

# Raising the Bar in Northern Norway

Norway's three northernmost counties have traditionally had a significantly higher dropout rate in upper secondary education than the rest of the country, and generally have a lower level of education than the national average. The Mastery Project is a development project that was completed in the Nordland County of Norway due to those reasons.

The project was part of the national school development program in Norway, The Promise of Knowledge – From Words to Action. Two high schools and three middle schools participated in the project in Nordland County from 2007-2009. The aim was to develop practices that contribute to an increased feeling of mastery (mastering a situation or condition) in school life, and thus helps ensure that more students complete upper secondary education.

The target audience for the Mastery Project is basically all students in the transition phase between middle school and high school. Some of the initiatives in the project were geared towards those students whom the schools considered to be in a "gray zone" (low motivation, learning difficulties, high absence).

The initiatives that have been tried out include interdisciplinary assessments of individual student groups, conversations with each student at school start and during the school year, various forms of personalized instruction for each student, combinations of school and partaking in the labour market for some students, closer cooperation between school and home, the development of improved monitoring of students with problems, and closer collaboration between primary and secondary schools.

The lessons highlighted in the evaluation are:

- Students who are unmotivated and tired of theory spend one weekday at a workplace.
- Teaching may be organized as a combination of multidisciplinary assignments some weeks and traditional teaching in other weeks.
- An important effect of the Mastery Project has been a closer cooperation between primary and secondary schools.
- The teacher gets an important role in following up the students who are tired of school or unmotivated.