



**Read!**



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## **A reading development project for all Malmö Children in grades two and five, 2006-2008**

### **Abstract:**

*This project is a cooperation between the libraries in Malmö and the Pedagogical center (a resource for the schools in Malmö). Its purpose was to give children a chance to discover the magic about reading. The target group was 9 year olds and 11 year olds, 24 000 children in all.*

**Main activity:** *Classes were offered a visit to their local library. We had professional marketing. The children met someone inspiring who can be a person for them to model themselves on and hopefully return to when they visit the library on their free time. To strengthen the librarians we offered them a course. We invited an actor to help them forward with their own personality when meeting the children in booktalks.*

*Examples of activities implemented every semester including a Relay race to create a detective story - 26 classes wrote a book, one chapter each. The first and last one was written by an author. We printed the book. And we did a play. 500 authors were born, but more important: they had come to know one story thoroughly by creating the characters, the intrigue a whole novel together and now they were hooked in the magic of reading. A second activity involved the book 'Tigerprince' - 26 classes got to know the Tigerprince by Chen Jiang Hong. Storytelling and painting were to deepen their interest in reading. 26 pictures, illustrating one scene from the book, 3 m x 1.5 m were exposed. The children met professionals who told the story in a place called Augustenborg's Botanical Roof Garden.*

*Every child knew the story by heart. And then they wanted several more stories. Target fulfilled.*

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## **Introduction**

In the spring of 2005 Malmö City Library approached The Pedagogical centre for collaboration. The proposal was to work together to encourage the desire to read and to work progressively to promote reading for children and to create networks between various actors in Malmö - school, preschool, parents and other cultural institutions – with an interest in reading matters. The magnitude of this affects not only public libraries, and it was therefore natural to work with The Pedagogical centre which is The Local Education Authority of Malmö, with an important role in coordinating the city's school libraries. We applied for sponsoring money from the Skåne Savings Bank Foundation and were granted 1.8 million SEK for three years. The target group was all children in grade two and grade five in Malmö.

Malmö is a city with a mixed population with people from all over the world. 27 per cent of the city's inhabitants were born abroad, and among the population there are 171 countries represented. 17 per cent, i.e. around 47 000 people, are children of pre-school and school age. Thus, we in Malmö serve a large group of children with diverse needs. This is more obvious in some neighborhoods than others, and makes the conditions for library activities diverse. At the same time Malmö is the engine in the expansive region of Öresund, growing both in population and economics. It makes library work in Malmö complicated but also extremely inspiring and challenging.

Malmö is Sweden's third largest city, divided into ten districts. Each district is responsible for its own schools, culture, recreation and primary care. There are seven branch libraries, and a city library. There is twenty children's and youth librarians in the city and today there is at least one in each district. Even though we work together on many levels, work in the districts has to be tailored to the conditions existing there.

## **Background**

*Malmö City Library and the Pedagogical centre would like, along with the branch libraries through the project READ! further develop their cooperation with schools and school libraries and offer more activities that stimulate reading. This is how it is formulated in the READ! project description.*

Swedish children read to a lesser extent today, and several studies show that literacy skills are falling. Since the early 1990s there is a clear decline in reading speed as well as reading comprehension. During the same period, the Swedish school system has undergone major changes. Work is now based more on troubleshooting within individual projects, which impose higher demands on reading and writing ability. At the same time there has been insignificant focus on reading in teaching and in the training of teachers in lower grades. Even in leisure time children's reading has been reduced as a result of increased competition with other media. Fewer parents give priority to read to their children.

Why is it so important to read? Reading stimulates literacy, the vocabulary as well as the communicative and social skills. Put together, they are important keys to success in school, and thus an urgent matter of democracy. But reading is so much more than that. As we read, imagination is given free rein and it gives us new thoughts and ideas. Through words, we can travel freely in time and space and grow as people. And last but not least, it's fun to read! This is also the main message of the READ! project.

### **Definitions**

We selected grade two and five since these ages are well suited for reading promotion activities. Grade two was invited in the spring semester, when most of the children have discovered the thrill of reading on their own. Many pupils in the fifth grade are great book-lovers and appreciate suggestions of further reading.

### **Organization**

A project manager was appointed in January 2006. A steering group had a mandate to work until the project application to the Savings Bank Foundation was established. The steering group has functioned as a decision-making group and as a support to the project manager in the cross-cutting issues. Much work was initially done on finding the right participants to the project team. The members of the team were the ones that came with ideas and they were also working operative. The group consisted of children's and school librarians from different districts. All were authorized and set aside time from their managers to work in the

### **Marketing**

For libraries in Malmö, reader-centered promotions for children and young people have been a priority for a long time. Reading skills and linguistic development is also an important goal in Malmo City Quality Plan for the school system. Our librarians have unique skills that both teachers and pupils can be inspired by. By meeting a librarian who will present books in a personal and stimulating way, the joy of reading can occur. In this project we wanted to focus on this core business, highlighting the different types of books and media and provide children with reading role models to come back to. We also wanted the multicultural Malmö to be reflected in our work so that the right book could find the right reader. We therefore attempted to find new ways to market libraries with giving book talks for children in grade two and five, in order to attract more teachers and with the goal of *all* Malmo children in these grades should visit their nearest library. A first step to streamline the distribution to the teachers was to send a letter and an e-mail to all invited teachers. This attempt immediately was reflected in visitor statistics. New publications with a more spectacular and fun layout were produced. This could be done by an important personal contact in the advertising sector. The project was also given its own website, also with the aim to stimulate contacts with the school libraries.

During the first semester of READ, we went out to inform about the project in various groups such as school leadership meetings, and teacher and school librarian conferences. We contacted and established collaborations with The Swedish National Agency for Education and several other organizations.

## **READ! Overall goal**

- To bring forth the joy of reading.
- To actively work to give children more space for reading, both in school and during leisure time.
- To create networks between various actors in Malmö with interest in reading matters.

## **Two main tracks**

### **1. Book talk, overall in the municipality:**

#### **Visit the Library and book talks for kids**

Malmö consists of 10 districts of varying size, and in total we would reach out to approximately 150 classes per semester. To give the children reading inspiration during the three years, Malmö City Library and all district libraries invited the children to their local library. Invitations were sent to all the teachers and during the library visit all children were given a book talk by a children's librarian. For many children it was the first meeting with someone who loves books, so it was important to provide them with inspiring book presentations.

#### **Inspiration for the reading models- the librarians**

We also thought it was essential that all children's librarians had the same platform to stand on, partly because their position would be emphasized, but above all because we are colleagues who must be able to discuss the meetings with children from similar references. It was important to reach the level where the desirable dynamic meetings with the children would appear. Therefore, we wanted to give all children's librarians training to meet the children and strengthen themselves as storytellers and dare to be more personal. During the three years since they have met an actor who directed their book talks. They have also got training in storytelling. To conclude, we went to boarding school in order to formulate book talk themes. These would be used as a basis for all literary promotion for children and young people in the city of Malmö.

#### **The autumn vacation was a manifestation of the three years of joint work in the children's librarian group, and there was a program common for all produced.**

In the autumn of 2008 we planned a program for the fifth grade. It would cover all libraries in Malmö. In the project description of READ! it is written that we should work actively to give children more reading time and space both in school and at their spare time. Therefore, we wanted to give them leisure time activities with a touch of reading as pleasure at the November holidays.

We focused on the books by Douglas Foley, about the 11-year-old boy Habib, which are very popular among children of this age group. Six reading groups were initiated by school librarians. Children who wanted to join were welcome on their free time after school. They read the book and reflected on a blog. They also got to meet the author exclusively. Foley visited all the district libraries during this holiday week. In order to emphasize the power of libraries, we chose to also open up one school library during the holidays.

## **Create Networks**

One goal that was important for us to achieve was to create networks of children's librarians and school library staff in each district. Considering the current workload, particularly in the school world, it is an almost impossible goal to reach. The project team discussed how this target would be met. We wanted each district to meet once or twice a semester and we wanted to establish contact between school and library, to inform each other. Each district was creating its own level on the gatherings. One district chose to have their network as a pure information forum, others chose to collaborate on a specific task.

The results of this work are that the district of Husie now has a network between school libraries and public libraries. It has focused on providing certain grades with author visits each year. In the district of Limhamn the manager of children and youth have given the children's librarian the assignment to create and maintain a network between the school libraries and the public branch library. Likewise major developments in school libraries are in the pipeline. The Pedagogic centre is supporting the project known as Limbo.

### **2. Subprojects:**

In order to give children an experience of reading and books, we realized at the end of 2006 that we should be focusing on a few districts each semester, and to direct actions to a smaller audience, which in practice meant that all children could not participate in all activities. The absolute fairness came to naught, but the possibility of an in-depth approach in which many children still had a chance was that the decision was easy to make.

The project team chose to start from the four so-called partner areas that were already established in the city of Malmö.

A working group of children's librarians and school librarians was formed well before the start of the semester. Each area had its own program budget. Each project also had a similar structure, with 500-700 children, approximately 30 to 50 teachers and a few librarians. An inspiring meeting for teachers, an experience or activity for the children that ran for a whole semester and a final product were parts in the structure. In this we hoped to explore new ways and to apply various methods to inspire children to read.

### **Detective relay, spring 2007**

In the spring of 2007 we focused on the districts of Hillier, Kirseberg and Västra Innerstaden. A group of enthusiastic children's- and school librarians made a proposal on how to work with children in a fun, yet well-framed way. The idea was to make some sort of reading relay. The initiative was to be called the *Detective relay*. 25 classes, 500 children, 50 teachers, school librarians, children's librarians and the children's author Mårten Sandén were involved in the project, all with the same enthusiasm.

We started with an inspiring day of further education for the teachers. Mårten Sandén read the first chapter that he had written, aloud and gave practical advice on how to inspire and work with writing in class. After that the relay started. Participants from the project group showed up as surprises in the classes and read the first chapter aloud.

Then the writing started. The result was a thrilling detective story set in Malmö. However, the production of the book was just a small part of the semester-long process. The children have seen chapters emerge, twice a week have teachers read aloud to their pupils. Each class had two days to write their chapter. Some wrote jointly in the whole class, others in groups, some individually, one small piece each. As help and inspiration they were provided with a Malmö map, a detective bag with magnifying glasses, handcuffs, a Sherlock Holmes-hat, a pipe and a notebook in which the children wrote a secret message of invisible ink to the next class. The new chapters were published in the mutual digital conference system, PedNet that all teachers in Malmö are using. It also added all information to teachers about the project. Mårten Sandén completed the book and the project group read the final chapter aloud in all participating schools.

Activities around the Detective's relay continued in the autumn of 2007. The project group was keen to let the children see their book turned into a play. After six months of inquiries and requests the last pieces of the puzzle were in place. In Kirseberg two actors are employed by the district council, and during the calm summer months they converted the book into a manuscript. Actors of the MAF-Malmö Amateur theatre Forum set up the play, and when school started again after the summer holidays all the children came to see it. At the theater they met with their relay mates after the show and all got their own, much longed for, copy of the book.

The drawings that were made as illustrations for the book, photographs, press materials and a slideshow of the process were gathered with the inspirational bag to a touring exhibition. The Detective relay was closed.

In this project we managed to achieve all the basic ideas. It depends on a number of factors. The size of the project group, seven participants, is ultimate. It consisted of different personalities but with one important common characteristic, that all is possible. Someone was the innovator, someone was organizational and thoughtful, someone was a convinced optimist, someone had the ability to frame the project and take it down to something manageable. Teachers of grade two also have the liberty to drop everything around for two days. Since the participating teachers immediately settled on the idea they have not complained or criticized the project at all. This means that you can work on without hindrance. Another factor that has played an important role is that there has been a spirit of community among the classes. This is because all children have spent time with each other by listening to their comrades' story writing every week. They've also worked with a common goal, to get the book finished.

The project is successful because we have reached the main goal, to bring the joy of reading! We also gave the children writing- and listening pleasure.

### **Butterflies, phantoms and football-new light on the non-fiction book, fall 2007 and 2008**

In the autumn of 2007 the project went on to the districts of Centrum, Södra Innerstaden and Husie. 35 classes in fifth grade participated. A new working group with representatives from affected districts was selected. Unlike the detective relay, this group was not as free to brainstorm. Reason: READ requested additional funds from the National Arts Council, focusing on the non-fiction book. In recent years, non-fiction book publishing has declined. Non-fiction authors do not appear in public in the same way as literary writers. We who work with children's literature unfortunately often contributes to this by only promoting

novels in our book talks. Finally, boys often like to read non-fiction more. We were granted 200,000 SEK split into two phases, autumn 2007 and autumn of 2008. The framework was therefore already set.

We started the project with an all-day conference on the non-fiction book. Interested teachers, school librarians, children's librarians and school principals were inspired by Karna Nyström, literature educator, and the authors Dan Höjer and Jonathan Lindström. But to engage and activate the participants deeper we had workshops where topics "to wake joy of reading with the help of non-fiction books. Is it possible?" "Is the non-fiction book on the way to extinction?" "Learning and the Internet compete. Good or bad? "

The main activity was that all children would meet a non-fiction author in another environment than school. Dan Höjer told us all about ghosts and disgusting things in the dungeon of Malmöhus. Jonathan Lindström, who is also an archaeologist, visited schools and gave inspiration to the children themselves to be archaeologists. Marie Rådbo, astronomer and writer also visited the pupils in the class, but in connection with the author visit, the children visited the observatory of Tycho Brahe Oxie outside Malmö. Pelle Eckermann writer and scientist met with the children in Malmö, Technology and Maritime Museum. A lot of experiments were carried out during the author visit. In connection with that the children were given a tour of the Knowledge amusement park at the museum.

The classes who met Dan Höjer were so inspired by his presentation that they wanted to write a book with ghost stories with a summary of facts about the places in Malmö where the ghosts were haunting the humans! To get some inspiration the pupils met educators from Malmö museum telling the story of ghosts on Malmöhus and a medium, Benny Rosenkvist. The children's interviews and conversations were recorded and sent out to teachers in mp3 format to use as inspiration for the mission: to write a horror story that was based on a real place in the city, and researching the site. It became a book with thirty-five hair-raising stories.

In the autumn of 2008 we did it again, in a similar way. The Inspiration day was different. We invited Monica Johansson, Lecturer at University College Library in Borås. She talked about children and young people reading non-fiction. We also wanted to have a digital slant on the day. Therefore, we hired Dan Åkerlund, Lecturer at Karlstad University. He talked about how to work with wikis in school, inspire children to express themselves and publish their work online, thus creating greater love of reading. His lecture was followed by a more practically oriented workshop. As inspiration, we invited Sassa Buregren, artist and author of *Democracy's Guide* and *Small feminist book*. She told us about the path from idea to publication.

Mattias Danielsson has written *How to feel anger, sadness To feel, To feel the love*. He met with 12 classes in Malmö Town Hall, a place we chose because many couples marry there. Elin Lindell and Lisa Bjärbo have jointly written *the book Great shame and embarrassment*. They met the children on site in schools, with BRIS (= children's rights in society) as a partner. BRIS talked about bullying and the authors about their books. Sassa Buregren, author of *Democracy's Guide* and *Small feminist book* met the pupils in the City Hall. This combination was a fluke. The children became wild when they realized that it is here in this beautiful hall where Malmö's politicians take all decisions about what will happen in Malmö.

We wanted the teachers to follow up the author visits. Therefore we created a wiki. The purpose was that all children would be able to publish their own texts in a joint Malmö Wiki.

A way of sharing their new knowledge. And a way to publish themselves that we know they think is funny. Writing is also a key to the love of reading.

Only two of thirty classes made use of this tool. You can choose to see it as a defeat, but we know that teachers need time to gain new tools. We have introduced a new tool to them and with further work, we will be able to attract more eventually. The efforts surrounding wikis have acted as a starter.

### **Tiger Prince, spring 2008**

In the spring of 2008 the turn had come to the districts of Fosie and Oxie. The project team first met in December 2007 for an initial brainstorming. One of the first proposals that came up was to work with stories in some form, and before the meeting was over we had decided to dare the new and bold grip to work the entire semester with activities based on the one same story. We discussed various methods to express the story and in how many ways we could portray it - through dance, art, digital stories, theater, etc. The focus on oral storytelling was something everyone agreed on, and that we would enlist the help of professional storytellers for this. All were given the task of selecting two suggestions on the story until the next meeting, and when we met again after the holiday season presented a number of different ideas. We agreed on the Chinese tale Tiger Prince by Chen Jiang Hong, a dramatic story with very expressive images. Among the many ideas that were around the drama of the story we decided to focus on storytelling and image-building, and the coming discussion was still much about the practical planning around this.

We decided the following approach: The project would start with an inspiration to teachers and school library staff. At the same occasion we presented all parts of the project that was going to take place throughout the semester. A workshop in painting was also conducted, where the teachers themselves created from the same conditions as was offered the children. The workshop was followed by a "story telling raid" in schools, where children had the first meeting of the story, but without the pictures so that they wouldn't be too affected by the book's dramatic illustrations. This was greatly appreciated, and Jonas, one of the participating children's librarians, would be called the Tiger prince of the children in his neighborhood for a long time coming. After this class visit, each class was given about a month to paint a collective work of art in large format, paintings measured the whole 3 x 1.5 meters.

When this extensive work on image-making was finished, all classes got to go on a field trip in a different environment than the school or library. There the story was re-told by professional story-tellers. Fosie's all classes got a unique visit in Augustenborg's Botanical Roof Garden, an exciting project that is little known outside the circles initiated. These visits had therefore added value to the children. They got to know a new place in their environment and it was a mutually fruitful partnership, which the garden's curator was very pleased with.

The semester ended with an exhibition just before the summer holiday. It was a beautiful sight to see all the huge paintings hung side by side, and to visit the exhibition was like walking through a magical Chinese forest. All of our concerns that the children would have got tired of the story after a whole semesters work came to naught, they beamed with pride when they saw their works on display and many of them could tell the story by heart. The work of the exhibition meant many practical challenges for the participating librarians, who for a while got to work as curators. It was a project where all participants surpassed themselves, and that we, who took part in it, never will forget.

The whole process with the Tiger Prince was documented in a blog where all the participating teachers were invited to write, and finally the children's pictures were also the basis for a digital slide show that was sent out to all classes that have been included.

Here are now the target instructions that teachers had to be assumed, which helped to give everyone a clear piece of art framed in identical conditions. However, they were sufficiently supplied loose to make room for their own creativity so that no painting was ever the same.

### **Materials:**

Tension Paper 1 ½ x 3m

Water Colors: yellow-blue-red

Sponges

Bucket of water

Temperature Block: black-brown-white

Oil Pastel crayons: black, white, red and brown (only those colors should be used, for the sake of unity)

Gold Paper

Adhesives

Ink Pens

Scissors

CD with Chinese music

### **1st "Pour & napping" of 1 ½ x 3m span paper**

Gather the children around the paper. Lift. Pour on the colour: yellow to begin with, the colour of the sun - the sun is needed for something to grow. Allow the paint to run on the paper to form beautiful patterns, while the children pull the paper in different directions. But in order for something to grow you also need water - now pour the blue colour. See how it mixes with the yellow into green. Then fall is here - the colour red. Discover how yellow, blue and red can create thousands of shades!

Once the artwork is ready, put it down gently on the floor or on a table. Then smudge out the colour with moist sponges to cover the entire paper and until all liquid paint has been sucked up. See how the colors change. Allow paint to dry before the next operation.

### **2nd The forest grows**

Put up the painting on the wall. Listen to the Chinese music to get the right atmosphere. Equip the children with sponges and brown, black and white tempera paint from brick. A few

children at a time go over and draw the vertical lines. Watch the process together and then see how the image has been transformed into a forest. Strengthen the tree trunks with a black oil pastel crayon.

### **3rd Tigers takes shape**

Preliminary exercise: Try to tear a tiger's body parts in plain white paper. The children, in couples, then tear out the head, body, tail, legs and paws of gold paper. Put the pieces together, and try to capture the various movements of the tiger. Paste the tigers in the forest environment. The tigers expressions, stripes, etc. are painted onto the golden paper with oil pastel crayons in red, brown and black.

### **4th The Tiger Prince**

Lay out the turquoise paper along a long table. Make simple drawings of a man in three poses: "Angry", "sad" and "scared". The teacher can be a model! Use the turquoise paper and markers, and select a point to start drawing from. Then try to draw the contours of the person without releasing the pen from paper. Stop at the same point as you started. All three characters were doing on the different emotions. Go around the table and look at each other's pictures. Select a character – but not your own! - and cut it out along the contours. Line up the figures as a thread through the entire painting with glue.

## **Conclusion - prospective**

The project is now completed and we look back on the three years with pride. We have managed to reach almost 25 000 children with various reading promotion activities, and have given them important and funny experiences that they hopefully can enjoy throughout their lives. The hundreds of teachers who contributed to the projects in various ways over the years have taken on new approaches to how they can work with reading matters in school. We have created simple structures for working with children and books, structures that can be re-used.

Children's and school librarians have been able to meet in new contexts and have worked in the various sub-projects in a way that brings them together in the long term. Malmo's children's librarians now have a common platform to gather strength and ideas from, and we will hopefully see much collaboration over the district boundaries in the future.

Many contacts have been established through our various sub-projects, and collaborations started with a number of external partners. A network between school librarians and children's librarians in the district boundaries and between the districts has been created. There will be an ease in groping for new contacts. The fear that previously existed is gone.

A publication written by literature educator Agneta Edwards compiles material from the three years of work. It describes the experience of READ! and it is now spread among libraries across the country, to reach out with our innovative practices to those who work with children and young people.

For us as project managers, the three years with READ! has been enormously rewarding and fulfilling. We have dared to try different ways and show off our library in the new context,

something that meant a lot to us personally but also in the extension of library visitors and future collaborations with external partners. We have had so many positive meetings with people who are dedicated to provide children with reading experiences, and their enthusiasm has influenced our work. We have seen that children and teachers really have appreciated the project and have had great fun, but when we think about it, we feel that we are the ones that have had the most fun!

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