



Ungdomsskoleforeningen

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# **YOUTH SCHOOLS IN DENMARK**

- an information booklet



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The Organization of Danish Youth Schools is a nationwide organization for all Danish municipal youth schools and aims to promote the development of the youth school area in harmony with society's demands and young people's needs and interests.

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# The Danish Youth School develop skills

It's great to be young. But it's not always easy. Young people do not only need to sort themselves out but also each other. They must develop their skills, be educated and prepare for a good adult life.

Denmark has a goal that as many young people as possible achieve a qualifying youth education program that provides access to further education or employment. But not all young people are ready for education or training, whether it may be due to academic, personal or social reasons. Not everyone manages to walk the straight path.

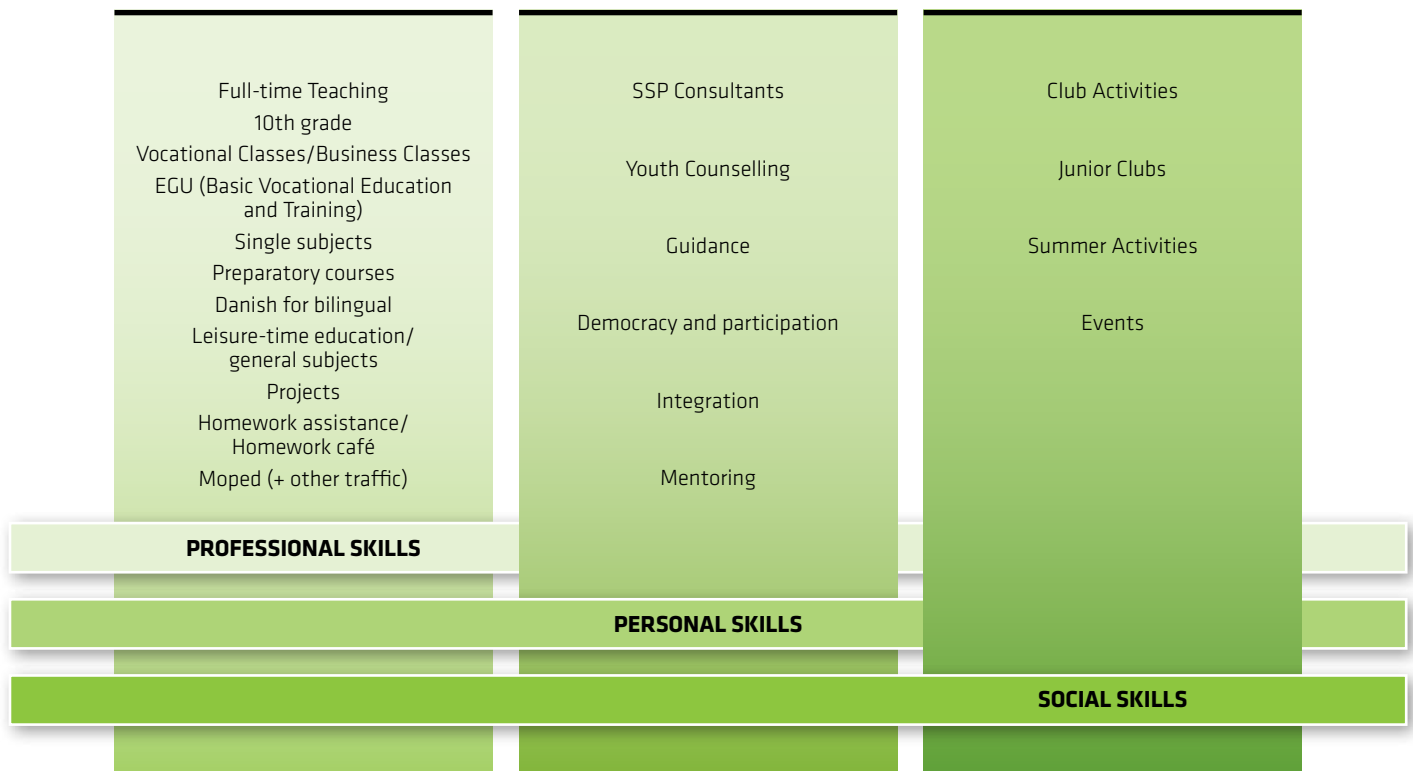
This is the reason why new initiatives and training offers are needed, depending on local and national priorities. This requires a

dynamic, energetic, cooperative and visionary organization that understands how to unite young people's wants and needs with society's overall objectives.

With its roots in popular education, its special pedagogical principles, the flexible framework law and the free choice of teachers, the municipal youth school is a major player in efforts to ensure young people a youth education and a good life. The youth school is helping young people's academic, personal and social skills and support their learning readiness so that as many as possible is able to complete primary school and start a youth education. At the same time it forms the framework for a safe community and an active and stimulating leisure time.

## Youth School's mission statement:

"The Youth School is to give young people the opportunity to deepen their knowledge, give them the understanding of and perfect them to society life and additionally contribute to give their lives an increased content and develop their interest and ability to participate actively in a democratic society".



# Education

**95%** of young people must complete a qualifying youth education so that they are better prepared for further and higher education and future employment. This is the concrete political objective that is based on many years of broad consensus that as many as possible should have an education.

But not all young people are academically, socially or personally prepared to start on or complete an education. Therefore it is

necessary to have a thorough and focused effort from all actors and educational institutions. This also applies to the Youth School which gladly assumes its share of responsibility for achieving the objective in close cooperation with general and vocational upper secondary education and Municipal Youth Guidance Centers.

Youth school currently offers a wide range of educational activities depending on local needs and political aspirations. Some offers

are targeted at young people, who need a different approach to learning than they encounter in the mainstream school system. Other offers help the youth in the transition between primary and upper secondary education.

Common is that the Youth School serves as a kind of educational laboratory where you can experiment with and initiate the necessary new ways and methods.

# Full-time Teaching

**Y**oung people who have a hard time in Primary and Lower Secondary Education or otherwise need an alternative may benefit from specially designed programmes in the youth schools' full-time teaching.

The name does not solely refer to the fact that the teaching is full-time, but to section 33 sub section 3 of the Danish Primary Education Act on another way to fulfill compulsory education in the upper level programme. Youth school full-time teaching must be able to match with the teaching in primary and lower secondary education. However, the method is free and not bound by class level and lessons, and there is a free choice of teachers. It provides a flexible opportunity to build on the individual pupil's needs and interests and involve practical instruction in e.g. workshops and kitchen, practical training in business life and transitions programmes.

When young people are enrolled in full time teaching, it is not uncommon that they are at a level several classes below their age academically speaking. Many also have a rough schooling with many shifts, periods without education and poor parental support behind them. In addition they have personal or social

problems, including actual diagnoses.

Hereby teaching is not only about closing the academic gaps, but is also about the development of personal skills and life mastery. These young people must learn to form social relationships and know general norms, why e.g. table manners, general education and conflict resolution can be used in many schools' offer.

Full-time teaching offers the central school subjects: Always Danish and mathematics, often English and sometimes social science and biology. Moreover creative courses and workshop teaching, whether it comes to repairing bicycles or maintain recreational equipment such as canoes and kayaks.

The goal is to finish the Leaving Examination of the Danish Folkeskole and to get young people further in upper secondary education or a job.

In recognition of the target group's challenges and conditions, several schools have affiliated mentors or other forms of protection, which aims at helping young people on track when they leave full-time education.

## Young people must be able to ...

Haderslev Youth School full-time teaching has organized a series of courses under the title: Young people must be able ... The goal is to provide young people with social tools for situations in which it is generally expected that adolescents at 14-16 years old master or want to be part of in an ordinary adolescence.

One of the courses is called "Dinner for two." The task is to plan and implement a date for two with dinner for a fixed amount of money. During the course the pupil is taught topics such as keeping the budget (mathematics), cooking and table settings (home economics), nutrition (biology), conversation during a date (Danish) - and more generally applicable rules for a date such as personal boundaries and hygiene both personal and in the home.



“It is better to go to the Aktivskole. In Primary School it was too hard to have that much theoretical instruction. At the end of the day I couldn’t concentrate at all. Often I just sat and starred and did nothing. In the Aktivskole I have much more workshop teaching. It means that I can concentrate better when I have to learn something. And then I have had the opportunity to try many different things in the workshop. This means that I am now more confident in my choice of education. I want to be a mechanic and then a fireman. I’m already a member of Vejle Youth Fire Brigade“.

Mikkel Lilleris, Vejle.



# EGU

(Basic Vocational Education and Training)

Vocational basic training - or simply EGU - is a practical course for young people. The goal is to equip the students professionally, socially and personally, so their chances of getting a permanent attachment to the labor market or start another training program are improved.

EGU covers 2 years, but can be shortened to 18 months or extended by a third practical year. The program consists of courses that are put together by exactly the providers and the elements that make sense for the individual person's aspirations and training plans. Guidance and especially job training are key elements, since much of the training takes place

at a workplace or at a workshop school.

A municipality may decide that the Youth School acts as the training responsible school in the municipality. In practice, the lessons will usually take place in close cooperation with the business schools and production schools.

There are examples of youth schools coordinating the offer of full-time teaching with EGU course for those students it will be relevant for. This can create a soft, comfortable and long-term transition from primary to general and vocational secondary education for a vulnerable group.

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# 10th Grade

Not all young people are ready to begin a secondary education after the completion of ninth grade in primary and secondary school. It may be of academic or maturity reasons or because they have not been clarified in terms of desires and choices. Therefore, legislation makes it possible to take an extra 10th grade, and some municipalities choose to place all or part of the offer made in Youth Schools.

Again, teaching to meet the current requirements, but the method, the approach to the young and the range of electives may be different, and definite transition programmes and unpaid internships are also implemented in the programmes. The perspective in 10th grade is forward looking and is regarded likely more as the entrance to the youth education than the end of basic schooling. Besides the general basic subjects, the Youth Schools also offers less traditional electives such as film making, music, entrepreneurship.

Some 10th grades have specializing in office, commercial and shop subjects combined with courses from the basic education of commercial schools. Others have specialized in the construction industry for potential craftsmen.

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## 10th grade in trade and commerce

“Try yourself out at a real workplace, fill out gaps in your school subjects. This can be your start at a professional education.”

This is the invitation from Korsløkke Youth School offering “10th grade in trade and commerce. “In cooperation with employers, unions and business schools young people are offered an extra year at school with compulsory education two days a week,, while they have the opportunity to experience company cultures in practice during the rest of the week. The school year thus builds a bridge to an education in landscape gardening, construction, metal, auto, commercial, service, hotel and restaurant subjects. Other pupils continue at the SOSU(Basic Social and Health Training) - education.

# Other offers

Youth Schools also offer single subjects to young people who have completed 10th grade or equivalent schooling, are less than 18 years old and have a distinct need for special education. From here they can get on to a transition programme to secondary education or a week's internship.

Many Youth Schools have a homework café where young people are supported in their schooling or training. This can be either quite informal, as a sort of club where there is silence and assistance to get their homework done. Or it may be more formal e.g. estab-

lished in close cooperation with high schools or other youth educations where the youth school supports the pupils in doing their homework.

The 20/20-model must also be mentioned which is a co-operation with especially vocational schools in relation to offers of 20 weeks of instruction and 20 weeks of internship. The offer meets young people who find it hard to be in the education system and are in need for a smoother transition.

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# Leisure-time education

Leisure-time education has been part of the work of youth schools from the beginning and is still one of the youth school's essential characteristic. Since the 1970s about half of Denmark's youth has been involved in one or more activities, which are called "evening classes for young people" popularly said.

Municipalities have a duty to provide leisure-time education. This gives young people of between 14 and 18 years the opportunity to perfect themselves in a number of subjects as a supplement to primary school teaching.

## Linguistic and mathematical challenges

Latin sounds like a relic from the past. But at Hedensted Youth School young people think it's cool to start the day by a lesson in the ancient language subjects. Every morning at 7 a.m. 18 students meet to take up an hour of Latin in Youth School - a course that ends with a basic test in Latin. A subject that was previously popular in the upper grades of secondary school is now also offered in the Youth School.

Likewise Viborg Youth School has special talent classes with challenging teaching at a high level for pupils in 8th and 9th grade. The content is organized thematically and could include e.g. astronomy, robotics or language variants such as Spanglish. Courses are organized in cooperation with the local high school. Several youth schools in the country organize talent camps in the summer with teaching at a high level, targeted at pupils who seek specific challenges and develop their professional skills.

The range of subjects is wide and varies from youth school to youth school according to tradition, needs and requests of the local community. Teaching often takes place one evening a week over the winter, but in recent years increasingly also for shorter periods, e.g. over a weekend. Basically it is a free offer, but there may be some user fee for e.g. materials or when travelling.

Part of the leisure-time education is preparing for examinations and can thus be directly used as a take-off for further education. For example, it is widespread that undecided young people take a third foreign language in youth school to keep more doors open in the choice of general and vocational secondary education. Others use youth school to learn the curriculum in a different way, as well as teaching of particularly academic young people are increasingly established in terms of so-called talent classes or weekend and summer camps, where e.g. scientific experiments are made or innovation is worked with.

## Together for something big

Don Juan, Blood & Honour, Oliver Twist, Beat and Atlantis. This is just some of the titles on the long list of musicals, which the Youth Schools in Espergærde and Helsingør have created over the years. From autumn young people meet one evening a week, practicing and working together on the big musical project, which premieres in the spring. Some participate on stage as singers, dancers or musicians, and others are working behind the scenes with the technique, costumes, set design, etc. In common is the great experience of togetherness to create and accomplish something big - and the development of creative talents, interpersonal skills and personal skills.



"I have followed courses preparatory for an examination and there I really learned how to take tests and work with my nervousness. I got better at taking tests and passing exams. It has helped me to be able to perform right up to high school, where we also have many tests."

Mathias Hansen, Vallensbæk.

## Examples of subjects:

Danish, languages, mathematics, painting, textiles, ceramics, jewelry manufacturing, outdoor life, musicals, singing, interaction, dance, fitness, cooking, yoga, exam preparation, hunting, fishing, license for mopeds, motor theory, make-up, self-defense, first aid, horse riding, climbing, sailing, sea kayaking, role playing, physics, sewing, animation, film making, babysitting, basketball, go-cart, boxing, journalism, scuba diving, writing workshop, girl club, homework café, travelling, computers, tractor driving and many other subjects.

The popular creative workshop give an opportunity to get to learn how to repair one's own moped, sew clothes or creating crafts. The subjects are also the first opportunity of many young people to test and develop their creative skills and verify the interests and skills in relation to general and vocational secondary education - an opportunity which is not always present in primary school. A tractor driving license is e.g. a must for young people who want to work in agriculture.

Leisure-time education is for everyone and gives young people the opportunity to form friendships across gender, ethnic and social backgrounds. In this way it acts as a sort of melting pot in a safe environment where young people from different social classes and areas of the municipalities will have the opportunity to meet peers in a community of interest. This contributes to the development of personal skills such as openness, tolerance and cooperation skills.

The creative subject can also contribute to the development of young people as a human being. For a shy 15-year-old it may be a challenge to stand in front of his or her friends and sing a song - and an even bigger victory when subsequently it takes place in front of an audience in the youth school's musical. Such experiences give confidence and a can-do spirit to overcome challenges later in one's education and work life. At the same time such events develop the collaborative skills as the musical team works across disciplines such as singing, music, dance, drama, sewing and other workshop subjects.

Good teaching requires good teachers. Also here the free framework law of youth schools provides the opportunity to quickly adapt experiment and innovate. With the free choice of teachers the schools are not bound by formal education requirements, which allows for other types of teachers who are passionate about the subject and have experience from the "school of life". This applies to the craftsman on the workshop subject or the university educated teacher in Mandarin, when the interest in Chinese culture and language must be accommodated.



# We gather in the club!

All young people need places to meet with friends. Meanwhile, many young people need adults who can provide a qualified and responsible opposition or act as role models. Therefore, Youth School clubs are an ideal setting for youth recreation.

In many municipalities the youth school is responsible for the club offers. The club has room for differences, and the young are to a high extent setting the agenda. Quite many clubs have established a club committee where co-determination takes place by more informal ways than in other places e.g. through mass meetings or autonomous activities.

The activities of the club are many and varied. Table tennis, pool, darts, makeup, jewelry design, play station and the rehearsal room's gear are safe hits. Common cosiness in the sofas in the corner and at club parties the music is struck for dance. Many clubs also arrange out-of-house trips – e.g. to the cinema, to the public swimming pool or canoe trips. Generally, the activities take place on weekday evenings, but many places also meet the need for a gathering place on weekends or in summer holidays. Hence some clubs offer special activities throughout the summer when schools are closed.



“It’s great to come in youth clubs in the Youth School. You meet other young people and have a place to be with your own friends in the evening. In the club there are always some adults to talk to, and they help you if you need it. In the youth school there are also lots of trips you can join. And there are a lot of sports and other things that are free for young people“.

Amalie Andersen, Odense.

As responsible adults the club employees ensures that the practical arrangements are in order. But a good relationship between engaged employees and the young people is of great importance. The ideal is that the young are in control, while the adult supports.

Several places the clubs are integrated into distinct youth centers, where many other activities take place. Elsewhere there is a strong interaction between club activities and leisure-time education.

## Junior clubs

The transition from being a child to being a young person is today taking place at an earlier age, and often before the young person reaches the Youth School's primary target group. Club offers to the younger adolescents are also needed. Many municipalities have chosen to let the

Youth School offer the so-called junior clubs for people less than 14 years old.

Activities in the junior club often take place in the afternoon - either within the same framework like the general club activities or in special rooms.





# Integration

The youth school is a meeting place for young people across gender, age, background and ethnicity. In line with this, Youth Schools make an extra effort to meet bilingual youngsters half way, so that they are prepared for a good life in Denmark both academically and socially.

The effort includes both general cultural encounters such as targeted inclusion work including extra tuition in Danish and social studies, homework assistance and leisure activities that may improve the knowledge of Danish society. Some places also offer teams targeted Muslim girls in an environment that parents feel comfortable with.

Several places the Youth School also performs the municipal's offer on special reception classes for refugees. For the same reason some municipalities have chosen to expand the youth offer to include young people up to 25 years, as the law allows that, so the young can remain in an exciting and developing youth environment.

Youth School offers are always organized in a way that involves new Danes' parents and thus propagate the knowledge of the Danish educational system.

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# Prevention

Cooperation shall partly prevent crime among young people including violence and abuse and partly assist when the injury has occurred.

Courses in smoking cessation. A drug addict tells about his life. Peer-to-peer information about sex and sexually transmitted diseases in the club. The preventive and educational work is taking place in many different ways in the Youth Schools and youth clubs.

Youth schools are often very centrally located in the municipalities' preventive work and in the SSP-cooperation between schools, social authorities and the police. Cooperation shall partly prevent crime among young people including violence and abuse and partly assist when the injury has occurred.

Many youth schools have also hired workers who are involved in outreach work, who at "street level" and in social housing areas establish and maintain a close contact with young people, discussing potential problems "at eye level" and act if necessary.

## Black Fingers

Vordingborg Youth School has arranged a workshop where young people can work with mopeds, cars and go-carts just like they go on trips together. At the same time they experience an intimacy with adults who want to spend time with them, and whom they can rely on.

The workshop is the result of a cooperation between the Youth School, the trade association, schools, social workers and the SSP-council in the municipality. The target audience is exactly young people at risk, needing a special offer during leisure time.



“I am active in the Youth School’s local council for youngsters and in the Youth School’s Pupils’ national network DUSK-net, because it’s instructive and fun, gives new friendships, and not least, creates a huge community. I have realized that there are many opportunities for young people in this country. We just need to open our eyes and embrace the opportunities. It has also taught me to stand up and say what I mean, to be able to articulate myself in the right way and be welcoming.”

Susan Jacobsen, Tårnby.

# Democratic formation

Part of the Youth School’s purposes is to develop young people’s “interest in and ability to participate actively in a democratic society”. Therefore, a concept such as participatory and democratic education is part of everyday life both in the individual teaching teams, in the club and at a broader level.

The young people help to determine the content of the instruction and curriculum, they participate in club committees and are represented in the youth school board, and they are responsible for arranging and conducting activities and celebrations. Nationwide many young people are also active in Youth Schools Pupils’ Network, DUSK - net, which works to upgrade youth democracy in schools.

The young thus help to set the agenda taking into account the general laws, rules and circulars established by the Ministry of Education, the Danish parliament and the local councils. However, it is equally important that the formal influence is also followed by inclusion in the Youth School’s daily activities. Therefore, the emphasis is on meeting young people at eye level, that they get heard and put their personal mark on things. Participation must not be just a catchy phrase, but must be real.

## Young People in council

This is what an offer is called of a democratic education in UngAalborg – the Youth School in Aalborg. Here the young are able to take the politicians’ seats in the City Council Chamber and discuss relevant topics such as leisure offers, need for internships, parties and events. Topics can be suggested by young people themselves, by the youth school or by the municipality. The offer gives young people the opportunity to get direct influence on their own lives. At the same time it promotes their knowledge of and interest in democratic processes.



# A small flashback

By type of school the Youth School is constantly changing. Time changes, new tasks and priorities join whereas others get into the background or disappear. But the purpose is generally the same: to support the development of young people's academic, social and personal skills and help them towards an education, a job and a happy adulthood. Similarly, throughout all years, Youth Schools have balanced between the general adult education and the more educational oriented focus.

Youth Schools were established in the years around World War II. In 1938 the Social-Liberal Minister of Education, Jorgen Jorgensen, set up the Youth Committee, which was behind the design of the first independent legislation for the Youth School area - "Act on

Youth Schools for the unskilled youth."

In the beginning the primary focus was on evening classes, which qualified for work life. Youth Schools were primarily dedicated to young people who left school at the age of confirmation and needed to improve their manual skills.

A new act of 1954 resulted, inter alia, that now youth schools were not only to apply to unskilled young people, but be an offer to all boys and girls between the age of 14 and 18 years old. The next major step came with the new Primary Education Act of 1975, when youth school full-time education was introduced as an alternative for young people in the upper grades. The moped license that became mandatory in 1979 also became of

great importance, since the statutory requirement meant that a whole new and large group of young people were related to the Youth Schools.

In recent decades, Youth Schools have undergone a rapid development of alternative education and activation courses, 10th grade, integration programs for immigrants and municipal prevention tasks.

The merger of municipalities in 2007 resulted in fewer but also larger Youth Schools. This concentration of forces meant that the Youth School has become a strong local actor in the cooperation with other schools, the effort for vulnerable people and the commitment to getting young people into education.

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