



Microsoft

Partners in Learning »

Foundation Gives Grants to Schools to Incorporate ICT Skills in the Classroom

Denmark

Customer Profile

Approximately 2,000 primary education schools in Denmark educate more than 690,000 enrolled students in grades 0 to 9. www.uvm.dk

Situation

Primary education schools in Denmark wanted to incorporate more Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills to help children better prepare to be members of the globalized world.

Solution

The School for the Future Foundation is supporting government initiatives for improving Danish education.

Benefits

- More than 1,000,000 kroner contributed by businesses
- 6 grants delivered in 2007
- 1,000 students reached
- 24 teachers trained

“The School for the Future Foundation gives us the ability to contribute to lifting primary education into the 21st century.”

Mille Østerlund, Head of Office, The Danish Bankers Association

Microsoft Denmark and Danish private sector form a partnership to fund innovative, interesting, and different ways of approaching education for children in Denmark’s primary education schools.



Situation

In 2005, the Danish government created the Danish Globalization Council. The goal of the council was to give advice on strategies for developing Denmark.

Of the more than 300 ideas that the council devised, the overwhelming majority concerned education. One of the council members was the general manager at Microsoft Denmark, Jørgen Bardenfleth. Using council recommendations as an impetus, Microsoft Denmark sought to combine private sector funding with the Microsoft® Partners in Learning initiative to help involve Danish schools and students in the globalized world.

Solution

In the spring of 2006, Microsoft helped form the School for the Future Foundation. The forum’s purpose is to reach out to some of the largest companies in Denmark to get them involved in helping the Danish educational system. Out of the 42 companies initially contacted, nine agreed to participate. Many different industries were represented, including engineering, financial,

“We are an active partner in the foundation because it supports innovation in primary education, offering teachers and students inspiration and enthusiasm needed to meet future educational demands.”

—Charlotte Ersbøll, Corporate Vice President,
Novo Nordisk

pharmaceutical, energy, and consulting. Each company donated the same amount, 100,000 Danish kroner, to a general fund. They also agreed to a three-year commitment.

The fund serves as the basis for financially supporting innovative and new approaches to teaching in the 21st century. The forum rotates specific academic subjects each year and then takes applications from schools that propose a project for the given subject. The first-year subject was science.

Posters were sent to the approximately 2,000 primary education schools in Denmark, making them aware of the project and directing them to a Web page to apply. The forum received 94 applications. From these applications, the foundation funded six grants. One of the projects enabled teachers to give Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) to their students and devise a curriculum that incorporated PDA functionality such as instant messaging and the 2007 Microsoft Office system. Another project involved using Microsoft Windows® Movie Maker to help measure fish and plant life in the North Sea.

All teachers who receive grants are required to take a two-day training course that incorporates core pillars of the Partners in Learning initiative, especially innovative teaching and ICT as well as instruction in peer coaching. Twenty-four teachers participated in the first training.

The companies involved elect members to serve on the five-person steering group. The group meets annually to elect members and choose which projects they want to fund. An External Assessment Board also participates, with six people closely connected to innovative education, including a professor from the University of Education.

Benefits

The success of the School for the Future Foundation is based on an understanding of social responsibility. The Minister of Education has been so enthused by the program that he has allowed the use of his name and office to recruit participants. “Primary education is the platform on which the rest of the educational system can be moved from the industrial society into the knowledge society,” says Mille Østerlund, Head of Office of one of the participating members, The Danish Bankers Association.

Getting private sector involved in education

Too often business and education exist in parallel worlds. With the School for the Future Foundation, business and education coexist, working together toward common goals.

In addition to the moral responsibility, businesses also get practical value from the relationship. One of the current issues within the country is the lack of qualified people to meet the demands for science-related jobs. For example, outside of the United States, The Microsoft Denmark Development Center is among the largest Microsoft Centers in the world. The country wants to fill those engineering and developer positions with Danish students. A program such as the School for the Future Foundation helps address recruitment problems by providing Danish children with the skills they need to succeed. "The School for the Future Foundation gives us the ability to contribute to lifting primary education into the 21st century," says Østerlund. "We believe that we are supporting the frontrunners in education."

The Future of School for the Future Foundation

In the future, the foundation plans on contacting more companies. Each current partner has agreed to contact three additional companies. The goal is to ultimately expand the program to upper secondary education and teacher training, exposing more students to exciting and innovative ways to teach. To this end, this year's topic will be the environment.

In addition, the foundation hopes to contribute more to teacher training. "Through the School for the Future Foundation, we can get decision makers within education to refocus on relevant and important subjects such as ICT," says Østerlund.

For more information

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