt Municipality
Aalborg Municipality

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REBUS

Trip to a Better School Environment

We hope that this document will provide inspiration for anyone wanting to work with improvements to the physical school and pre-school environment together with children and young people. It is mainly intended for school staff, property managers and architects, but it is hoped that children, young people, parents and others will also read it. We have seen that when these particular areas of expertise and experience are combined, the better the work and the results are. The document is based on an EU project in which Sweden, Norway and Denmark have jointly carried out pilot projects at schools and pre-schools. The point of departure has been children's and young people's ideas for improvements to the physical environment in which they spend so much time. The document is structured as a guideline with different work phases to help you achieve a good work process which, it is hoped, can lead to long-term results.

Welcome along on the Trip to a Better School Environment!



REBUS

Trip to a better school environment

If we bring about a change in attitudes to our way of relating to the physical environment in the long term, the actual driving forces are participation and the ability to have an influence. If we listen to young people, and have the courage to draw on their experiences and opinions, we will build confidence that leads to greater respect for each other and for the school and pre-school environment. We achieve this through collaboration between children and young people, school staff, the architecture educationalist and property manager.



REBUS

Trip to a better school environment

REBUS

Trip to a better school environment

