

KED's new online base group project focuses on the five competencies of social and emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

KED

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Realizing Opportunities

No matter the size of our dreams, we have to keep realistic about the cost of realizing them. Exchanges for students and teachers are expensive. You need to pay for flight tickets, visas and other travel related budget items, even when you have a generous host family. In Sweden, it is not allowed to ask parents of individual students to pay for exchanges. And we all want this opportunity to be offered to students with the required interest and skills, regardless of financial circumstances.

Luckily, there are ways to get funded. In some cases, the school can allocate some funds from its own budget towards international projects. But to fund exchanges on a larger scale, you need external sources. In this issue, team leader Helena

Erdsjö at Kunskapsskolan Västerås outlines how they acquire the money they need to conduct yearly exchanges with their buddy school in the Netherlands. Hopefully, this will inspire you to extend your search for scholarships.

Online collaboration is a cost-effective option that KED strongly encourages. The format and content for collaboration is your choice. Perhaps you have an idea already and just need a matching base group to start off? If you want professional inspiration, Helena Berggren at the central pedagogy team in Sweden has created brand new material that is now available to everyone in our global Network.

“The KED Network underscores the universality of effective teaching methodologies and the importance of exchange in enriching educational practices,” says Simrit Kaur in her recap of hosting her Swedish teacher buddy in India earlier this year.

Talking about KED as a dream factory, do not forget to tune in KED Talk on your podcast player. There are new episodes in our series about personalizing learning around the KED Network. ■

Cecilia Aronsson
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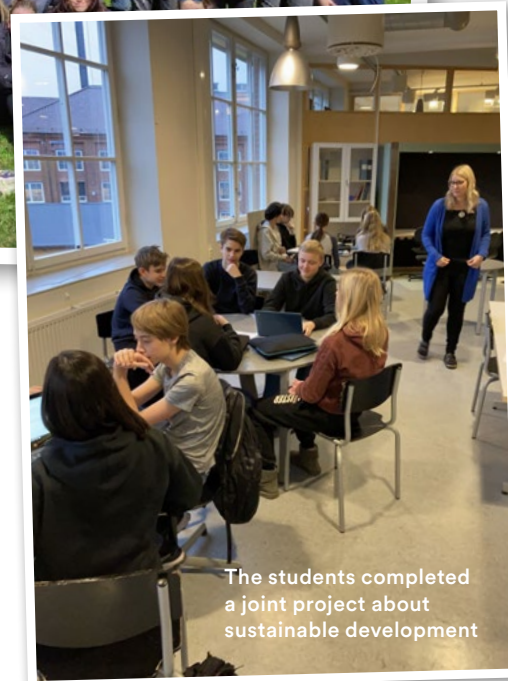
Finding Funding for KED Exchanges

Has your school thought about starting an international exchange and how to afford it? Have you heard of Erasmus+? As the first Swedish KED school ever, Kunskapsskolan Västerås has now obtained Erasmus+ accreditation. This means that we receive funds from the EU for seven consecutive years so that we can conduct international exchanges. It contributes to ensuring that all students, regardless of financial circumstances, can come along if they wish, which is part of the program's principles. As a school, you can get a lot of money to cover the traveling and activity costs associated with student exchanges.

It was by pure coincidence that we were contacted by Kunskapsskolan partner school Van Kinsbergen college in the Netherlands a few years ago. Van Kinsbergen college also holds an Erasmus+ accreditation to finance their student exchanges, and they suggested a mutual exchange between our schools.



Curious as we were, we of course agreed. Running projects within Erasmus+ means applying for funds from the EU. It is quite an extensive applica-



tion with many guidelines. Most important is that you work and adhere to the four basic principles of the European program: inclusion and diversity, green sustainability, digital transformation and working for an active EU citizenship. Since we were novices at this, we first applied for a short-term project that was started, implemented and finished within 15 months.

When we started the collaboration in 2021, we were still living with pandemic restrictions so we planned a project to be conducted mostly outdoors. Our Dutch buddies were overjoyed that they would get to camp and experience Swedish outdoor life. We chose to include everyone in Year 8. To start off, they had digital meetings with the Dutch students on different themes. Among other things, they had



Van Kinsbergen college and Kunskapsskolan Västerås have established a long-term exchange project financed by the EU



Erasmus+ exchange students encounter new eating habits



Swedish midsummer celebrations when the Dutch buddies visited Västerås

to present their cities and discuss the differences and similarities of going to school during a pandemic and how they experienced the increasing digitization. When the visitors arrived here by bus in spring, all Year 8 students were involved and we carried out cultural exchange by celebrating midsummer and playing Swedish games and sports. We went hiking and canoeing and witnessed the importance of taking care of our nature.

When it was time for us to reciprocate the exchange after summer, we brought 30 students by bus from Västerås to Elburg, where Van Kinsbergen college is located. Our students applied to participate by submitting a short video. As it turned out, all of those who applied were admitted. In the Netherlands, our students stayed in host families with students they had met earlier in the year. Our main theme was sustainable development, focusing on water. We were given lectures about how the Netherlands has worked over the years to prevent floods by digging ditches, canals and dams. We visited Deltawerken (the great Delta Works) where we got to see a living example of this engineering art. In Amsterdam we learned how important the canals have been and still are to the city.

What did our students gain apart from this? We saw up close how our students grew and became more confident in English. They made new friends in another country with whom they continued to keep in touch. For many, this trip was their first without their parents and they were nervous beforehand. However, they noticed that they managed without their parents and they also got to know their fellow classmates better. This trip truly became a memory for life.

Here are some student voices:

“I feel satisfied that I managed it myself, because I usually never travel without my parents. I realized that I tend to overthink situations and worry too much. But thanks to my friends, I dared.”

“It was fun to stay with a host family. Everyone should try it!”

“It was a lot of fun and I learned a lot. For example, they have a completely different system in school with various degrees you can enter according to skills, etc. It was also interesting when they told us more about their politics and what is going on in their society. It was never stiff and I felt welcome. I learned that I’m actually more extroverted than I thought and I dared to go outside my comfort zone and talk to new people. I also had time to myself and slept very well, I would definitely stay there again.”

“It was a learning experience to stay in a host family. The food culture was different from Sweden. People ate more sweets and less real meals. It was common to have chocolate sprinkles on the sandwiches. I didn’t find it difficult to be away from my parents, I called them almost every night, but it was fine to be without them.”

We received very good feedback from both students and parents, which encourages us to continue our exchange with Van Kinsbergen college. Therefore, we applied for a full accreditation from Erasmus+, which means that we can run the project for several years.

The positive feedback also generates a lot of enthusiasm for the exchange, so now we have many students who want to participate when they reach Year 8. As a school, this allows us to be at the forefront of our sustainability and internationalization work. But above all, we create memories and friendships for life!

Helena Erdsjö
Team Leader, Kunskapsskolan
Västerås

Helena Berggren, project leader at Kunskapsskolan Sweden HQ

Global Exposure for Base Groups

To help students learn the skills selected for the KED Program and apply them in a real setting, KED has developed a format called KED Skills Buddies. Last year's round of the project focused on sustainability and involved four schools in Sweden (KS Uppsala Norra, KS Gävle, KS Borlänge and KS Trelleborg), matching them with equally many base groups in similar grades in India (KKG, KI, KKL and KKB). The evaluation indicated that students were highly satisfied with the project.

Based on the previous round, KED has developed a new project theme for KED Skills Buddies, in collaboration with the Swedish pedagogy team. Helena Berggren is the chief creator of the new framework that focuses on social and emotional learning (SEL), in line with KED's global priorities.

Helena, please briefly outline the content of the new online base group project:
 "There is detailed content for five base group sessions, including online

meetings with a peer group in India or Sweden. In mixed smaller groups, the students will choose a dilemma to explore throughout the week. In their base groups, they will discuss and practice abilities like connecting with your feelings, empathetic listening and conscious and responsible decision making."

"Social and emotional learning is a perfect theory and toolbox to incorporate in KED schools."

What is the point of connecting base groups in different countries to do this exercise?

"It is a unique opportunity for our students to interact with peers in another part of the world. The evaluation by participating students last year shows how

thrilling and eye opening this can be. It was one of the most exciting school projects they'd been part of."

Why did you choose SEL as the new theme for collaboration?

"In the KED Program, we want our students to achieve high academic results and good strategies for learning. In addition, we want to empower them with resilience, empathy and skills to make responsible and caring decisions for themselves and others. Social and emotional learning focuses exactly on this, and is therefore a perfect theory and toolbox to incorporate in KED schools."

What do you hope that students will learn from working with this new format?

"I hope that they really take the opportunity to listen and learn from each other, realizing that although we live far apart, we have so much in common. I also hope that working with SEL can provide more insight about what's important for living a richer and healthier

life, as well as a deeper understanding of concepts like responsibility, choice, kindness and empathy. Last but not least, I hope that they will have a lot of fun during the process.”

The base groups are paired up and work together on the set project framework for one week during their daily base group sessions. Their work and presentations are shared between the base groups in both countries. The new framework will include additional modules that can be used by schools that wish to extend collaboration.

This way, students practice all the six skills distinctive of the KED Program; ‘Learn to learn’, ‘Cooperate’, ‘Act globally’, ‘Take action’, ‘Be innovative’ and ‘Live digitally’. The project feeds into the KED certificates given to students at Kunskapsskolan India as proof of their exposure to global citizenship.

Eva Reichberg is in charge of the base group project at Kunskapsskolan Uppsala Norra in Sweden. In the previous round, they collaborated with Kunskapsskolan Lucknow around sustainability, and in May this year they will connect with Kunskapsskolan International to explore social and emotional learning together.

Hello Eva, you recently completed this base group online project with your students in Year 7. How was it?

“It was very interesting and the students were very serious about their approach to the task given. The students took pride in making the conversations exciting by asking questions to each other. They were all very curious about how the other students live their lives and how the school works in their countries. Some groups did not want to stop chatting and they wanted to get back in touch.”



Eco-wizard 2

My name is Daksh Sethi
One thing to know about me is that I love to play football!
My photos show my outdoor school environment of our school.

Learn to learn
Reflection
Strategic
Self-awareness

Cooperate
Communication
Team work
Management

Take action
Planning
Implementation
Responsibility

Be innovative
Creativity
Problem solving

Live digitally
Digital citizenship
Digital use
Digital ethics

Session 1: Self-management
Session 2: Self-awareness
Session 3: Social awareness
Session 4: Making responsible decisions
Session 5: Relationship skills

Session 5: Relationship skills

The new format for online base group collaboration focuses on social and emotional learning (SEL), in line with KED’s global priorities.

Reacting is an instinctive, emotional response to a situation. It’s often impulsive and influenced by our past experiences or fears. Responding, on the other hand, is a thoughtful and deliberate action. It involves considering the situation, weighing the options, and making a conscious decision.

What did your students learn from it?

“They learned that although we live different lives in some aspects, we are very much alike in others!”

Why do you think that other work teams in Year 7 should introduce this project to their base groups?

“I think we must never underestimate the power of communication, to learn from and understand each other. To have this opportunity to meet is a wonderful thing and it gives hope for a better future for everyone, if we stop and listen to each other. It is warm and wonderful to meet people like ourselves, in a school like our school, but somewhere far away on Earth.”

Based on your experience of collaborating with a base group in India, what advice would you like to give others who try this?

“Do not hesitate if the chance is given, go for it! Make sure your work team works together to make it possible, because the more united you are, the better it will work! The result is worth the work input and it gives you an experience of a lifetime.”

If you are interested in trying the base group project with your students and school, please contact Cecilia Aronsson or Helena Berggren to get you matched and equipped to get going. ■

Cecilia Aronsson
Network Director

The Friendship Route to Learning

Let me take you on an incredible journey of hosting Andreas Wallin from Kunskapsskolan Nacka, Sweden, as part of our KED Team Lead Exchange Program this year. Our connection began through virtual meetings, where we discovered our partnership and shared excitement for Andreas's upcoming visit to India.

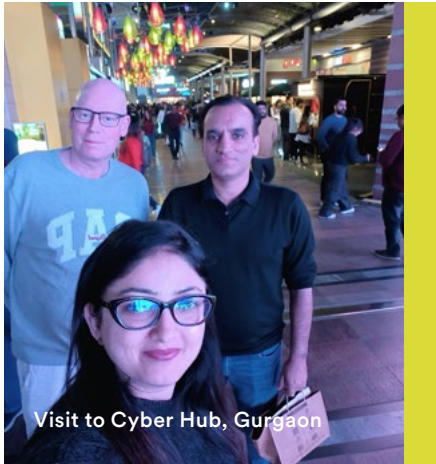
Knowing this was Andreas's first time venturing beyond European borders,

I asked him about his openness to trying Indian cuisine and spices, to which he expressed keen interest.

The moment finally arrived when I welcomed Andreas at Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi, accompanied by my husband. Despite the evident fatigue from his journey, Andreas's excitement was palpable. His joy upon savoring Punjabi parathas for breakfast on his first day and his

curiosity about the recipes set the tone for our time together. Despite battling jet lag, Andreas and I navigated through his first day in India with a relaxed itinerary. We opted for an evening visit to Cyber Hub, Gurgaon, known for its vibrant food and beverage scene. As we indulged in delicious Indian cuisine and explored the area, Andreas could not contain his happiness at being in India.





Visit to Cyber Hub, Gurgaon

During Andreas's one-week stay, we embarked on an inspiring project centered on the theme "quality starts with good relationships". Together, we explored how fostering strong bonds among staff and students can lead to exceptional outcomes in student development and learning environments. A comprehensive plan for all his observations was crafted by me to facilitate Andreas in engaging in classroom observations, personal coaching sessions, and interviews with students, teachers, and school leaders. This ensured that he gained valuable insights into our educational ethos and practices.



Dinner with global colleagues

Moreover, our everyday conversations and discussions played a crucial role in deepening our understanding of each other's school culture. It was fascinating to learn how, despite living in different countries, we are able to implement and follow the same pedagogy to help students achieve their goals through personalized learning. The KED Network underscores the universality of effective teaching methodologies and the importance of exchange in enriching educational practices.

where he immersed himself in meaningful discussions about Indian culture and traditions.

On his last day, we embarked on a memorable road trip to Taj Mahal in Agra. The awe-inspiring beauty of the monument, coupled with its profound historical significance, left an everlasting impression on us. Lifelong memories that we will cherish forever.



Meeting with Kunskapsskolan India CEO Sunitha Nambiar and Kunskapsskolan International Head of School Rupa Chauhan

Our everyday travels to school were filled with excitement for Andreas, who found joy in spotting cows on Gurgaon roads. Despite busy days at school, evenings were reserved for exploring local attractions and indulging in Indian street food, giving Andreas a glimpse into the vibrant mosaic of Indian culture.

Andreas's deep interest in experiencing India led us to plan a visit to Old Delhi, where he had the opportunity to travel by metro and explore historical landmarks such as the Red Fort. Additionally, Andreas relished Indian hospitality during his visit to my colleague's home,

Hosting Andreas at my home for a week was an enriching experience, made even more special by his kind words of appreciation. His humility and openness to new experiences were truly commendable, as he wholeheartedly embraced every aspect of his visit, from the food to the cultural immersion. Looking ahead, I eagerly anticipate my upcoming visit to Sweden in May. It will be a wonderful opportunity to reunite with Andreas, continue our exchange, finalize our project, and have the pleasure of meeting Andreas's family. I am excited to further strengthen our bond and deepen our understanding of the world.

Simrit Kaur

Digital Team Lead, Kunskapsskolan International

Embracing Innovation – Empowering Learning

The KED Teacher Exchange Program also includes cultural interaction.

This is my first year teaching at Nün Academy Kunskapsskolan, Jeddah. My role here is Director of Educational Technology, and I also teach Computer Science to students in Year 7-9. Joining the school brought with it great anticipation and the opportunity to learn about the innovative KED Program, which was entirely new to me. Since I was a base group teacher for Year 7 in my first semester, I gained preliminary information about applications and the KED approach. After a couple of months, a survey was shared

about the KED Teacher Exchange Program, and I filled it out. Luckily, I was chosen to participate in this valuable program.

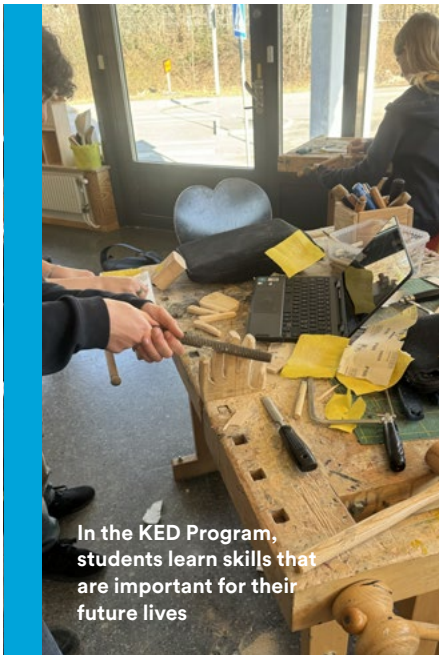
The exchange journey began with a visit from Markus Sirkka, a dedicated English teacher from Kunskapsskolan Fruängen in Sweden. During Markus's visit, he mainly focused on seeing differences and similarities in teaching English while my research question was focused on exploring the effective use of digital tools, particularly the digital logbook, at

Kunskapsskolan Fruängen and how to utilize and integrate a digital logbook effectively at Nün Academy.

I arrived in Stockholm on Friday afternoon, and a taxi driver was waiting for me to take me to the hotel. I was fortunate to have a two-day weekend to explore the city. On Friday evening, Markus took me to a good Turkish restaurant. On Saturday, we spent time at his amazing house, which is located close to the forest. This was quite different from Jeddah, as we do not have as many

green spaces or such forests. However, we do have beautiful expansive deserts, and when the weather is good we also go for barbecues and hikes.

In Saudi Arabia, we work on Sundays, but it was the weekend in Sweden, so we had the chance to spend time in the Old Town (Gamla Stan). We started with a visit to the Nobel Museum, followed by the Parliament building, various palaces, and museums. A boat trip to the Vasa Museum was a highlight, showcasing a massive ship and offering insights into maritime history. A leisurely walk back to my hotel from Gamla Stan in



In the KED Program, students learn skills that are important for their future lives

the evening allowed me to see the city illuminated beautifully. It was a lovely weekend after a long flight before starting our workdays.

The excitement on Monday was notable as I made my way to Kunskapsskolan Fruängen via metro. Students headed to their classrooms directly unlike our school, where we have gatherings or



Exploring Swedish wildlife together with a local teacher provides food for thought

national anthem ceremonies in the morning. I found that the students have different times for coaching sessions at Kunskapsskolan Fruängen, so they might start school at different times. Some students go directly to their classrooms to wait for their base group teachers. During the base group session, students choose their workshops via the Learning Portal. The base group coach shares information about the day and guides students in choosing workshops according to their needs. Before the base group session is over, there is a special box to collect and keep students' phones.

I had the chance to attend many base group sessions, coaching sessions, workshops, and lessons, allowing me to meet other teachers and learn about the use of the digital logbook. Some subjects in the Swedish curriculum are similar to after-school club activities in my school, such as woodcraft, home economics, and handicrafts. In home-economics lessons, students learn how to cook, wash clothes, manage their home

budget, and more. The woodcraft class helps students develop their creativity and improve their manual dexterity. I believe such skills are extremely important for their future lives.

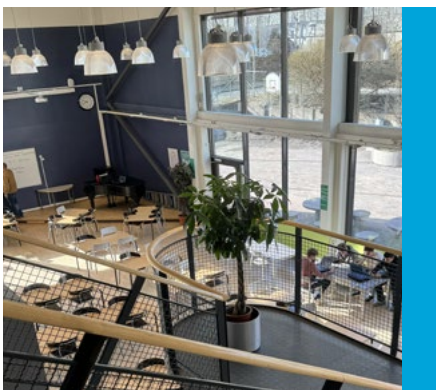
During my time at Kunskapsskolan Fruängen, I also had a chance to see their exam days. It gave me many new ideas that we can implement in Jeddah. Especially the app used for the exams that is a very useful solution for all schools equipped with Chromebooks. I will definitely introduce this to my colleagues, as I organize and manage ongoing training, workshops, and Q&A sessions for them about digital tools.

I noticed that Chromebooks and the Learning Portal are a central hub for both teachers and students at Swedish KED schools, collecting all KED tools such as the digital logbook, personal timetable, and resources for learning. It is not realistic to use the Portal in the same way in Saudi Arabia, since there are core differences in the curriculum. However, we can replace the physical logbook with a digital one. Additionally,



Murat Okal from Nün Academy Kunskapsskolan, Jeddah recently completed his teacher exchange at Kunskapsskolan Fruängen in Sweden

Aspect	Nün Academy Kunskapsskolan	Kunskapsskolan Fruängen
School Timing	Uniform timing for all students	Some students arrive early for coaching sessions
Timetable	Uniform timetable for all year levels	Individualized timetable based on workshop choices
National Anthem	Played every morning before lessons start	There is no gathering before the lessons
Coaching Sessions	15-minute coaching sessions are conducted by pulling students out of specific lessons	Specific 15-minute sessions based on the individual timetable
Lunch	Students bring their lunches	School provides lunch
Duties for Kids	Assigned duties during lesson time	Ensuring the cafeteria is tidy and sanitary after lunch service
Uniform	There is a uniform policy	No school uniform
Phones	Students are not allowed to bring phones	Phones are allowed but must be submitted during the morning base group session
Logbook	Physical textbooks	Digital platform
Workshops	Embedded within lessons	Workshops have different timings based on student choice
Duties for Teachers	Duties during break times at specific locations	No assigned duty areas for teachers
Computer Science	CS Year 7-10	CS/ICT integrated within other lessons



all our digital resources, websites, apps, and other tools could potentially be accessed through the Portal along with the digital logbook and personal timetables.

Since we are part of the same KED Network, we have many goals and teaching approaches in common, but due to the cultural, geographical, and curricular diversity there are some different routines. My observations are shown in the table.

Even so, the same dedication to providing students with an amazing education shines brightly. I thank my host and Kunskapsskolan Fruängen for all their effort and support to make this journey an unforgettable experience. ■

Murat Okal

Director of Educational Technology,
Computer Science Teacher, Nün
Academy Kunskapsskolan, Jeddah

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