

*“The world does  
not consist of 16 subjects  
– it hangs together”*

In Kalmar, CreatLearn has not stayed within the walls of the school. Amongst other things, the 150 students have displayed their works in one photographic exhibition and one art exhibition. Short films created by the students have been shown on TV monitors at the Kalmar Art Museum and on city buses. The two schools involved chose slightly different strains for their projects, but they had one point in common: that the theme, Civil Courage would be clearly connected with the students' everyday lives.

At both schools there has been a core group of four to five teachers who have taken responsibility for CreatLearn. The goal was that the projects were to include all subjects and that it would become a part of every phase of learning, all for the purpose of introducing more creativity – using creative paths to learning and involving even more creativity in the teaching.

Another aim was to get the students to work together in groups and that the teaching would increasingly connect theory with practical experience. To be given more practical work was something that the students themselves were also positively disposed toward, getting to do something that was for real.

The basic concept was that the entire course of events would not be prearranged. Instead, the idea was for it to develop progressively and that this would happen with input from both the students and the culture experts.

**Shocking kick-off**

The teachers wanted the project to start off with a bit of a shock to the system, that it would make a strong statement of a new beginning. They planned for a kick-off that the students would not forget in a hurry. Something that they could relate to on a personal level and that would hopefully make them even more committed to the project.

What they chose was theatre.

The students were however totally unaware that it was a

*“To learn in a different way means  
thinking in a different way.”*

*/Student voice*

## SWEDEN / KALMAR

kick-off into theatre. They thought that the man standing at the front of the classroom was a consultant invited by the school leadership on account of their worries concerning the students' behaviours towards each other. The consultant (who was an actor) began to address the students, taking a strong line that blue-eyed people are better than brown-eyed people.

Now, the students were certainly challenged in the area of civil courage. Would anyone dare to protest? Initially they all sat in silence, but after a while several of them began to argue against what was being said.

When it was revealed to them that the man was only an actor, it engendered strong reactions. Some of the pupils were upset, angry and sad. The experience was dealt with in group discussions afterwards. The students were then asked to ponder on what it takes for us not to automatically say or do something that does not feel right for us, as an individual, or that goes against our own values.

### Creating film from differing perspectives

At one of the schools, Falkenbergsskolan, around fifty students in Year 9 have participated in CreatLearn. The teachers' aim was that the project would make the pupils more aware of how they treat one another, both in real life and for example in social media. The hope was that they would become better at standing up for themselves and for others.

Having had theatre as an introduction, the students then visited the local theatre for workshops over the course of two days. Amongst other things, they watched actors from Byteatern act out on stage various dilemmas relating to civil courage. The students were asked to take a stand on each scenario and were also given the task of describing similar dilemmas themselves. They not only wrote the scripts but acted them out on stage as well.

Besides Byteatern, Reaktor Sydost – a regional film resource centre – has been involved in the project as culture experts. They have been there as backup support for the film-making. The students were divided into smaller groups and together they produced nine films – all with civil courage as the theme.

The teachers say that the external help they have received from the culture experts has been essential. They also felt that the students' interest grew when they got to meet someone who really did have knowledge and experience in this field.

*“Fun to learn in a different way,  
not just sitting at your desk at school.  
Good to take some time thinking about  
for example bullying and harassment  
and to express these thoughts through  
dramatisation.”*

*/Student voices*



*“In my opinion all students need  
several ways of learning, regardless of  
whether you are doing maths or read-  
ing a book. There is creativity inherent  
in all subjects; it's just a matter of how  
you release it. The great benefit of this  
project is that schools and culture are  
connecting.”*

*/ Lotta Rautio, Art teacher at Södermöreskolan*

### What can you do with an empty box?

At the other school, Södermöreskolan, close to one hundred students in Year 9 have taken part in the project. Four of them were included in a working group together with four teachers and the school principal. The reason for this was that the school wanted to increase student influence, allowing them to have a say in the planning of the project.

During the project a string of different workshops have taken place.

One of them was the one that Falkenbergsskolan also partici-

*“The close collaboration between the schools and Byteatern in this project has been a very positive experience, as we have really been discussing and planning things together. This is the thing that is often missing. There is usually not enough time for planning and reflection, and you just end up doing a bit of film with the kids. Here we had the opportunity of connecting the work to various subjects, turning it into something significant. I also feel that through this project we have gained a good insight into and understanding of one another’s work – both schools and the culture people. There is a very big difference between coming in as a ‘cultural event’ at school and the approach where you seriously collaborate. It has been such a positive thing to feel that you’re actually working together on a project of this magnitude – teachers, students and culture experts! Everybody’s commitment has been equally important.”*

*/Ida Qvarnström, Film consultant at Reaktor Sydost*

pated in, when the students visited the theatre and had to take a stand on the various dilemmas dramatised on stage by the actors from Byteatern.

Another workshop was run by Reaktor Sydost. The students then had to make short films with the help of their mobile phones where they presented various dilemmas relating to civil courage.

The third workshop had to do with using the medium of art to illustrate civil courage. After an inspiration session the pupils were divided into smaller groups. Each group was given the task of describing and presenting civil courage in a steel cube measuring approximately one cubic metre. In February, 2013 the cubes were exhibited in the city park.



From the exhibition in the city park.

In the workshop, where these steel cubes were emerging, they used some material created by the Living History Forum called: “Play Role”. This material was also used in a workshop where the students each wrote a text dealing with the role of the spectator.

The school also worked on another project connected with CreatLearn: “Act and react – civil courage”. Here, the students made simple animated short films in little cubes. The films were of approximately two minutes’ duration and were later shown on TV monitors both at Kalmar Art Museum and on city buses.

#### **Integrating culture with the teaching**

Both schools have prior experience of working with culture, but the teachers have noticed a marked difference in comparison with earlier work. Previously, there was a tendency to look at culture as a fun distraction from everything else. And, it has not always been followed up afterwards. Each event has been treated more as an individual, free-standing activity. Such an encounter with culture can of course also have a purpose and bring great enjoyment. One way or another, culture is always meaningful, say the teachers, but it reaches greater heights

*“The world does not consist of 16 subjects, it hangs together. Therefore, we want to find new ways of working for both teachers and students. We want to depart from the mentality of compartmentalising everything and begin to approach subjects as pieces relating to the bigger picture.”*

*/Ulf Nilsson, Principal of Södermöreskolan*

when all the possibilities inherent in it are being utilised.

Unless the cultural input is integrated, the teachers are aware of the risk that it may be viewed as something that steals time from the rest of the teaching, and as a disturbance to the regular schedule. The experiences gained from CreatLearn demonstrate something totally different. The cultural experts have not only been visitors but have become a part of the students' work on a daily basis. Previously, on several occasions the activities have been planned by the culture experts themselves, but now both the planning and the work have taken place in the schools in collaboration with teachers and students.

Here, culture has its given place. And the project was a way of showing that culture is one of many ways of learning. The teachers have also expressed that culture provides an opportunity to approach a subject from a different angle. This has the potential of creating a deeper understanding, whilst it also opens up for new ways of thinking. It makes way for a greater development of the students' creative abilities and their ability to think for themselves.

**The work at the schools continues...**

The greatest difficulty, from the teachers' viewpoint has been to organise the work. Despite the fact that they have been meeting regularly with the culture experts, they still feel that they themselves have been organising the major part of the work. One positive outcome of this however is that both the teachers and the culture experts feel they have gained a greater insight into each other's worlds. This will both simplify and strengthen their cooperation in the future.

Looking ahead, the schools wish to continue their close collaboration with culture. They want to work on a plan together with the culture experts with an aim of becoming more in tune with each other in deciding what role culture will have at the school in the continuum. At one of the schools they are now for example working towards an ongoing collaboration with Byteatern and Reaktor Sydost on a project dealing with the environment and good deeds.

The teachers speak about the project as a whole as a great success. They feel that the students have been interested, motivated and involved. Since the project they have observed a maturity and new depth in their way of thinking that they have not seen as clearly before. The students have even noticed this in themselves – the project has caused them to make an inward journey.

*“A network has been created between the school teachers and us at the various cultural institutions. It's important that we continue to develop that network, so that we together – with a long-term perspective and sufficient planning time – develop ideas around how to progress in our work with the students. The role of the theatre is not primarily to deliver drama pedagogues on demand. The possibilities are much greater than that. It might for example have to do with Forum Theatre, live projects, textual work, discussions with the students about dramatics, or work related to stage productions. But the important thing is that school and culture develop this work with a focus on the students' progress and corporate creativity.”*

*/Anna-Greta Larsson, Chief Pedagogue at Byteatern*