



Max, Izabell, Edwin, Jens and Arvid in Year 9 at Kunskapsskolan Örebro enjoyed debating in KED Model United Nations, traditionally hosted by Kunskapsskolan Gurgaon in November. You can read their report on page 2.

KED

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Welcome Something New

Cecilia Aronsson

KED Network Director

cecilia.aronsson@kunskapsskolan.com

Despite the drastic changes to our lives, people that I encounter around the KED Network express the same great passion for their responsibilities as teachers and commitments as students.

KED schools still excel in their unique capability of adjusting teaching to the needs of each student. The schools still work to make every student feel included. The restrictions put on us present new conditions to personalize learning as required. But the determination to adjust and make students reach their goals is the same.

And the KED Network is still active.

Even though we cannot travel to each other, we have more than ever to exchange about how to tackle the challenges we face. Personalizing education remotely and making both students and teachers feel included are not simple tasks to solve these days. The thoughts by a colleague in another part of the Network might be exactly what you are looking for. Have a look at the interviews with Angelica and Sara in this Newsletter. A challenge that forces us to look in new places for a solution will eventually make us develop. That is how economists claim that crisis leads to innovation.

Being innovative is one of the core future skills in the KED Program. However destructive this crisis has been, it helps to remind ourselves that it spurs our hunt for innovative solutions that help students and teachers succeed.

As we are going through unprecedented times, we remain grounded in our core values and our continuing vision of educating students to master the challenges of today and shape the world of tomorrow.

We Are the KED Diplomats

Jens Bergold Knabe, Edwin Krutholm, Noel Ekman and Elias Wallerå
Year 9 Students, Kunskapsskolan Örebro

Some weeks ago, ten students from Kunskapsskolan Örebro got an exciting invitation. Kunskapsskolan in Gurgaon, India invited us to be part of KED Model United Nations, an international conference online to debate some of the most important agendas in the world right now. Several of us act on the editorial board of the school paper and we were thrilled.

“Our world today is in a largely unprecedented situation and uncertainty is rampant. We need global dialogue and cooperation to be at the forefront, now more than ever. It is our responsibility as an international community to have discussions and deliberate on issues that plague our world, thus charting a way forward,” says Saumya Pandey, student at Kunskapsskolan Gurgaon and Secretary General of the KED Model United Nations 2020.

The rules were simple. The contest took place online, through Zoom meetings, with participating students from KED schools in India, Sweden, and the Netherlands. Each participant then acted as a delegate of a specific country, representing Colombia, Finland, Norway,

Ireland, Hungary, Jamaica, New Zealand, Germany, Nigeria, France, Pakistan, Malaysia, Belgium, Jordan, the Netherlands, Sri Lanka, Canada, Indonesia, Australia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Switzerland, Turkey, UAE, Uruguay, Thailand, Brazil and USA.

“We felt it was interesting and cool to be part of something this big,” says Izabell Bauer, student at Kunskapsskolan Örebro.

Each delegate was supposed to answer different questions in selected urgent agendas in the contemporary world, such as “Preventing the risk of radiological terrorism”. Together, the participants gained new knowledge about these challenges, as well as the intricacies involved in solving them. In the World Health Assembly, students discussed the perilous agenda of Covid-19.

“I felt it would be a good thing to do for my future. It was not even hard to be in school on the weekend. But then we started, and it was so much harder than I thought,” says Swedish participant Filip Ståhl.

We did not know what to expect. When we logged on and saw everybody in the chat rooms, we got nervous. This was hard. Since we had never ever participated in anything like this before, we were not sure how to prepare, and felt a little lost. Then we realized that students from the other schools were feeling the same, and that this was a new situation for most of us. We did our very best. Everyone was friendly, and the leaders were helpful.

The most memorable part of the competition was when the different delegates compared their countries' views, formed blocs, and made resolutions. In this part, we talked to each other more informally to find ways to cooperate.

An executive board marked the participants. We wish we had spent more time researching and preparing, but we had a great experience with lots of fun. We are positive this helped us develop confidence in leading others, gave us stronger awareness of global issues, and best of all, introduced us to new friends all over the world.





Partner School with Passion

Koos Woltjes

Communication Manager, Kunskapsskolan Nederland



Closeness, authenticity, and personal attention to every child. When parents around the world are asked about the desired added value of schools, these elements are invariably placed in the center.

Parents play a decisive role in the choice of school for their child(ren), they are interested in how their children are doing at school and can provide valuable input. That is why Dr. Nassau College in Gieten – the fourth Kunskapsskolan Partner School in the Netherlands – focuses on the triangle of student, parent(s) and teacher in its personalized education. Not in ten-minute conversations, as is usually done in Dutch schools, but by jointly discussing the student's learning goals at the beginning and halfway through each school period. At the end of each school

period, they exchange ideas about the results together. Students, parents, and teachers see, experience and guide together all the way to the final exam.



Listen

“Parents are the real experts of their child,” says Irma Veenhuizen, school leader of Dr. Nassau College, and continues:

“Listening is the most important part of communication in our opinion. I see parents as welcome partners in our personalized education. And in addition to the education oriented discussions at the beginning and halfway through each school period, we have an active sounding board, in which about 20 parents and the school management exchange ideas on a regular basis, with the basic purpose to find out if we are doing things right.”

As the school leader, she thinks parents are a great help with that. And it has a positive effect on the quality of education, she thinks. Moreover, it encourages communication whenever it is needed. It has allowed the school to immediately involve the parents in the

challenges surrounding the Covid-19 crisis, for example. They quickly got a picture of the students who were less able to learn at home. At Easter, during the Covid-19 lockdown, teachers biked home to every student to bring them a chocolate bunny.

“That is what we mean by closeness. We have a connection with the community here in the Dutch province of Drenthe and that makes our work great fun. Whoever acts from passion, does not have a job but a life,” says Irma Veenhuizen.

Unique

Dr. Nassau College works from the principle that every student is unique. Organized around him/her with his/her own ambitions and talents. With sufficient attention for each student, in a clear structure towards personal goals. At their own level, at their own pace, but always challenged to get the best out of themselves. An environment where students – when up to the task – can take charge of their own learning process and become more motivated, noting that Dutch students, on average, are the least motivated students in the whole of Europe.

All schools in the Netherlands that use the KED Program for personalized education apply these principles, but Partner Schools go a clear step further.

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Partner School with Passion, cont.

They have chosen to use the KED Quality Model as an integral part of their quality assurance, making full use of what has been developed and applied so successfully by Kunskapsskolan in Sweden over the past 20 years, creating higher study results and personal development exceeding that of students in other educational approaches.

Satisfied

An important part of quality is that parents and students are satisfied with the school, and that teachers can apply their versatility and professional self-awareness effectively. This is promoted by the close bond between the school, the parents, and the wider community, and further encouraged by the digital tools of the KED Program that give parents direct insight into the progress of their child(ren).

“Parents should have the opportunity to ask questions and put forward points of criticism,” says Irma Veenhuizen.

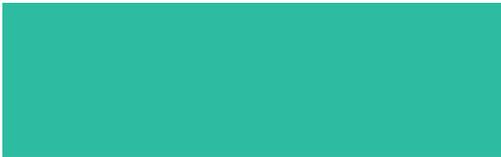
Parents have asked them to look together at the feedback that students receive during their weekly coaching sessions, thinking there might be a difference between different coaches.

“A great idea! We have put that topic on the agenda for a meeting and I will bring one of our coaching experts to join that conversation,” says Veenhuizen.

This shows how the school not only explains how they professionally train and support teachers, but also listens to how parents perceive the coaching of their child(ren). The dialogue highlights that the school and the parents

have the same goal: students’ well-being and progress. And from there you see a bond developing, with parents asking the Head of School about the well-being of teachers as well.

“Together we are strong, and we ensure that students here at school learn more than the final exam requirements. In line with what will be required of them in a rapidly changing world,” she says.



I Have the Best Job in the World

20 years have passed since Kunskapsskolan opened its first schools in Sweden in autumn 2000. But for Cecilia Carnefeldt, Chairman of Kunskapsskolan Sweden, the story begins one and a half years earlier when the first plans for the new school group emerged.

“Our founder Peje Emilsson led the initiative together with the previous Minister of Education Per Unckel, the economist Nils Lundgren and the school entrepreneur Anders Hultin. My first job was to proofread the draft of the business plan and the document that would then become our first prospectus. Anders Hultin and I were employed by Kunskapsskolan on June 1, 1999,” says Kunskapsskolan’s first crew member Cecilia Carnefeldt.

Tell us about the start

It was extremely intense. The first CEO Anders Hultin and I borrowed a small, hot office in the attic of a building in Stockholm. One of my first memories is a meeting with politicians and officials in Enköping that rendered a first page article in the local newspaper. I had just finished my law studies, but my work tasks were so diverse, such as drafting employee contracts, producing leaflets, creating a logotype and letterhead, making a homepage, writing press releases and newsletters, negotiating with the union and presenting our case to municipalities. Some time in 2000, I got the formal title as Information Manager and became the Secretary of the Board of Directors.



Where did the Educational Program of Kunskapsskolan come from?

The founders wanted to create a group of schools with the same working methods and organizational structure. The idea was to offer high quality education through cooperation, regular evaluation, and best practice. We aimed for a modern type of teaching with the student at the center of the school. Each student was given the opportunity to work at their own pace, be seen and reach their individual goals. Those principles still apply. In autumn 1999, we encountered the people who would realize our vision. The teachers Torbjörn Bindekrans and Birgitta Ericson – Tobbe and Gittan – had explored personalized education in their own classrooms for several years and presented their model for personal coaching. My colleagues and I met them first time over dinner in October 1999. I still remember how passionate they appeared that night.

Who else was involved from the start?

Two of the stars that are still working with us are Camilla Conradzon, Kunskapsskolan Tyresö’s current Head of School, and Kenneth Nyman, now the Director of International Operations. Lars Jonsson, Head of School at Kunskapsskolan Västerås and Enköping, joined us early on. He was presumably also the one who had the first international contacts that would later pave the way for Kunskapsskolan’s international expansion. In this regard, Head of School Mats Rosén joined us for the start of Kunskapsskolan Ystad and later realized our international plans by working as Head of School for Kunskapsskolan in India for many years.

It is impossible to mention everyone, but it is amazing that several of the first team members are still working here. They have invested so much of their working life in Kunskapsskolan. I think the reason is that they regard Kunskapsskolan as more than a job. They joined us in shaping the foundation of our creation, with our vision, values and working methods. I feel touched, proud, and gratified when I reflect on the impact they have had and still have.

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I Have the Best Job in the World, cont.

Describe what Kunskapsskolan looked like 20 years ago

Kunskapsskolan was – and still is – not like a traditional school. We did not want dull corridors and rows of classrooms. Instead, we put a reception and a café at the entrance. The Head of School was to be found easily and not locked away in a remote office. Glass walls and open design were meant to encourage a friendly environment while discouraging bullying. Our first schools were perceived like modern offices – and this helped us convincing property owners to rent out more places to us.

The architect Kenneth Gärdestad developed our design profile in close dialogue with our teachers and combined it with a thoughtful color scheme. To emphasize that we differed from traditional schools, the rooms got inventive names, e.g. arena, base group room, office. The first schools had large open areas. This has changed with time, to get a more peaceful study environment.

In what other ways did Kunskapsskolan appear ahead of its time?

We were early adopters of digital working methods. From the start, we decided that our schools would be equipped with thin clients – personal computers – connected to central servers that kept all content for teaching and learning.

The Learning Portal, today our digital platform globally, started out as a list of folders with documents in, but soon we started building our huge web portal with access to all the schools' learning materials. I recollect that English was the first complete subject on the Portal, managed by Pernilla Brorsson, who is now our Global Curriculum and Portal Manager.

Do you remember the first reactions from students and parents?

The response was overwhelming. Applications flooded in and I had countless phone calls from parents who were keen to secure a place with us for their child. Crying fathers on the line was nothing extraordinary.

Often, I was approached by students themselves who wanted to go to Kunskapsskolan and asked me how to convince their parents about it. In the first years, many students switched to Kunskapsskolan because they had experienced bullying or lack of support at their previous school. This made me realize the power of the Swedish system, whereby everyone has the right to choose their school unlike other countries where this right is granted only if your parents are wealthy enough to pay for a private school.

How was Kunskapsskolan's start acknowledged?

We really stuck our chin out. In our recruitment ads, we said we were looking for the best teachers in Sweden to work at the best school in Sweden. We illustrated our message with a dust whisk to represent what we wanted to do with the traditional school, i.e. clean up. Starting a group of professionally managed schools drew a great deal of attention. In just a few months, we were on the frontpage of all kinds of publications. Some municipalities resisted us with force, others welcomed us with open arms. The rest of the Swedish education and business community did not react much. But as said, there were numerous applications from students and teachers.

What was the approach of the new teachers and school leaders?

Individuals actively applied to us because they wanted to work in another way, that goes for school leaders, teachers, and other functions. They were highly committed, and the first years required a lot of creativity from team members since we did not have any established routines or structures. Collaborative projects were launched within and between the schools that saved us from unnecessary distraction and slow motion.

When were you convinced that Kunskapsskolan would succeed?

I sensed early on that there was high demand for what we could provide. At the same time, I was humble before the challenge of starting five schools in a year, along with a so called 'Kunskapsgård', where students from all our schools would go to learn practical subjects like craft and cooking.

We had many skilled team members, but still, there were moments when I wondered how we would deal with it all. However, I remember the feeling that ensued during our first kick-off, or rather work camp, in August 2000. All teachers and other staff, about 100 people, prepared the approaching opening of our first schools. I served food and coffee. The energy generated over these days left me with the feeling that this would become very good. >>



I Have the Best Job in the World, cont.

What are Kunskapsskolan's strengths today, 20 years later?

We are still a modern school that focus on the individual. We have high-quality digital support for the schools and a well-functioning quality model. Over the years, we have developed solid structures for evaluating quality and performance. We have a thorough quality model that covers all relevant aspects of running a successful school, regarding working methods as well as the quality of the school in a broader sense. Very good in other words, as noted by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate during our regular review recently. We have extremely skilled team members who cooperate on different levels. And we have support functions that focus entirely on assisting the schools in a great way.

Kunskapsskolan has developed step by step during the past 20 years. All parts of our working model: our methods and tools, our support functions, and structures, have improved. Yet, the core of what we do is unchanged – our values and the idea of personalizing learning for each student. We have cared for and nourished our origin in a balanced, good way. We are better than ever now.

What do you expect Kunskapsskolan to be in another 20 years?

Kunskapsskolan 2040 has the same values and vision as today. The working methods are essentially the same, but digitization has had a huge impact and we have a large selection of online courses and learning resources. Artificial Intelligence (AI) functionality is used when there is a clear need for it, while the teacher's contribution as coach is more important than ever. I am fully convinced that teachers cannot be replaced by digital systems.

Kunskapsskolan's physical locations remain, but there is more flexible thinking about when, where, and how to learn. Our Swedish schools will be complete K-12 schools. And by then, Kunskapsskolan may possibly run a teacher training college.

Educating Students for Life

“I want to inspire and influence my students, so they grow as human beings,” says Sara Törnert, who is teaching Psychology and Sociology at upper secondary KED school Kunskapsgymnasiet Göteborg.



She is interested in people, how we act in different social situations and why we think, feel, and behave as we do. This is the reason Sara chose to become a teacher of these subjects.

“Then when I see that my students develop and learn new things with my supervision, I feel that my job is meaningful. In upper secondary, we reflect a lot on who we are. This adds to the excitement of teaching Psychology and Sociology and being able to encourage students to take in new perspectives and ways of understanding themselves and their fellow human beings,” says Sara.

She has worked at Kunskapsgymnasiet Göteborg for three years:

“Kunskapsskolan has a good learning model that puts every student at the center. Our school is relatively small, which nourishes a community spirit where everyone knows each other, and it is easy to develop personal bonds. In this kind of environment, every student can feel they are seen and respected,” Sara says.

She thinks that a good school is supposed to give its students high-quality, meaningful education. But it should also be a place where people respect each other, something that she knows is the case when she sees a lot of smiles around. A sign of well-being among the crowd.

What do you think students get at your school that stands out?

Good possibilities to develop according to their personal needs, for example through the sessions called “study coaching” and “study forum”.

What is that, please explain

Study coaching means that every student meets a teacher one-on-one for 15 minutes every other week to go through and plan their schoolwork. Here, students get support and coaching to master their studies. Study forum then, refers to set times every week when students can meet teachers in all subjects to ask questions and be supported in specific areas of individual subjects. It is very good.

What is your favorite teaching session?

There is a course called “Youth cultures” where one of the requirements is to write your own lyrics about being young in today’s world. Some of my students played the guitar, sang, and rapped, even though I did not ask them.

And finally, please share your best study tips with us

Listen carefully to the lectures and participate actively in classroom discussions – it is good to learn from each other. Also, ask your teachers for feedback before you hand in your work. Then it is always good to plan your work so that there is time left to develop and work on the details before the deadline.

Learning Cannot Begin Until You Learn to Fail

“Good relations promote motivation and engagement in the classroom. And it is important to have fun together, ”

says Angelica Johansson, Social Science teacher at upper secondary KED school Kunskapsgymnasiet Norrköping.

The warm, contagious laughter sounds through the classroom. Anyone who has ever met Angelica knows it belongs to her. Because she laughs a lot.

Angelica has worked as a teacher in the KED Program for four years. She teaches Social Science, History and Sociology.

“I have always been interested in how society works. Then, to understand why the world is what it is you need insight about the historical development. Sociology is my favorite part of Social Science. To visualize and question social structures and norms is intriguing,” she says.

The aspect of her job that Angelica enjoys the most is to coach students individually. At upper secondary KED schools in Sweden, students have personal study coaching once every two

weeks. During this meeting, students review and plan their schoolwork together with their personal coach and discuss how to reach their personal goals.

“I think this arrangement promotes good relations between the students and teachers. It builds a community here at school. I also like study forum, which is a time slot when students can come around and be helped in all their subjects. There, you have time to really support those who want to and need it,” Angelica says.

Meeting a lot of people is a natural part of being a teacher, a part that she relishes:

“It is rewarding to be significant in teenagers’ lives. It is good to get challenged, think in new ways, and be

pushed out of your adult comfort zone. And to get to know so many sharp and fun personalities. All this convinces me that the teacher profession is the best job in the world,” says Angelica.

What do you think is the best thing about KED schools?

In a graduation speech the other year, one of my students said that she would miss the ‘Kunskap family’. Hearing that students develop so warm feelings for you, is the best feedback a school can get.

And finally, please share your best study tips with us

I have two. **First, dare to fail.** It is who you are, not what you do, that makes you valuable. It is when everything goes wrong that we learn.

Second, ask for help. Many believe they should be on top already from the start of a new course, but then they forget that taking the course is learning to climb to the top. The teacher is your best tool. It is that person’s job to teach you and then it should never be intimidating to say, ‘Now I understand absolutely nothing’.

