

Good practices in Promoting Physical Activity in Schools; Umeå Municipality, Sweden

Education

Umeå Municipality, Sweden

Socio-demographic indicators:

Municipality/City Population: 127.119 residents (2018)

Gender ratio: 50,2 % men, 49,8 % women (2018)

Age distribution:

0	1-5	6-12	13-15	16-18	19-24	25-44	45-64	65-79	80-84	85-89	90-94	95-w	Total
1487	7534	10285	3881	3602	13103	38488	27458	16063	2714	1586	740	178	127119

Socio-economic indicators:

GDP per capita: 416,000 SEK (30,000 €)

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Health and Physical Activity Issues:

- Sport is important as an economic factor
- It has value for city marketing
- It supports integration and inclusion
- Health promotion and maintenance of mobility are undisputed.

Why did you start an activity / a project?

The level of physical inactivity is rapidly increasing in Sweden (only 22% of girls and 44% of boys meet the recommended daily level of PA) and the right to be healthy in is still not equal for all. E.g. During the 1970´ s about 90% of all children in Sweden walked or rode the bicycle to school. 2006 it was reduced to 58%.

The purpose of Change the Game is to contribute to long-term sustainable social development by improving physical literacy among children and young people.

Since 2014, several sectors have collaborated with Change the Game as a platform, founded by a local property company - Balticgruppen. Now these sectors are involved in different projects where physical literacy is used as a lens when designing new programme, activities and environments: Umeå municipality (leisure, school, culture, city planning, marketing) Umeå university, Regional health department, the County Administrative Board, the Regional Sports Federation and corporate business.

More info about [Change the game](#), [the project](#) and [physical literacy](#).

How do you do it?

Umeå started an active school transportation project, with the lens of physical literacy, which was made possible thanks to the funding and engagement of our local public housing company “Bostaden”. The target groups were primarily students grade 3 and 5, their parents and their teachers; and secondary school unit managers, principals, teachers, property managers.

First, shorter training was conducted in the field of physical literacy, mapping of potential school paths used by the students of the class, and ideas on what the implementation could look like. Four different ways were considered to be used by and from the school by the students. Ideas for the implementation included theme weeks with different movements, potential collaboration with Fritidsbanken to borrow different means of transport such as skateboards one week and scooter another week. Finally, it was decided that different units of operation, like stations, would be placed along the four different roads to and from the school.

Furthermore, a workshop was held with the respective grade, where the students acted as co-creators and the coordinator, teachers and leisure educators supported. A shorter introduction was held by the coordinator with the concept of physical literacy. The students were divided into smaller groups and with the help of pictures on existing school roads and a small checklist for physical literacy enriched activities/environments they created prototypes and ideas for how units and implementation could be designed. Then an information meeting was held with the parents with a view to informing about physical literacy and pilot project as well as discussing difficulties and opportunities. This was done partly in a group but also through a digital survey.

During the summer, the “operating units” were produced by suppliers while permits were approved. At the beginning of the implementation phase, an inaugural event was organized where students, parents, teachers and others at Ersdungen school were allowed to test the operating units, hear more about the project and participate in and place a number of them around the actual city district (Västra Ersboda). A total of about 130 children and 50 adults participated.

For four weeks the “operating units” were out and also the locations varied around Ersdungen and the city district for the students (and the public) to use them. Eight different “operating units” were placed around the school. The farthest one was about 750 meters, while the closest was 10 meters. At each potential path, two units were placed.

The overall result of the operating units was as follows:

- Inspired by the prototypes from the students
- 75% recycled material
- Most are movable and changeable, i.e. not static and stationary. Some could also be built together
- Each unit encouraged three or more movement skills or principles of risky play
- The units were more used on the way home than in the mornings
- The children consider learning to move is more important than learning to read and write (assessment - PLAY self-assessment tool)
- Children invented new challenges, how to use the operating units, thanks to the design that was done with ambition to create a level of challenge to each level of ability.

What are your expected outcomes?

To generate knowledge about how physical literacy enriched active school transportation can affect the attitudes, motivation and behaviour of children, parents and teachers to become more physical literate and physically active throughout life. Furthermore, the purpose of gaining new insights into future projects within parks and residential areas can be implemented. The project's actors also show their true ambition to contribute to a better Umeå through this purpose.

The primary outputs from the pilot project are already known. For example:

The units were more used on the way home than during the way to school. Children seemed to invent new challenges by changing the way of training movement skills using the operating units. This seemed to be thanks to the design that was done with the ambition to create a level of challenge to each level of ability, but also letting the kids be creative and promote their autonomy.

Based on the survey (assessment tools - PLAYself) that was carried out before and after the implementation, children seemed to rate the importance of movement, sport and activities in different context (at school, at home, with friends) higher than the importance of read, write and count. These attitudes also increased among the younger kids, while it kept unchanged among the older kids.

The tool also investigated attitudes and self-confidence related to physical literacy and physical activity. On group level, the younger children rated their overall score higher after the implementation than before. The overall scores for the older children kept unchanged.

The digital survey that was conducted to investigate parents' attitudes (difficulties and opportunities) related to active and physical literacy enriched school transportation seemed to have an overall positive impact. The parents rated items like "My child would get a better overall health (physically and mentally) by using active or physical littered transport means to and from school" higher after the implementation than before.

