

LJAN
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Our Journey Towards a Thinking School

Ljan School – Our Journey Towards a Thinking School

Ljan School is a public primary school in Oslo, Norway. The school has 305 students from grades one to seven. We also offer an after school program for students up to 4th grade. The school and the after school program introduced the *Thinking School* program in August 2013 with the support of David Hyerle's *Thinking Maps*. In August 2014 we also began teaching Art Costa's *Habits of Mind*.

Background

For many years, Ljan School used a type of map which involved only one way of thinking – brainstorming. We found the learning outcomes of this map to be limited, and we were looking for a different method to improve the students' learning. At this point we came across David Hyerle's eight *Thinking Maps*. We found these maps to be a more dynamic tool that could be used by any age group in our school. We thought these maps would better support our students in different ways of thinking and in a more systematic way than the map we already used. With the previous type of maps and other exercises in the classroom, we found that many students finished too quickly and merely scratched the surface of the subject – with Hyerle's maps, it was easier to make the students focus for longer periods of time and study the subject matter more profoundly. We wanted to give our students high quality thinking skills and make them more involved in their own learning. Our aim was to provide equal opportunities for all students to enjoy learning and to develop lifelong learning skills. Therefore, we began our journey towards a *Thinking School* with all classes making use of David Hyerle's *Thinking Maps*.



Our journey in 2013/2014:

We needed a clear direction so we established a Drive Team for the introduction of these maps. All staff was involved in the further process to a whole-school approach to these Thinking Maps.

1. In August 2013, all staff had half a day with Nick Symes for an introduction to these *Thinking Maps*.
2. We introduced the students to one type of map each month. After the first year, all staff and students had used all eight maps.
3. All staff had regular meetings to share their experiences in using these maps. By using these maps, both students and teachers began to share a common language.
4. Parents were also kept informed through weekly information.
5. We carried out a students survey on the use of the maps.
6. All staff visited *Thinking Schools* in Cardiff at the end of our first training year. In these schools we discovered another learning strategy called *Habits of Mind*.

2014/2015:

1. This school year, the students chose a map on their own. In the classroom, the student could work on the same task, but sometimes they used a different type of David Hyerle's maps. They used the maps independently to support their own learning. The teachers observed the students and found that they were more reflective and organized in their own thinking.
2. We introduced the student to one type of *Habits of Mind* each month. Pictures of the sixteen Habits of Mind as well as students work on these *Thinking Maps* were put on the walls in each classroom and in the common areas. We knew that both *Thinking Maps* and *Habits of Mind* are a part of life-long learning and a part of our everyday life. But we had to start our journey with a clear direction to ensure a common approach to our *Thinking School* program.
3. Some teachers also used these maps in their own meetings and in contact with the parents.
4. We carried out a student survey on the use of the Thinking Maps and the Habits of Mind for student from 5th to 7th grade.



Summary of key findings

From our student survey, we know that the students find the *Thinking Maps* and *Habits of Mind* helpful in organizing their own learning process and at making them understand deeper meaning in the subject matter as well as remaining focused on the task. They also tell us that the *Habits of Mind* serve as a reminder of the objectives of the subject and lead to greater reflection in their own thinking. Students also responded that they are better at sharing their ideas and at collaborating during teaching hours. In particular, the students reported that the use of *Habits of Mind* is positive for the whole class and the school environment.

Our staff find that these tools improve the students' aptitude for learning and the development of their social skills. After two years, also we also find that many students – although not all – are very articulated in their understanding of the intentions of these tools.

What next

We introduced the *Thinking Maps* and the *Habits of Mind* from a qualitative rather than a quantitative perspective. During the next academic year, we will have to introduce the remaining *Habits of Mind*, one at the time. We then need to take a holistic approach and consider the *Habits of Mind* in their entirety. Our ultimately goal is to use all Habits of Mind during the entire school day.

The *Habits of Mind* are a part of the life long learning. Later on, we aim to introduce Edward de Bono's *Six Hats*. We also know that we have to establish a system of training for new teachers and assistants, to make sure everyone at the school is involved and has a sufficient background in the use of these tools. Ljan School looks forward to increase our knowledge about these learnings strategies on our journey towards becoming a *Thinking School*.

Marianne Fiskaa
Headmaster



Double Bubble Map

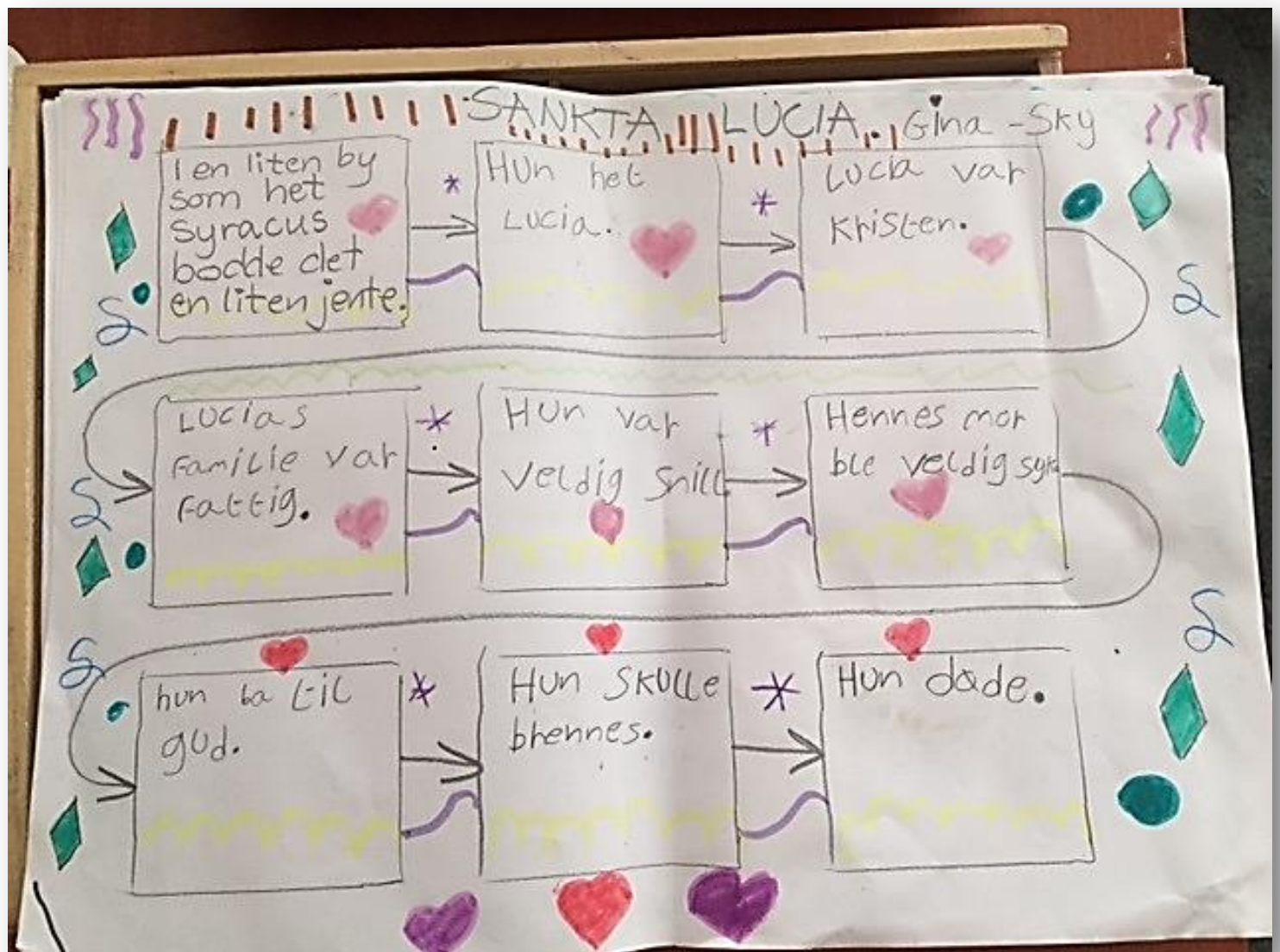


Tree Map

geometric shapes



Flow Map



Bobble Map



Habits of mind



Managing Impulsivity

