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What has Norway done to improve students' reading skills and reading engagement?



A short presentation of the Norwegian school system

- Publicly funded comprehensive school system
- No selecting, streaming or tracking of students during primary (1st to 7th) and lower secondary school years (8th to 10th)
- Upper secondary programs (11th to 13th)
 - 3 academic and 10 vocational programs
 - Drop-out rate is 25 – 30 percent, and the majority are boys with reading problems are on vocational programs

Reading instruction in Norway

- The "first" reading instruction = beginner instruction
 - Before 2006: "Wait for the child to mature"
 - After 2006: Early intervention and diagnostic testing of all children in their 1st, 2nd and 3rd year
- The "second" reading instruction = reading instruction in all subjects throughout school
 - Inspired by the PIRLS and PISA reading frameworks

The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

- PISA was created in 1997, the first assessment took place in 2000, 32 countries participated.
- 15-year-olds are tested in Reading Literacy, Mathematical Literacy and Scientific Literacy every three years.

“Achievement in reading literacy is not only a foundation for achievement in other subject areas, but also essential for successful participation in most areas of adult life. The ability to access, understand and reflect on all kinds of information is essential if individuals are to be able to participate fully in our knowledge-based society. The meaning of knowing has shifted from being able to remember information, to being able to find and use it. (OECD 2009).

Reading literacy skills

“Reading literacy skills must include finding, selecting, interpreting and evaluating information from the full range of texts associated with situations that reach beyond the classroom.” (OECD 2010)

The definition of Reading Literacy in PISA

“Reading literacy is understanding, using, reflecting on and engaging with written texts, in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate in society.” (OECD 2009)

Text types and text formats in PISA

- Text formats: continuous and non-continuous (lists, forms, graphs, diagrams)
- Texts types: argumentative, injunctive, descriptive, narrative and expository

The Norwegian PISA results in 2000

- Average achievement scores compared to the OECD mean in all three domains
- A high spread in student achievement in reading
- Large gender differences favouring girls in reading
- Large gender differences favouring girls in reading engagement
- High correlation (0,41) between reading scores and reading engagement

White Paper from the Norwegian Ministry of Education:

“(...) having poor basic skills from primary and lower secondary school is one of the primary reasons for dropping out of upper secondary education, which in turn prevents one from attaining vocational competence or qualifying for higher education. Without completing upper secondary education the probability of poverty and marginalization increase drastically.

Make room for reading!

- A strategy designed and initiated by the Ministry of Education and Research in 2003 and completed in 2007
- The main objectives for *Make Room for Reading!*:
 - To improve reading skills and motivate children and adolescents to read more
 - To improve teachers' skills in teaching reading, provide literature, and use of school libraries
 - To increase the Norwegian society's awareness of reading as basis for learning, cultural skills, quality of life, participation in working life, and valuing democracy
- 876 projects, mainly in primary and lower secondary school, many of them focused particularly on boys

National reading tests

- In 2002 national experts (i.e. researchers, teachers, teacher educators) representing reading, writing, mathematics and English were called by the Ministry of Education and Research to develop national tests for grades 4, 7, 10 and 11.
- Among the reading experts were researchers who had been involved with PISA and PIRLS in Norway.

The Knowledge Promotion Reform

Five basic skills across subjects, throughout primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and training:

- *Oral skills*
- *Writing skills*
- *Reading skills*
- *Mathematics skills*
- *Digital skills*

*

The basic skills are integrated in the competence aims for each school subject

Reading as a basic skill

The PISA aspects of reading are visible in every subject

Natural science:

*“Being able to read in the natural science subject means **collecting information, interpreting and reflecting on** the content of natural science texts, brochures, newspapers, books and information on the internet. Reading in the natural science subject also includes reading manuals, recipes, tables, various graphs and symbols.”*

... and in social studies

*Being able to read in social studies means to read, **examine**, **interpret** and **reflect** on factual prose texts and fiction containing increasing levels of difficulty in order to experience contact with other periods, places and people. Being able to read also means processing and using varied information from images, film, drawings, graphs, tables, globes and maps. To understand and participate actively in the society we live in, it is also necessary to be able to read and **collect information** from reference books, newspapers and the internet, and to **assess this information critically**.*

The national reading tests for grades 5, 8 and 9 are based on reading as a basic skill across curriculum

- 8 – 10 texts in different formats and genres representing different school subjects (narrative, argumentative, descriptive and expository texts)
- The selection of texts reflects the competence goals in the national curriculum
- 3 main aspects of reading:
 - retrieve information
 - understand and interpret
 - reflect on form or content

National reading test 8th grade, 2009

8 authentic texts (school subject in parenthesis):

- News graphic (Science)
- Extract from a novel (Norwegian, Religion/Ethics)
- News article about altitude sickness (PE, Science)
- Cartoon/comic (Norwegian)
- Book reviews (Norwegian)
- Time table for a ferry along the coast of Norway (Geography, Mathematics)
- A new kind of environmentally friendly chewing gum (Science, social science)
- Students' opinions (blogs) about the age limit to vote (Social science)

Haiangrep

I gjennomsnitt dør fire mennesker av haiangrep verden over hvert år.
I det samme tidsrommet dreper fiskere omkring 40 millioner haier.

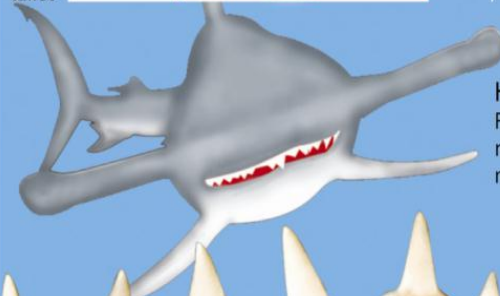
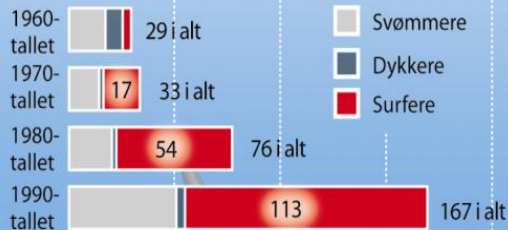
Angrep verden over i 2006



Svartstripet hai
Vanlig langs
Florida-kysten.
Mørk hale
og finner



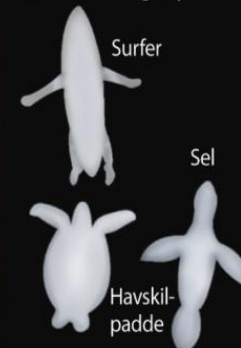
Surfere mest sårbare for angrep



Hammerhai
Flere arter, hvorav
noen kan angripe
mennesker

Hva haier ser

Mennesker ligner på
haienes naturlige bytte



Høsten 2009 holdt presidenten i USA, Barack Obama, en tale ved Wakefield High School i Arlington. Talen ble sendt på radio til hele USA. Bruk teksten når du svarer på oppgavene som kommer etterpå.

Tilbake til skolebenken



«Hei, alle sammen! Hvordan har dere det i dag? Jeg er her sammen med elever fra Wakefield High School i Arlington, i delstaten Virginia. Med oss på radio har vi elever fra hele Amerika, fra barnehagen opp til tolvteklasse. Jeg er glad for at dere alle sammen kan være med meg i dag.

Jeg vet at for mange av dere er denne dagen første skoledag. Og dere som har startet i en ny klasse eller på en ny skole, er kanskje litt nervøse. Jeg ser for meg at det er mange eldre elever der ute som akkurat nå er godt fornøyde, fordi de bare har ett år igjen på skolebenken. Uansett hvilken klasse dere går i, finnes det noen som skulle ønske at det fortsatt var sommer og at de kunne ligge bare litt lenger i senga denne morgenen.

Jeg kjenner den følelsen. Da jeg var ung, bodde familien min noen år i Indonesia, og moren min hadde ikke penger til å sende meg til den skolen der alle de amerikanske barna gikk. Hun bestemte seg for å gi meg ekstratimer selv, fra mandag til fredag – klokka 04.30 på morgenvisten. Jeg var ikke altfor glad for å stå opp så tidlig. Mange ganger sovnet jeg ved kjøkkenbordet. Men hver gang jeg klagde, sendte moren min meg et av blikkene sine og sa: «Dette er ingen dans på roser for meg heller, gutten min.» Så jeg vet at noen av dere fortsatt prøver å omstille dere til skolehverdagen.

Jeg er her fordi jeg har noe viktig jeg vil diskutere med dere. Jeg er her fordi jeg vil snakke med dere om utdanning og om hva som forventes av dere alle sammen i dette skoleåret.

Proficiency levels

- The results are presented in terms of three (5th grade) or five (8th grade) proficiency levels.
- For each level, general descriptions of students reading skills are given.
- There is guidance material available for teachers to use, both with regard to the implementation of the test and the use of the results.

Level 1

Retrieve

- Take account of a single criterion to locate an independent piece of explicitly stated information

Interpret

- Recognise the main theme in a text about a familiar topic, when the required information in the text is prominent.

Reflect

- Make a simple connection between information in the text and everyday knowledge to state a personal opinion.

Level 5

Retrieve

- Locate and combine multiple pieces of deeply embedded information, and infer which information in the text is relevant to the task. Deal with extensive competing information.

Interpret

- Deal with ambiguities, ideas that are contrary to expectation and ideas that are negatively worded.

Reflect

- Critically evaluate or hypothesise, drawing on formal, public or less common knowledge. Show accurate understanding of long or complex texts.

What students on different levels can do to improve their reading skills

Level 1

The text must be short and simple, and the student must be familiar with its form and content. The theme must be of interest for the student. Students can practice

- retrieving important information which is clearly presented or is centrally placed in the text, i.e. an explicitly expressed feature of the main character of a story, a clearly expressed opinion, or figures that are visible and easy to find.
- understanding the main storyline or theme in a text, i.e. the most important incident or the main argument.
- understanding arguments or information that are simply clearly presented, and then presenting personal views.

Level 5

The text may be long or complex, the student may be unfamiliar with the format and the content, and the text may contain advanced language. The student can:

- combine multiple pieces of deeply embedded information in different texts with different format, and retrieve the information that is relevant for the certain task. For example an instruction or a recipe where a combination of information from illustrations, lists, and text boxes is necessary.
- Show that he or she understands indirect and ambiguous presentations, for example use of irony, sarcasms or negations. Explain events that are the opposite of the expected, for example in old texts, from distant places or milieus.
- Recognise supportive and non-supportive arguments in argumentative texts.
- Take a critical stance towards style, tone or lay-out in texts, and decide whether the text is trustworthy or not.
- Put forward hypothesis to explain the background of an event or a persons non-expected behaviour.

After the test

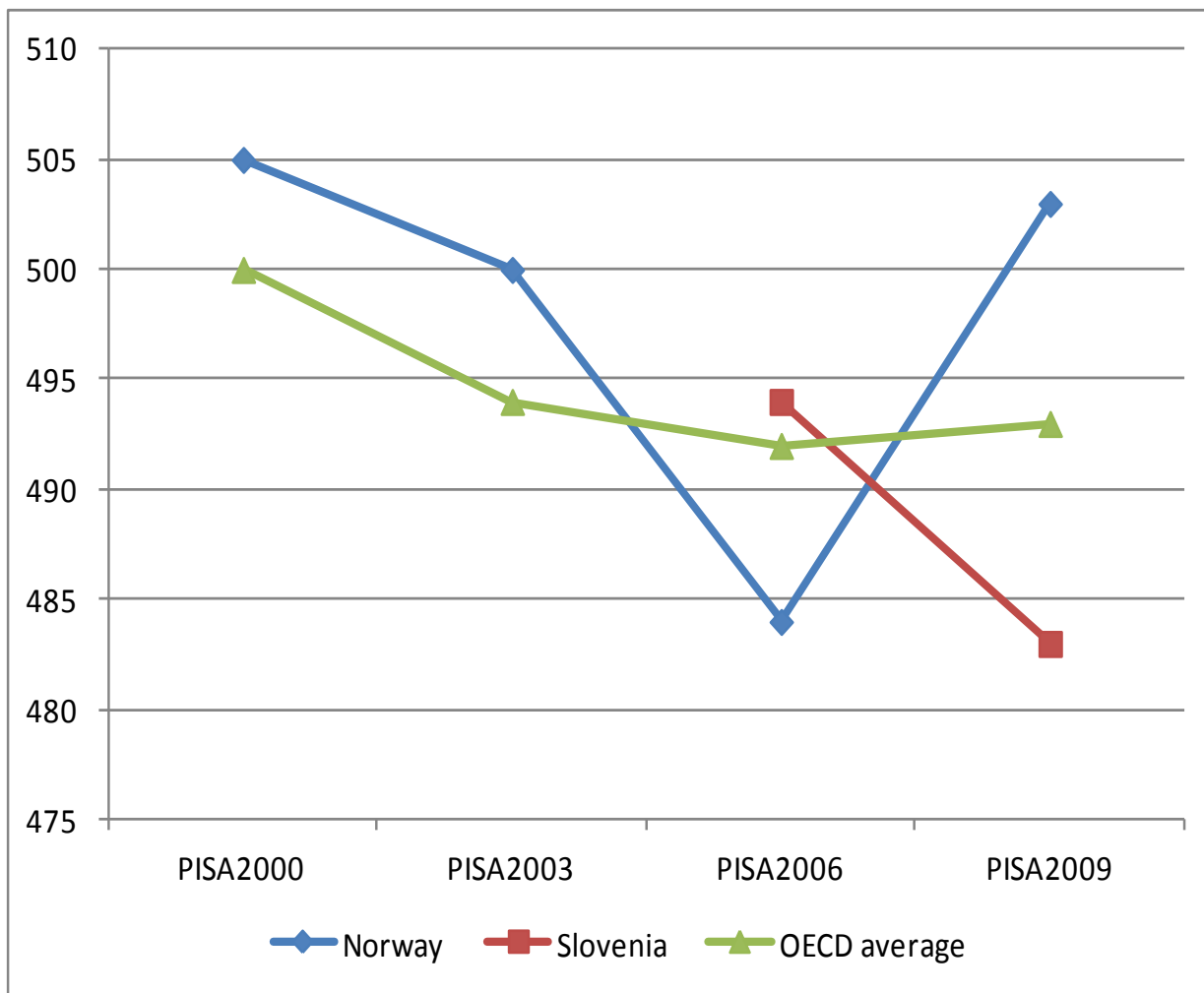
- Study every individual student's results item by item, especially the items where the student has failed.
- Find out whether the students in your class have more problems with texts related to certain subjects, text types or item formats than others.
- When students are not credited, the reason may be that they
 - Have not understood the question
 - Have not understood the text
 - Have not reached the question
 - Have not tried to answer
 - Have just guessed what was right (multiple choice)
- Go through the test with the students, explain to them what characterises the different texts (genre, form, text type) and what the different questions are measuring (retrieve, interpret, reflect).
- Show the students where the line between credited and non-credited answers to open ended questions goes, give examples.
- Go through the different distractors of the multiple choice items and explain why they are wrong and why the key has to be the correct answer
- Let students try to construct multiple choice items themselves.

Reading tests can give important and valuable information to teachers, if they are of high quality, and if teachers understand how reading is assessed in the test, and how the results can be used.

The impact of the national efforts

- Reading instruction with early intervention
- Schools have reading supervisors
- Reading strategies are focused in all subjects in lower secondary school
- Reading programs with focus on engagement and assessment of reading
- Awareness of the importance of reading instruction in upper secondary school

PISA 2000 - 2009



Classroom research

- A research project based on problematic PISA findings in Norway was carried out in 2005
- Comprehensive video study from 6 classrooms over three weeks
- No reading instruction was observed, and teachers had vague perceptions of what reading instruction on this level was

Many boys do not see themselves as "readers":

I: Do you read on the Internet?

S: *What do you mean?*

I: Do you use the Internet?

S: *Yes, but not for reading.*

I: What do you use it for, then?

S: *Anything, really, looking at newspapers perhaps..*

I: Oh, but then you have to read, don't you?

S: *Yes...*

I: When you enter a web page it is hard to avoid reading, isn't it?

S: *Yes, of course.*

I: So maybe you read more than you are aware of?

S: *Yes, you do, but I don't enter an Internet page to read.*

I: But once you open a web site, you must read something?

S: *Yes, yes...one does. You have to read once you start the computer, because you have to write something...*

Metacognitive awareness

S: Sometimes I read, and at the same time I think about something else.

I: How far can you read before you become aware of that?

S: It can take long.

I: What do you do when you realise that you think about something else?

S: I close the book and think that I have read it

Students agree that it is important to be a good reader

Yes, you have to, you read all the time, it is something you need out there ... there are signs and maps and – well – when you start upper secondary school, you have to be able to read and understand what you read, so... Even if we have advanced technology, I don't think someone can read for you, and then you just understand somehow. They invent more and more all the time, so you just have to read more and more to learn what they have found out, so...