

28th September – 2nd October 2015

Sesimbra, Portugal



**Egelundskolen, Albertslund, Denmark**

Understanding school refusal?

**RECIPE**

# Albertslund, school strategy

## School strategy "school for all:

- More young people must **complete a youth education**.
- **Community for all** which focuses on relational and social skills of students.
- **Everybody should be happy to go to school. The overall objective is to strengthen children's and young people's social and relational skills.** It is important not to feel left out or being bullied in order to thrive. All must respect each other, and everyone must experience themselves as part of a social community where you can thrive and develop.
- **All children must be challenged**, and all children must be given the opportunity to be in communities so that they can develop the best in oneself in order to be ' contributors ' in society.
- **Goal-In 2017** is 98% of all students say Yes! to be excited to go to school.
- -In 2017 is 90% of all pupils in the municipality of ' yes ' ' are you pleased with your school? ', ' are you pleased with the class you go in? ', ' do you think that you will learn something? '
- -In 2017 we include 96% of all children and young people in elementary school.

# Everybody should be happy to go to school

- .







## **Community for all**

Cooperation with leisure club.

Pupils with special needs, travel by bus to the club, meet other youngsters and adults.



## **All pupils must be challenged**

Pupils go to the motor center to learn about motors, bikes and go-carts

## Student absence in the school year 2012-2013 in primary and special school -

Pupil absence divided into three cause categories:

1. Absence due to **illness**,
2. Absence with school **leaders permission** (extraordinary freedom) and
3. **Illegal** absence.

Nationally, the average student absences for the school year 2012/13 5.7 percent per. student, equivalent to almost 12 school days for a full year student.

Average student absences in 2012/13 at the three absences categories accounted absence  
due to illness 3.4 percent per. student  
absences with permission 1.5 percent per. student, whereas  
unauthorized absence was 0.8 percent per. student.

Albertslund is among the highest ranked municipals ☹ -  
We are in the top 5 with 7,8 percent per student

# Dilemma

©Marty Bucella

www.martybucella.com



"I know the kids don't like you and pick on you, but you have to go to school...you're the teacher."

# What do we do?

- What do we know?





## **Albertslund**

An interdisciplinary team has started to identify the causes to pupils' absence

# When Children Refuse School

- Christopher A. Kearney after "School refusal assessment scale-revised (C)" by Christopher A. Kearney & Anne Marie Albano: When Children Refuse School (Treatments That Work)
- - A Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Approach Parent Workbook

# When Children Refuse School

**Children and adolescents may have different reasons why they do not come to school.**

- Some children and young people feel bad (feel sick, sad, scared, etc.) when they are in school,**
- and other children and young people find it difficult to be with other people in the school.**
- There are also some children and young people who would rather be at home with their family,**
- and there are other children and youth who do not attend school because they would rather do something fun outside of school.**

# Four primary reasons

- **Reasons that is connected to the negative consequences of being in school:**
  - 1) Avoid school-related stimuli, that provokes negative affectivity
  - 2) Escape from aversive social and/ or evaluative situations
- **Reasons associated with “rewards” by staying home from school:**
  - 3) For attention negative/positiv
  - 4) Tangible rewards outside school

# Primary causes to school refusal

1. Avoidance of **school-related negative stimuli** that provoke stress, depression, anxiety, and physical discomfort



The discomfort can occur for many different things - travel by school bus, fire alarm, schoolyard, transition / change to the new class / new school year, the teacher, some learners, samples, bullying, etc.

Can be seen in the context of specific phobias, generalized anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts / behavior. In some cases, agoraphobia and panic disorder

“something in school makes them mad, sad, scared or upset”

Refusal 1 – due to anxiety

# Primary causes to school refusal

2. Avoidance of **social and professional** (evaluative) **situations in school**, causing stress, depression, anxiety and physical discomfort  
The discomfort may arise in connection with **national tests, examinations**, tests, school camps, presentations, **group work**, eating in the canteen, **changing to the gym**, conduct interviews, etc.

Can be seen in the context of social phobia / social anxiety, OCD perfectionist traits, depression, suicidal thoughts and behavior. In some cases, agoraphobia and panic disorder.

“feeling judged, evaluated or put in front of audience or peers makes them shy/ anxiety

Refusal 2 – due to anxiety



# Primary cause to school refusal

3. Desire to **be at home with parents for attention**, comfort at home with parents, take their parents on job etc.

OR

Because **it's hard to be away from their parents** (who could be an accident with my parents while I'm in school).

Can be seen in the context of structural family changes (divorce, sibling increase, etc.), mental illness in the family, etc.

Can be seen in connection with separation anxiety, physical complaints, stubborn and defiant behavior, tantrums, etc. in an attempt to be allowed to stay home. The child often comes too late, need to call home, and sticks sometimes from school etc.

“missing school or just staying home is fun/exciting/enjoyable

or

“I have hard being away from my parents”

Refusal 3 – due to reward



# Primary cause to school refusal

4. Desire to stay away from school because it's **more fun to be at home** (sleeping longer, play games, watch television) or spending time with friends / girlfriend, money, drugs, low crime.

Can be seen in connection with abuse problems, school fatigue and (starting), dyssocial behavior and a general lack of motivation.

“it’s more fun to be outside than in” 😊

Refusal 4 – due to reward



# What to do? Share good experiences

- Changing bad habits – how?
- Medical ?
- Helping parents help kids ! How?
  
- *Review and summary: what is anxiety and what is refusal behavior? – what are the primary reasons a child may be avoiding school?*