



## Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

**Report Title:** Democratic Pedagogy in Sweden      **Name:** Maggie Schwirck  
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**Program:** New York City Program  
**Trip Dates:** 08/15/2011 - 08/24/2011      **Location Visited:** Stockholm, Sweden  
**Post Fellowship Reporting Template:** PFR Template 02

**Project Summary:** The Fund for Teachers grant provided us the opportunity to travel to Sweden and visit a number of schools across the country to learn about their school system. We became interested in the Kunskapsskolan charter schools as a result of attending a network meeting where we discovered that the organization was in the process of opening a middle school in New York. After attending the meeting and with further research, we discovered the Kunskapsskolan schools were extremely successful compared to other schools across the country and the world. The schools have extensive advisory programs as well as provide each student with individualized education plans. We have experimented with individualized education plans beyond our special education population at our school but have not been particularly successful.

We have also had an advisory program for years that we feel has the potential to be much more successful. Overall we were inspired to visit these schools to learn from their programs and strategies to better serve our population of students. In particular we were looking for teaching strategies to better serve our students who have not been successful with our more traditional model of teaching.

We contacted the CEO of the Kunskapsskolan program and were given the opportunity to visit a middle school and high school. In addition, while planning our trip, we were put in contact with two teachers from public Swedish schools which we were able to visit as well. In doing so, we were able to compare the Swedish public system to that of the Swedish charter system, which helped us with our research.

In every school we learned that an advisory program existed as an integral part of the students' education from the middle school level to graduation. Advisors played an active role as their advisees' support system for all years the student attended the school. At our school our advisors are reassigned each year, which we found was not the case in any school we visited, public or charter. We also found that the Swedish advisory system was particularly successful, which inspired us to transform our advisory system. We have decided to model our system after the programs we saw in Sweden which include looping advisors, weekly academic check-ins, monthly meetings with advisors about progress toward long term plans, and regular structured goal setting ranging from weekly to long term.

**Career Impact:** Swedish society highly values education and children in particular. Parents are allowed time off from work when they are requested by the school for a visit concerning their child and their employer is obligated to let them go. In addition, most schools do not deal with discipline issues as extensive as ours because of parent involvement and the diversity of programs offered for students. We had to be careful analyzing structures and not assume they would not be successful here because of societal differences. We carefully thought about structures and redesigned them to fit the needs of our students and schools.

We were very much inspired by the Swedish schools, regular and charter. Visiting the schools was invigorating. At the end of the day we were discussing the schools and teachers and already planning changes we wanted to see happen for this upcoming year. We were so excited that we prepared a significant number of changes in the two weeks we had between the end of the trip and beginning of the new academic year.

**Classroom/Community Impact:** The fellowship has greatly impacted the school community and in doing so has helped individual classrooms. We have reshaped our advisory program, which we are hoping will strengthen teacher student relationships, and consequently result in higher academic success. We have also adapted the workshop model from the charter schools for after school tutoring. Students may attend subject workshops of their choice. We are hoping this will also lead to higher success for our struggling students and provide student choice and the opportunity to take ownership over their education.

Because of our fellowship and implementations, we are now better targeting our challenged learners and our non-traditional learners. We are also committed to building stronger relationship with parents and students to foster a sense of educational ownership and dedication. In addition, before our monthly meetings with students, all of the student's teachers take time to meet and discuss the student's progress. Because advisors might be unable to meet with teachers, we have developed an online document with up to date information regarding every student.

**Open Response:** We have already changed our advisory program and are currently continuing to modify and make changes as we put the new model in place. Before school started we presented our findings to our principal to obtain the go ahead to make these changes and present them to the staff. We are still working to use what we learned to better serve the population we work with. We plan to work on creating more individualized education plans, not just for our special education students, but all students for which the traditional method of teaching at our school does not work to better serve them.

Another goal we have is to get students to take ownership of their education. Once our advisory changes are successfully in place we plan for students to do a lot more goal setting using a log book in which they record weekly goals and drivers to meet those goals as well as long term goals. We foresee all students recording their goals independently after much scaffolding and practice with their advisors this year. We are already on our way to higher academic success and will not stop until all of our students needs are met.

**Quote:** Global Citizens of Tomorrow

Photos:



Kunskapsskolan Middle School



School Visit Norrkoping



Lunch Time!



Public School in Uppsala



Student Guides in Harnosand



Teacher Time in Harnosand



A Visit to the Science Center



Student Workshops in Stockholm