

Guided Reading Denmark

"Guided reading gives all children a safe way forward to good reading, where they are each met at the level they are, and it is simply the reinvention of good reading for every child." This is the view of Wenche Kortbaek, a primary school literacy teacher, who in 2015 started developing Guided Reading in Denmark with Lisbeth Skov, Reading Adviser and Consultant for the Rudersdal municipality of Copenhagen.

[Guided Reading Denmark](#) was born following a visit to London where Lisbeth and Wenche met Richard Boxall, Associate Deputy Head and Daily Supported Reading (DSR) Lead at [Hackney Services for Schools](#). DSR is a classroom programme by Hackney Learning Trust that helps UK-based children primarily in Key Stage 1 (but also low readers in Key Stage 2) make accelerated progress by working with trained adults in small groups matched to their independent reading levels. Spotting an opportunity to take this model to Denmark, a new differentiated teaching material for use in reading education for all children was created.



"Traditionally there have been no principles of guided reading, and no reading groups, in Denmark," Lisbeth explained. "Teaching children to read typically involves the majority of pupils using the same book when they start, and this means that higher ability readers can get bored too easily, and lower ability readers struggle because the text is too difficult for them. Alongside this way of reading, we became involved in Reading

Recovery, and through that we met Richard and learned about DSR, a special kind of guided reading. We were fascinated by how well children were reading, and with so many good books when in Denmark we are not used to seeing so many books. We knew that this could help Danish teachers who wanted something else to teach their children in groups."



The first edition of Guided Reading in Denmark was launched in 2016 by a group of literacy teachers in Rudersdal who developed a system of DSR in Danish with some adjustments, initially involving 12 schools. From here it evolved, and Wenche and Lisbeth decided that DSR would not be a term that teachers in Denmark would recognise, so named it Guided Reading. "With our guided reading we teach in small groups, appropriate to reading levels, and during our visit to London we picked up big insights on how that is used in schools," Wenche said. "Guided reading is not only a teaching material, but

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also a didactic that requires you to think and organise reading teaching in a new way. Other communities heard about Guided Reading Denmark and we are now working with 45 schools across 24 different municipalities."



Over the past six years Guided Reading Denmark has grown in popularity as the Danish education system gives schools flexibility to implement different approaches to teaching to reach national reading goals. "We have seen great impact on children," Lisbeth revealed. "Every pupil benefits in different ways and on their own level. Those who become strongly literate feel safe and secure as we have met them at their level when reading with them. What we can also see and hear – without measurement – is the love of reading being developed. For teachers we undertake training from the very start. There is always great discussion between teachers in sharing advice, for example, on how they are approaching children who may not be developing or are struggling with a certain area."

Wenche, who has been a primary school teacher since 1994, also reflected on the impact in her own school. "We have seen teachers develop and share the same mindset, meeting more than they have ever done before, and talking about guided reading children and what they are going to do differently next week," she revealed. "Teachers really like it and are sharing videos and photos of what has happened. They are together and teachers are growing. Before we were reliant on formal meetings, now we have a change of culture, and it is powerful to

have the same common approach, in school and with parents. Parents are thrilled about this way of teaching their children to read, they feel the benefit."

As part of Guided Reading Denmark, children access around 50 translated PM Reading Books. "Pupils are really fond of these," Lisbeth said. "They are great books, good storylines, and easy to use in Danish. The pictures are also full of detail, true to the story, and are clearly understandable. The lower level books – bands 1–3 – are straightforward to read. Children like them, and as a result are really interested in reading. We have also started to have some publishers in Denmark creating guided reading books. Over the coming years we want to work in many more schools, but first we aspire to spread the word on guided reading and encourage uptake. We have extensive experience of helping schools get started with this."



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