



The Danish Friskole

**– a segment of
the Grundtvigian-Kold school tradition**

The Danish Friskole

– a segment of
the Grundtvigian-Kold school tradition



Published by the Danish Friskole Association

The object of the association is:

- to strengthen and promote fellowship and cooperation among the Danish friskoler;
- to safeguard the rights and influence of the home on questions regarding schooling;
- to work for the best possible conditions for establishing and running friskoler in Denmark.



The Danish Friskole

– a segment of the Grundtvigian-Kold school tradition

©2010 The Danish Friskole Association and authors.
The text may be reproduced with indication of source.
Editor: Thorstein Balle and Margaretha Balle-Petersen

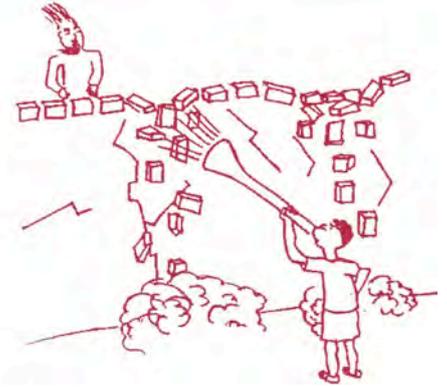
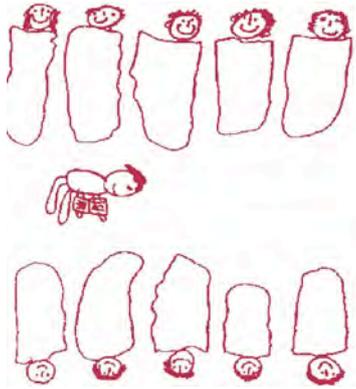
Translation: Ann Andresén

Layout: Ole Mikkelsen, The Friskole Office

The childrens' pictures were drawn by friskoler pupils and have previously been printed in the Friskole magazine (Friskolebladet).

Photos: The Hjortshøj-Egå local archives, Claus Bonnerup and Andreas Duedal

Cover: Drawing by Louis Moe



Preface

This booklet is about the Danish friskole. In this booklet, the Danish term friskole (plural) will be used. Friskole could be translated as independent private primary (and secondary) school, but friskole is not just a word, it is a concept, and it is this concept we wish to acquaint you with in this booklet. These schools are a part of the independent school tradition which – with common roots in N.F.S. Grundtvig’s and Christen Kold’s concepts of schooling – also include among others the folkehøjskoler (folk high schools) and efterskoler (continuation schools).

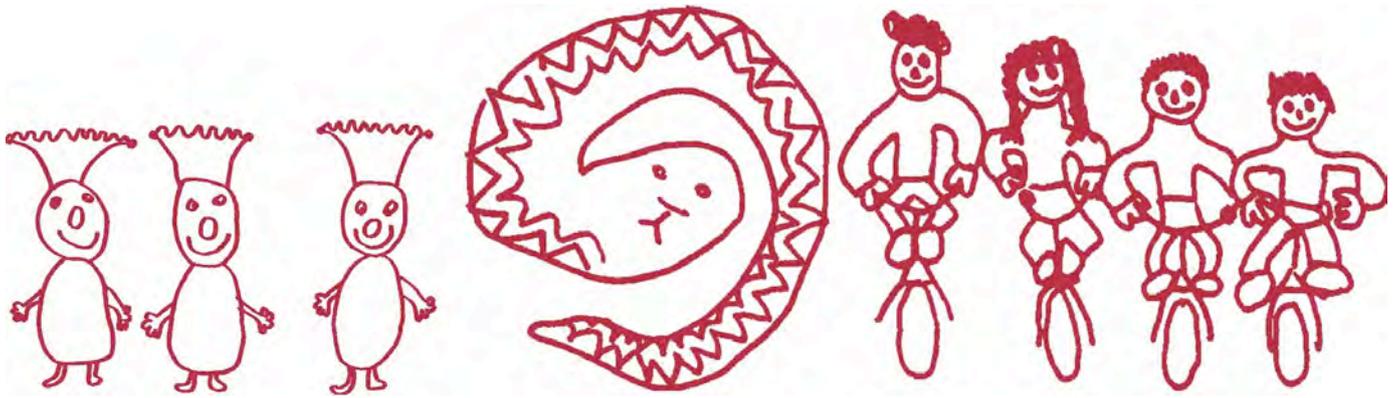
This publication is a result of the growing contact with educators, especially in Eastern Europe and the Baltic countries, which has created a need for more information about the friskoler than what could be gained in our brief pamphlets in English and German. This booklet was made possible through economic subsidy from the Ministry of Education’s lottery.

The Grundtvigian-Kold friskoler are a 150 year-old grass roots movement. This movement is difficult to describe because it is a living and manifold tradition which cultivates variety and which is implied in the interaction between human beings. It also embodies a built-in opposition to the conformity which every description cannot avoid creating.

The friskoler like to tell Hans Christian Andersen’s well-known fairy tale about Klods-Hans (Numskull Jack) because this story illustrates the concept of the friskole. This is why we have chosen the Klods-Hans motif to decorate the cover of this booklet. The wry and sardonic personality of Klods-Hans is a figure one can identify with. He who, when it counts, solves problems much better than his two well-prepared brothers who have clung to what they, and the majority in society, believed was the sure way to success in life. Reality, which is the true test, showed, however, that it was Klods-Hans who, thanks to his baggage of courage, and unimpressed ingenuity, managed the unexpected challenges in life. It was Klods-Hans who won the princess and half the kingdom.

In the following, we will never the less attempt to describe the Grundtvigian-Kold friskole. To this, one must add a broader perspective.

The Danish educational system is built on compulsory education – not compulsory schooling. Danish parents are free to choose the municipal school or one of the many types of friskoler or private schools subsidized by the state. Parents can also, if they have the courage and tenacity, establish a new school based on the principle’s they find right. There are many types of private prima-



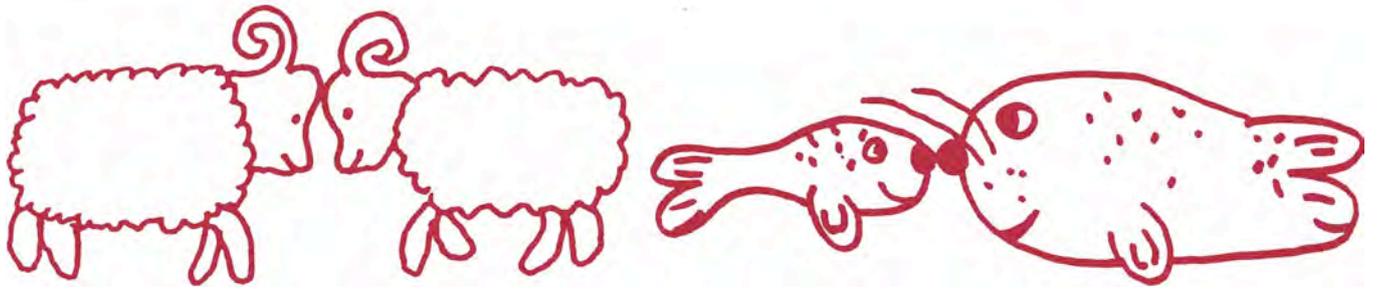
ry (and secondary) schools in Denmark. They can identify with the entire religious, political or educational spectrum. There is room for the progressive as well as the elite, and there are schools for the German minority and for the Muslim immigrant groups. These are mentioned in a following section (pp. 21 and 31).

But what we talk about in this booklet is first and foremost the Grundtvigian-Kold friskole and principals of freedom which influence them. First, we tell about the historical roots. Then about the bearing pillars: the rights of parents and the minority. And about the principles of freedom: the ideological freedom, the pedagogical freedom, the economic freedom, freedom of employment and freedom of the pupils. We then describe some common characteristics of the friskole tradition and finally, we become more closely acquainted with three friskoler – each with their own story. At the end of this booklet, you will find some useful addresses.

The overall texts have been written in collaboration with two friskole parents, Thorstein Balle and Margaretha Balle-Petersen with support from Niels Thomsen, Løgumkloster, who has written the articles: „A Grass roots Movement” and „A Christian Tradition”. A number of the shorter texts have been written by principal, Aksel Bording, Stevns Friskole. The three concluding „school stories” have been written by principals: Ernst Kr. Larsen and Else Nørhave Kjær, Gudenådalens Friskole, Torsten Johannessen, Odense Friskole and Knud Frederiksen, Sdr. Vium Friskole.

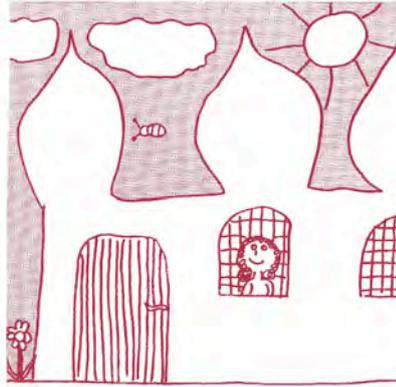
We hope that this account of the Danish friskole tradition will give others courage and inspiration to – just like Klods-Hans in the fairy tale – create schools according to their own ideas – schools one feels are what a school should be.

Copenhagen, May 1995
Margaretha Balle-Petersen
National Chairman of the Danish Friskole Association



Contents

Preface	3
1. A grass roots movement	6
The „folkelige”	7
2. The rights of parents	9
3. The rights of the minority	11
4. Freedom in the friskole	13
The Principle of Ideological Freedom	13
The Principle of Pedagogical Freedom	14
The Principle of Economic Freedom	14
The Principle of Freedom of Employment	15
The Principle of Student Freedom	15
5. The Grundtvigian-Kold friskoler	17
Governed by the parents	17
Emphasis on the narrative and song	18
A Christian tradition	19
6. Other private primary schools	21
7. The stories of three friskoler	23
7.1. To start from scratch	23
7.2. Influenced by generations	26
7.3. From municipal school to friskole	29
8. Useful addresses	31



1. A grass roots movement

The friskoler didn't begin with schools or education. They began with the grass roots movements which, from the middle of the 1800th, transformed Danish society. Before then, we had an absolute monarchy where the paternal king felt he knew better than the „common” man. This pertained to all matters: politics, education, religion and business. But in the middle of the 1800th, the population began to feel that they were capable of taking responsibility for their own affairs.

First came the religious revivals. With the religious revivals, the people no longer believed that the church and the ministers had a monopoly on how to obtain salvation, and they discovered that they themselves had to take the responsibility for their relationship with God. When they realized this, everything else was easier. If one can take the responsibility for the salvation of one's soul, then one can also be responsible for the education and upbringing of one's children. And if one can do this, then one can also take care of monetary matters, trade and politics. No matter how complicated it seems, nothing can be a greater responsibility than one's relationship with God and the question of how the life of one's child will be shaped.

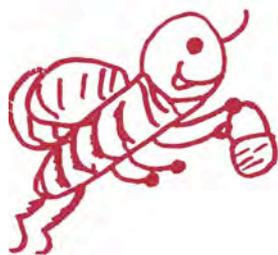
This is how it began. Where ministers were incompetent, one established free congregations, and the congregations hired their own ministers. When the merchant made

a profit on agriculture, cooperative dairies and slaughterhouses were established. When one felt the grocer was making too much of a profit, cooperative stores were founded. Where there was no place to discuss, meeting halls were built.

On the whole, one didn't wait for the central government, the municipality or officials to take care of things. When something needed to be done, the people themselves took the initiative. The people did what had to be done – often with a great economic risk and with an amazing lack of knowledge and experience.

It was in the same way, one established schools. This was often connected with the fact that the municipal schools were inadequate. But the real reason was that people were confident *they* knew what was best for their children. If the municipal schools could satisfy their needs, they were used. If not, a group of parents established their own school.

In principle, it was felt in those circles that it was best if parents taught their own children, but when they couldn't manage this, they arranged for collective education. This was their own responsibility. Thus, the friskoler began. There was no need for administrators or experts. What was needed were teachers who could act as parents – along with being knowledgeable.



The „folkelige”

The common denominator for all of this was what was called the popular or ordinary, in Danish: the *folkelige*. This is an expression that rings with fanfare, but it is not so easy to define. It includes everything to which a human being is willing to commit himself and his fellow man.

What does this involve? First of all, two things that are equally important: *fellowship* and *freedom*. Both of these should be mentioned simultaneously. One assumed that one could have fellowship without becoming uniform, meaning that freedom would not suffer because of fellowship. One also felt freedom belonged within fellowship. Freedom is what one owes one another in fellowship: fellowship is a caricature of what it should be if it does not include freedom. On the other hand, freedom obtains its substance from the fellowship within it.

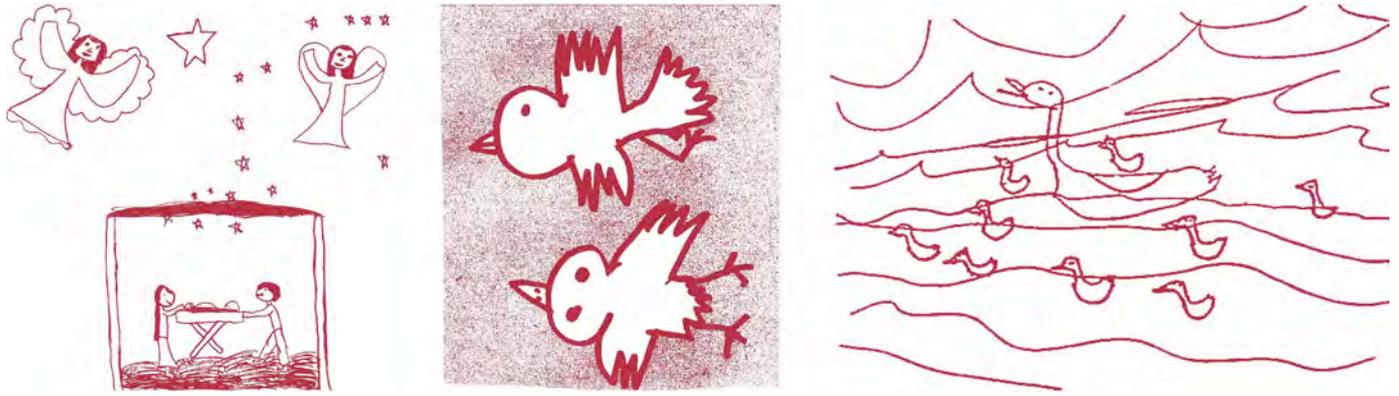
Second, the popular involves a commitment for *equality*. But equality is two things. In one of Grundtvig's songs, which more than any other has been a flagship for the popular movements, one speaks of „equality in castle and cottage”. It is about equality, but this doesn't mean that one starts by producing an external equality. On the contrary; one assumed that equality was there no matter how different the people's circumstances were, even though it was difficult to see. From this grew the effort to encourage equality as far as possible. It was this the people starting the

cooperative dairies expressed, but didn't always live up to – that one should vote according to one's „head”, not according to one's „heard”, meaning that the farmer with two cows should have just as much influence as the farmer with thirty or – one man, one vote.

It is not necessary to equalize economy, intelligence and knowledge before one can consider oneself equal. All humans are born with the same dignity. But it was only natural that one took steps to gain more equality in the external conditions being that we all *are created* basically equal.

The popular still contains more elements: for example, *responsibility*. This is only natural. One took responsibility for one's own affairs and felt one could manage just as well as the municipal officials and the so-called experts. But then one also had to accept the consequences and live with the risk that went along with responsibility. This they learned. The impact of the „common man” taking responsibility can hardly be overestimated. There was a need for people to be members of boards and committees and to make decisions, and they did. It is amazing that this went well; sometimes it didn't, but they didn't give up, and they became more and more competent.

And from this arose a self-reliance at which one must marvel – and at the same time a distrust of the experts which sometimes cost them dear. But the people learned to rely on themselves.

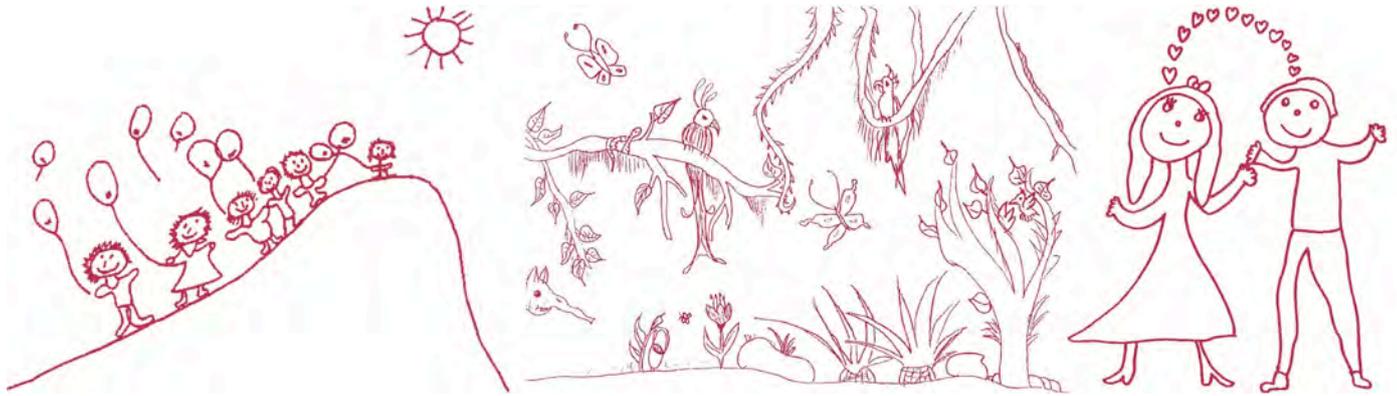


The friskole has a long tradition in Denmark. It has grown from below for 150 years. The children's education is first and foremost a matter for the parents. The friskole has its roots in education at home. This option is not used much today, but it is still the fundamental principle of freedom of education.

In 1914 the children in Egå Friskole, who can be seen here together with their teacher, came from 7 different homes. These homes, along with others with or without children who supported the school, made up the school circle and attended various meetings held regularly at the school in the evenings.

The little friskole in Egå which was established in 1881, ceased to exist in 1957.





2. The rights of parents

Upbringing and education are an existential matter. Who has the right of authority over the child – over the human being – as an individual? This has always been a philosophically controversial question. In Antiquity, as well as in the modern dictatorships, one looked upon the state as the correct system. Aristotle said, „The whole comes before the parts”. The state before the individual. Christian thought breaks with this concept in that it maintains that both the family and the individual are responsible to an entity above the state and therefore have a right to be independent of the state. This concept, which developed gradually and through much conflict in the Christian cultural universe, has been interpreted in many different ways throughout the ages.

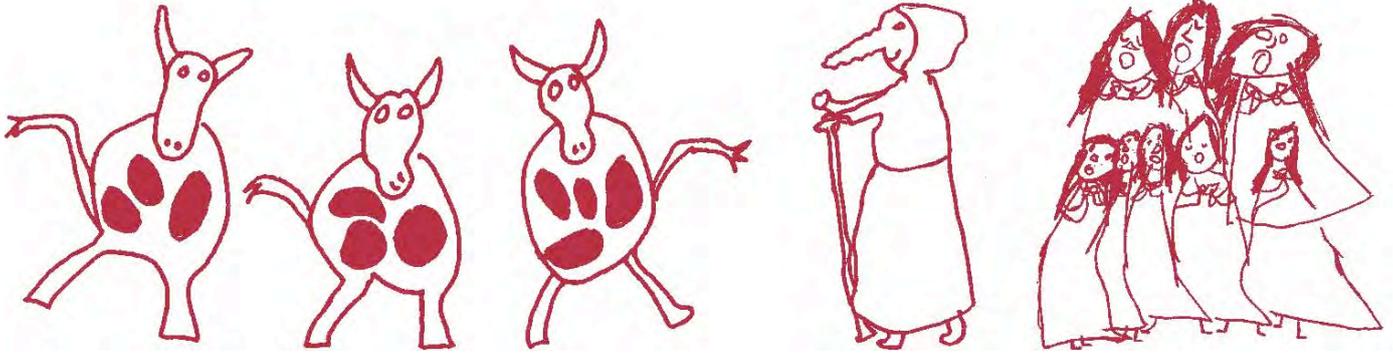
In the 1200th, we meet the first outstanding spokesman for parents’ rights in relation to the senior authorities, namely, Thomas Aquinas. His controversial viewpoint was that Jewish parents had the right not to baptize their children. He claimed that before baptism – already in the creation of father, mother and child – there is a divine commandment which must be respected. The mortal situation of a child is a parable to the child’s relationship with God.

When one speaks of the rights of parents as a fundamental principle of the Danish friskol-

er, it is with reference to this religiously based viewpoint. *With regard to upbringing and education, it is the parent’s conscience that is the highest authority.* (Conscience is, of course, formed by parents’ personal relationship with God – and this must necessarily be placed *before* their relationship with the state and church.)

The concept, parents’ rights, has had a pronounced influence on Danish school legislation – especially during the 1800th when Grundtvig and Kold played an important role. But the roots branched off in the pietistic movement of the 18th century. This movement clearly established that belief was one thing and the authority of the state another, and it is also fused with the thoughts of the Enlightenment regarding education and liberalism as means of developing a new, free, civil society.

It is therefore we have compulsory *education*, not compulsory *schooling* in Denmark. Therefore, still today, it is the parents who are responsible for their child’s education – either by teaching the children at home (a principally important possibility, but an option which very few parents use) or by choosing a municipal or friskole (partly state supported) in which they have confidence. The principle of rights of parents can be traced back to the first school Act of 1814:



The responsibility of sending one's child to school was negated for those who took the responsibility for the child's education.

This provision was most likely intended for the upper class who could afford to hire a private tutor. But during the 1830th, it became rather quickly established that there wasn't compulsory schooling for the children of the ordinary man either if the parents – as was the case with the parents of the religious revival – provided education themselves. With the event of the Friskole Act in 1855, the rights of parents was firmly established, and later legislation has further developed the principle. From 1908 when the friskoler were assured state grants, the state began to pay for the right of *all* parents to decide how their children would be educated, regardless of their economic situation. And this is the way it has continued. The fact that the government regularly updates the laws regarding subsidy shows how strong the rights of parents is anchored in the Danish educational system.

The term, rights of parents, has become a matter of faith. It was developed and formed through controversy about what the awak-

ened regarded as – the (wrong) rationalistic teaching of Christianity in the municipal schools. It was in the faith, the common man gained the strength to stand up to the authorities and demand the right to teach his own children in what he himself felt was the true faith. Later, the cultural battle became broader and revolved around the state's regulation of pedagogic, economic and social conditions and the political authority gained by the common man's struggle to gain self-determination in these areas.

The struggle for parent's rights is, however, not finished. It continues to be a matter of faith. And it is still revolves around the sometimes controversial right of the relationship with the state and the senior authorities. In the public debate of the 1990th, questions are raised from many sides asking if the Muslim immigrants in Denmark should actually be permitted to isolate themselves in their own schools where the education – even if much of it takes place in Danish – is permeated with the Islamic faith.

The purpose Danish Friskole Organizations is to safeguard *the family's right to have influence on issues regarding education.*



3. The rights of the minority

Democracy, as a concept and in reality, can be interpreted differently throughout the world. The horizon of interpretation is so broad that those who are on the one end will often accuse those at the other end of being undemocratic. In Western European political tradition there is, however, agreement that democracy means that decisions are made through free elections, and it is the decision of the majority which is valid.

With this as a point of departure, there are, however, two major concepts. One could be called „democracy of the majority” – meaning that the opinion of the majority shall, at all times, be promoted, and that the minority must be subordinate and hope that they will belong to the majority next time. The second concept could be called „democracy of the minority” – meaning that the majority has the authority to make decisions, but does not necessarily know the truth. The truth could, in principle, just as well lie with the minority; therefore the minority must be protected and not adapt or conform to the decisions of the majority more than absolutely necessary.

In their practical politics, European countries emphasize one of these two concepts of democracy. In Denmark, already from 1849 when Denmark got its democratic constitution, the rights of the minority were prevalent in legislation. Grundtvig and his political companions fought for this concept. They did

so to such a degree that the minority not only had the right to think and act as they would in opposition to the majority, but the majority (the state) also secured them economic support so they could deploy their minority opinions.

Here we have the core of Danish democracy of the minority. The protection of the minority is a right of the minority, which was statutory in, for example, the school legislation. The minority should not be subservient to the majority, but must be able to maintain one’s political as well as economic right – and even oppose the majority because of this right.

Only a few countries go this far. In most countries, the minority is protected and is allowed to, for example, establish their own schools. But to support the minority with state funds so they can oppose the majority, that is going too far! However, this is what we have chosen to do in Denmark and, consequently, this view of democracy ensures much freedom to the schools established by the minority.

Actually, the Danish view of democracy meant a lot for the German minority in Denmark after the First World War. The referendum in Slesvig in 1920 determined where the new German-Danish border would be located. The new border resulted in a large minority of Germans on the Danish side of the bor-



der. This minority was granted, in conformity with the thoughts regarding minority rights, a special law giving them the right to establish their own schools and receive the same subsidy as the municipal schools. The amount was actually more than the Danish friskoler

received according to the Friskole Act. This arrangement continued until after the Second World War. Today, the schools for the German minority are under the same legislation as other private schools.

Man is a divine Experiment

„Man is not an ape, but a divine experiment”, wrote Grundtvig in 1832 in his major work „Norse Mythology”. Every human being born is unique. In what way? Well, because each individual one of us can only live the particular life we have been given. No one else can live it for us – no more than we can live life for someone else. And it is our task to meet the challenge of living life fair and square – not to turn our backs on it. When Grundtvig talks of apes in relation to man we should not, incidentally, imagine it has anything to do with the theory of evolution. Darwin’s „Origin of Species” did not appear until 25 years later. Grundtvig is merely trying to explain what he sees as a crucial difference in the quality between ape and man. Apes can only „ape”, or imitate what others have already done. Man, on the other hand, is capable of doing what has to be done!

And what, then, is it that has to be done?

Quite frankly, there is no ready answer. Precisely what it is, we each have to find out for ourselves. That is what the experiment is about!

Being oneself, but not self-contained

One of the underlying ideas in Grundtvig’s work is that man has to know himself before he can know others. One must be able to say „we” and mean „I” at the same time. It is important for every individual to understand that he is unique. It is also quite reasonable to feel oneself „interesting” as an individual – but without making the mistake of believing oneself to be the only individual who is interesting. We all are! Important as it is „to be oneself”, so it is important „not to be self-contained”. We must not flee from reality and retreat into ourselves, but stand and face it side by side and play our part in it. „Day and deed go hand in hand” runs the text of one of Grundtvig’s many songs.

(Jørgen Carlsen: *The Danish „Folkehøjskole”*, 1993 p. 14-15.)



4. Freedom in the friskoler

The Grundtvigian-Kold friskoler belong to what are called the private schools in Denmark, meaning schools which are not owned by the state, or municipality or any other public authority but, usually due to special legislation, receive economic grants from the state. The private schools in Denmark encompass many different types of schools – from alternative children’s schools, friskoler, efterskoler, folkehøjskoler, private high schools, various types of trade schools and some teacher-training colleges.

The friskoler are private schools, but what is more important, however, is that they are free or independent. Together with a number of other private schools – folkehøjskoler, efterskoler, home economics schools, and needlecraft schools – the friskoler belong to „the family,, of so-called independent schools.

To the independent schools, freedom means both the freedom from something and the freedom to something. It is the freedom from being subordinate to the power of the state – and thereby the majority’s concept of schooling and education – and the freedom to establish schools and carry out education on their own conditions.

One can assemble the liberty of the independent schools – among these the friskoler – into five principles of freedom, and these are inter-dependent.

The Principle of Ideological Freedom

This principle is absolutely fundamental to the existence of the friskoler. Its source stems from the ideas regarding the rights of parents and the minority as previously described.

It is the parents who have the responsibility for, and thereby also the right to decide how their children shall be brought up and educated. The state can therefore not demand that a child shall have a particular education or go to a certain school. The parents can choose to teach their child themselves – and if enough parents agree, can they establish a school whose subject profile and entire being is based on precisely their concepts or ideology.

It is important to emphasize that the ideology can be of a religious, political or pedagogical nature. A particular religious view of the world – that it is evil, good or will soon go under – can without any problems, be the basis for a school’s ideology and daily life. If one has the opinion, which some socialistic schools have, that children should be educated to overthrow the existing society, one is also protected by the Friskole Act and can establish a school with this viewpoint.

It is elementary that the freedom to assert certain viewpoints through schooling and upbringing also implies the freedom to oppose other viewpoints - as long as this takes place with means that are within the law.



The Principle of Pedagogical Freedom

In order for particular viewpoints regarding mankind and society to be able to unfold in the lessons and daily life of a school, there must, of course, be freedom to determine content as well as methodology in connection with the school. Therefore, the state has very general rules regarding educational content and none regarding methodology. The only stipulation in the Friskole Act is that certain subjects: Danish, mathematics and English, „measure up to the level required in the municipal schools”. The stipulation is very open, and, in reality, the schools are given complete freedom with respect to the choice of educational content and organization.

At a number of schools believing in the Bible, for example, one believes the earth was created 6000 years ago, and that most of the geological and historical evidence we have to the contrary is therefore incorrect. At these schools one can, without contest, design history and geography instruction according to this perception.

Some schools feel it is of vital importance that children learn to understand the world as a unified whole. Knowledge, they believe, is primarily a tool for solving practical problems. Therefore, the instruction is only project-oriented. There are no school subjects in their curriculum. No one but the parents of the children attending those particular schools can contest the validity of this.

Supervision to insure that the instruction provided by the friskoler is satisfactory with respect to the mild criteria of the Friskole Act is in the hands of a supervisor who the circles of individuals behind the schools choose themselves, and who is then approved by the state. If the conditions do not meet the stipulations of the law, the state can take away a school’s authorization and thereby the right to subsidy

The Principle of Economic Freedom

Parents pay for their child who attends a friskole, and the amount varies from school to school. The schools must have students in order to exist. However, the schools do not want economy to be a decisive factor when parents are contemplating sending their child to a friskole. Therefore, schools endeavour to keep the payment at a relatively low level.

In exceptional circumstances, parents can be granted a free-place for their child. In this case, the payments for the child would be taken from a free-place foundation to which the state allocates grants.

In order for pedagogical freedom to become a reality, it is imperative that the state put no restrictions on how the school’s income and state subsidy shall be used. Therefore, there are no fixed rules. There are, however, rules pertaining to teachers’ and other employees’ salaries and their conditions of employment.



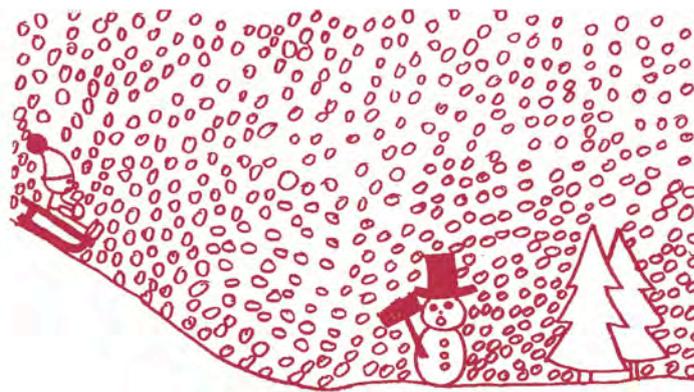
If a school, in order to live up to its ideology, wants to use its money for Bibles or for bus tickets, for example, it can do so. Only the parent-elected board can object. This freedom is also one of the reasons that the schools are very different – from buildings to materials for the curriculum and to the arrangement of their classrooms.

The Principle of Freedom of Employment

Ideological freedom and pedagogical freedom entail that the schools themselves must determine who has the appropriate qualifications to teach at the school. Neither the state, unions, nor other authorities not connected with the school can determine what type of educational training the teachers should have. Many friskole teachers have not been educated at the teacher-training colleges. Some have no pedagogical training, some have been educated at an alternative teacher-training college especially created for the friskoler.

Freedom of employment means that the friskoler – in contrast to the municipal schools – can openly demand that a teacher has certain views of mankind and society. The school cannot only require that teachers have a particular religious or political conviction; they can also demand that teachers, in and out of school, act in accordance with this conviction.

Lack of agreement between the teacher's and school's ideology is therefore a completely



legitimate reason not to hire a teacher or, if necessary, to fire a teacher.

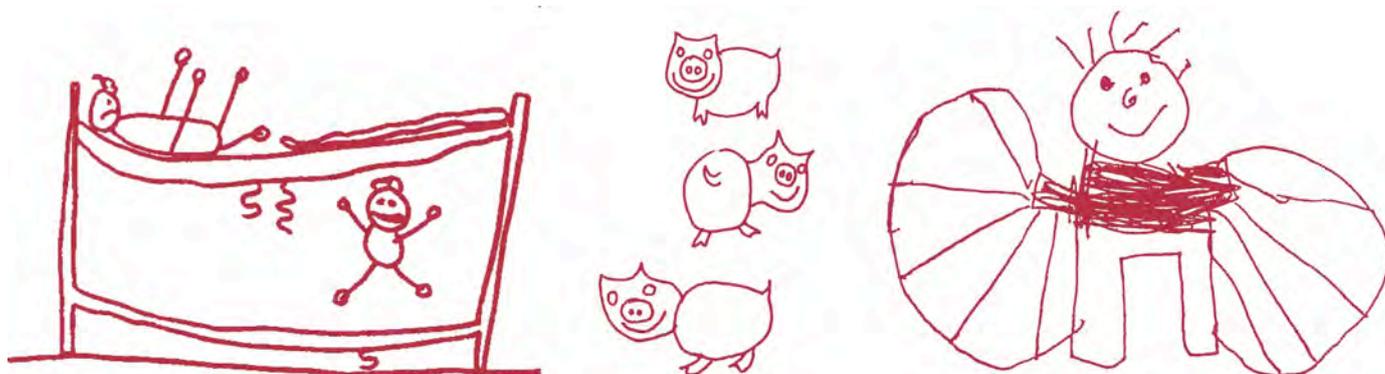
It can seem provocative that in a society such as the Danish, where the individual's freedom to believe, think and act is emphasized and protected, notably in connection with conditions of employment in the municipal schools, that a friskole that receives substantial subsidy from the state, can fire a teacher if he/she, for example, is a candidate for the „wrong” political party during an election. It is, however, a precondition for the protection of the minority – and therefore the Danish view of democracy. The Danish society must live with this paradox of freedom regarding the right of employment.

It must be noted that the employees of a friskole have the same economic protection regarding dismissal as employees in the municipal school system.

The Principle of Student Freedom

Just as no authority outside the school can intervene in the employment of teachers, there is no official authority that can require that a particular child be enrolled in the school. A friskole has the sovereignty to determine its process of acceptance and education. Here, also, the school has the freedom to set up criteria regarding parent's or children's convictions as a condition for acceptance.

The majority of friskoler do, however, accept students in the order they apply. One assumes



that the parents enrolling their child agree with, or will conform to, the ideology of the school.

There is therefore extensive *freedom to* something in the world of the Danish friskoler, and this freedom is used to a great degree. Regardless of its ideological foundation, an approved school has the right to receive state subsidy and be protected by the five principles of freedom.

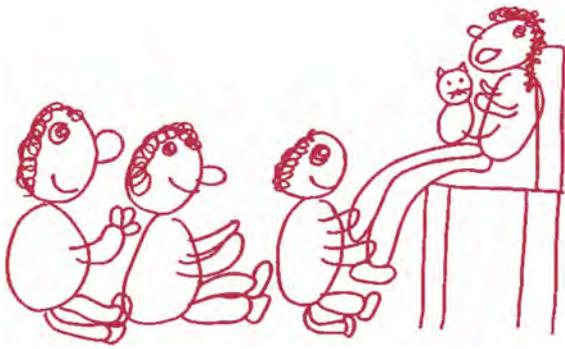
It should be stressed that the five principles

of freedom are *principles*, and that some of the examples of their use are extreme and have been chosen to illustrate how far these principles *can* go. Many of the friskoler – and not in the least many of the so-called Grundtvigian-Kold schools – would never use freedom to create a lack of freedom and oppression. This can occur, however, at some schools with a very radical religious or political ideology, even though these schools would not consider their actions as lacking freedom or being oppressive. They would rightly maintain their right to run a school according to their concept of the truth.



Some friskoler are old, others are very new. But what they all have in common is that they belong to the parents, children and teachers. Therefore, the practical maintenance of the buildings involves everyone. This also pertains to building something new, where much of the work is done voluntarily. One also has the economic responsibility.

Øster Jølby Friskole was founded in 1861. There you see the raising of a new building in 1984.



5. The Grundtvigian-Kold friskoler

The Danish private primary schools, meaning schools parallel to the municipal schools offering education from kindergarten through the 10th grade, are called the *independent primary schools*. They are under the same legislation, The Act Regarding Friskoler and Private Primary Schools. The schools, according to their various historical ideologies and concepts of education, have been organized into various groups and associations. The largest group among the private primary (and secondary) schools are the Grundtvigian-Kold friskoler. These schools are very different from each other in their curricula and the way in which their day progresses. Despite this, one can find many traits in common, and these can be traced back to Grundtvig's and Kold's views of mankind and education. These viewpoints have lived on in this more than one hundred year-old school tradition.

Governed by the parents

All friskoler are not-for-profit institutions, meaning that a school must not be owned by a private individual or run for private profit. If there is a surplus, it remains in the school's account. All schools must have a board as the supreme authority for the school's entire activities.

The school circle can, to a great degree, determine how the board will be composed. In some friskoler, for example, the Catholic schools, it is an association or organization

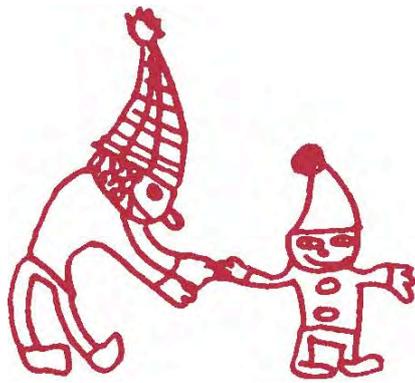
A heterogeneous school circle

The work of the school circle (the group of people behind the school) is very central in our school – Stevns Friskole. This circle should function as an organism working with several cooperating organs.

Harmony between the teachers and parents is of vital importance. It is here the friskole is created. We meet with each other in many different ways: common meetings for the entire school circle, parents' visits to the school, teachers visiting the homes, but most important is that we meet at festive occasions. This we do several times a year: class parties, spring festival, end-of-term celebration in the summer, but the best of all is our Christmas party. Usually 300 children and adults attend.

A group is a circle which gravitates around a centre. So does a school circle. The centre is the mission of the school, its view of life, and this is the organism's heartbeat. A heartbeat which is kept alive by a Christian outlook. This is expressed every day in our morning assembly when we say The Lord's Prayer.

But it must also be noted that most of the homes who wish to be members of the circle are not previously acquainted with the Grundtvigian-Kold view of schooling. There are many different reasons why parents wish to send their children to precisely our school. Most come because of the close milieu



which the school circle attempts to create. Some come because they are attracted by the aesthetic subjects we offer. Some come because they hope their children will be better prepared for the labour market. Others come because they feel it is „fashionable” to send their children to a school where one has to pay (this is certainly not our goal). Fewer come because things have not gone well for their children in the municipal schools. And some come because they have been referred by a school psychologist or social worker.

Before one applies, a thorough orientation about the school and its ideology is given. Then it is up to the parents to decide if they can say „yes” to a partnership with us. But the school must also be able to say „yes” to the parents. We must be in general agreement with regard to upbringing and education. And the parents, as well as the teachers, must be prepared to contribute more to the fellowship of the school than they would in a municipal school – otherwise it won't work.

Sometimes a home will withdraw their child after a few years because they discover that they do not agree with the school on important matters. In some instances, the school can also ask a home to find another school for their child because the fellowship didn't work. This freedom must be there for both parts.

What has been said here about the homes applies also to the teachers. Usually, we manage to have a good fellowship which results in lasting friendships also outside of school.

which is behind the school, and this group has the deciding influence on the composition of the board. This is in order to protect the ideology on which the school was founded.

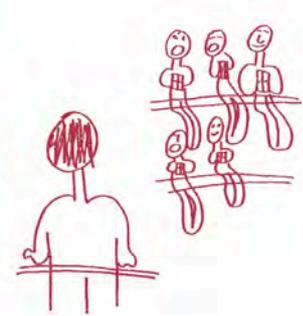
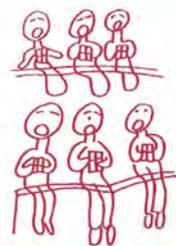
In the Grundtvigian-Kold friskoler, it is of crucial importance that it is the pupils' parents who have the decision-making authority regarding the school.

All of these schools have as the supreme authority a „school circle” which is composed of the pupils' parents and others who wish to support the school. From this circle, a board is elected. The board is responsible to the Ministry of Education for the running of the school as a whole.

It is also characteristic for the Grundtvigian-Kold friskoler that parents are active in connection to the school, for example, by participating in the maintenance and cleaning of the school.

Emphasis on the narrative and song

Already in the first friskoler founded on Grundtvig's and Kold's ideas, song and the narrative, „the living word”, held a central place. And this is still one of the cornerstones of the friskoler. Through the active use of, and listening to, the Danish language – the mother tongue – the child learned what it was to be Danish. And it is through poetry and the narrative that the child is presented for the *mythical*, the mystery of life and existence – that which is difficult to measure, and



weigh, and understand but which is essential in order to live a true life as an individual and as a member of society.

The narrative, or oral tradition, at a Grundtvigian-Kold friskole is not just another pedagogical method equal to other pedagogical methods. Because the narrative form has the *folkelige* – the belonging to the people – and the *mythical* as its starting point and as its end, it must be understood in itself as a special way in which people are together – it is an introduction to human life. According to Kold, instead of learning by rote and memorizing textbooks, the key was the teachers ability to bring a subject to life through the narrative.

A Christian tradition

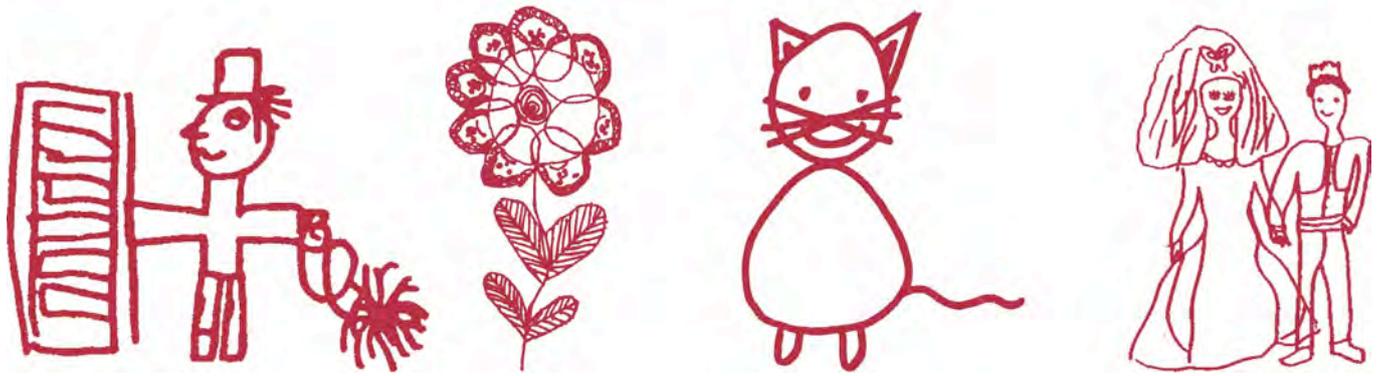
The friskoler were founded in circles where Christianity was a natural starting point and a basis for life. What this meant, Christen Kold said very simply. He tells how, during his youth at the teachers training college was depressed about his inadequacy in all respects, „but one day Peter Larsen Skræppenborg (a revivalist) made me aware that our Lord loves the human race”. This changed everything for him. This made him joyful, and he discovered that he also loved human beings, even himself. The understanding of God’s universal love gave him life and liberty. This understanding of Christianity influenced everything he did later in life, including his work with education. It has also been a common feature of the friskoler since their beginnings.

Different interpretations

The aim of Stevns Friskole is to run a school based on Christen Kold’s and Grundtvig’s views on education. There are wide and varied interpretations of their viewpoints. But this is the way it should be. This is what makes a Grundtvigian-Kold friskole exciting and rejuvenating. This enables discussions about the identity of the school to take place year after year.

Occasionally, sparks start flying during the debates, and it sometimes happens that someone leaves in anger. But these debates are never boring. They are most often fruitful. In any case, these are the conditions when we elect to put the freedom of education at the top of our list of priorities.

Christianity as a foundation means that the Grundtvigian-Kold friskoler cannot have an ideology – neither pedagogic, political, nor religious. The fact that our Lord loves human beings is not an ideology. It is a condition which implies security, equality and freedom. This freedom should not be restricted by ideological preambles. This foundation means that human beings and thereby children are something because they are loved – as in a family – not because of what they are or what they can do, or what they can attain and not what one makes them become through pedagogical efforts. The children themselves – as in a good home – are more important than beliefs and pedagogical programs.

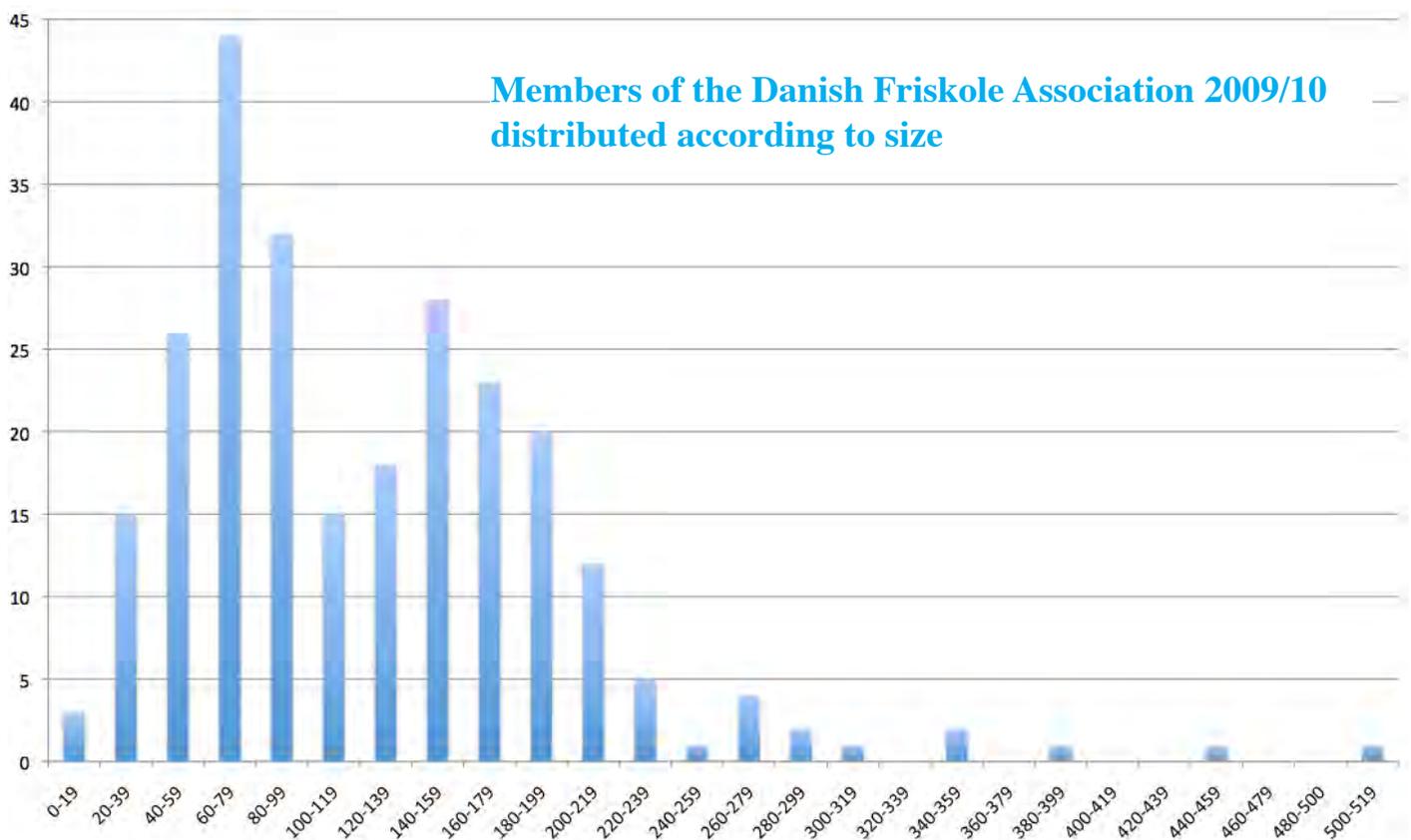


The child comes first, the method thereafter, and this must be adapted to the child and reality.

As Christianity is an attitude and not a group of intentions or fixed opinions, it is necessary that the teachers and parents connected with the school have the same viewpoint. This is necessary in order to maintain the school's foundation – otherwise the tradition is dead.

But because an essential factor of this attitude is to insure freedom, one cannot demand

a confession of faith from the parents or the teachers. This could appear to be contradictory. If a friskole is to remain a friskole and continue to live with freedom, equality and love, there must necessarily be teachers and parents who hold on to living Christianity and thereby keep the foundation of the school alive. But this cannot be *demanded* of the parents or teachers without distorting that Christianity because then there is no freedom. One must continue to live and struggle with this contradiction.





6. Other private primary schools

As mentioned before, the friskoler are grouped in various associations. Historically, there are two principle lines to which the Danish friskoler adhere. The two biggest groups of these schools belong to one or other of these lines. One is the Grundtvigian-Kold group and the tradition which they represent as explained above. The friskoler, of which only a minority have more than 200 pupils (see the graph on p. 20), are members of the Danish Friskole Association. One hundred ninety-four schools are members of this association, and this is, in relation to the number of schools, the largest association of friskoler. Besides the Grundtvigian-Kold friskoler, the association has as members a few schools with an ideology other than the Grundtvigian-Kold, as well as 15 Rudolph Steiner schools (Waldorffschools) and 9 schools for immigrants.

The other historical main-line is represented by the private primary and secondary schools (reálskoler). Many of these schools were like the friskoler founded in the last half of the 1800th. Not as an ideological and pedagogical alternative to the municipal school, but as an option for academically-gifted children, mainly from the rural areas, to enable them to gain more proficiency than they, at that

time, could get in the municipal schools. Still today, the hallmark of these schools is that their curricula is academically oriented. There are 116 private primary and secondary schools, most of them with between 200-1000 pupils. They belong to the association Danmarks Realskoleforening which is, by far, the largest organization with respect to number of students.

The other associations of private primary schools are: Lilleskolernes Sammenslutning (schools which were inspired by reform pedagogics of the 1960th, with 39 schools), Foreningen af Kristne Friskoler (schools founded in the 1970th with a pietistic Christian ideology) with 29 members, The Association of Private High Schools (primary schools connected with these high schools) with 20 members, The Association of Catholic Schools with 16 members and finally, The German Schools and Language Association (schools with relationship to the German minority in Denmark) with 16 members.

If one wishes more information on the above-named associations, one can call or write to them. The addresses are at the end of this booklet.

Friskolernes danmarkskort 2010

Skolekredse, der er medlemmer af Dansk Friskoleforening
Opdelt efter foreningens seks regioner



- Grundtvig-koldske skoler og skoler med blandet pædagogisk grundlag.
- Indvandrerskoler.
- ▲ Rudolf Steiner-skoler.
- △ Adventistskoler, apostolske og tværkirkelige skoler.
- △ Skoler med Tvind-pædagogik.
- ◇ Skoler med Ron Hubbard-pædagogik.
- Uden ramme (f.eks. ●): Skoler med under 100 elever.
- Med én ramme om (f.eks. △): Skoler med fra 100 til 199 elever.
- ◻ Med dobbelt ramme om (f.eks. ◻): Skoler med over 199 elever.

Forkortelser: RSS: Rudolf Steiner-skole - Pr.: Privatskole.
- Sk.: Skole. - Int.: Internationale.
- Skoler, der blot er anført med et stednavn, hedder Friskole.

De enkelte landsdele er ikke gengivet i samme målestoksforhold.

- København og Frederiksberg:**
- Ahi Int. School
 - Al Hikma Skole
 - Al-Hilal Skolen
 - Al Huda Skolen
 - Al Quds Skole
 - Amager's Int. Sk.
 - Bjørns Int. Skole
 - Bordings Friskole
 - Calamus Privatsk.
 - DIA Privatskole
 - Frederiksberg
 - HAY-Skolen.
 - Iqbal Int. Sk.
 - Iqra Pr.
 - Jinnah Int. Sk.
 - Kilde-sk.
 - Livets Skole
 - Landsby-sk.
 - Mariendal
 - Nord-vest Privatsk.
 - ▲ RSS i København
 - △ Sjællands Pr.
 - △ Svanevej Pr.
 - Vanløse Pr.
 - ◇ Øresunds Internat. Sk.

Der er 254 friskoler i Dansk Friskoleforening. Derudover er der ca. 230 andre frie grundskoler: privatskoler, lille-skoler, kristne friskoler, tyske og katolske skoler. I alt er der næsten 500 frie grundskoler. Antallet af skoler kan variere i årets løb. Kortet revideres løbende og nyeste udgave ses på bladets hjemmeside: friskolebladet.dk. Endvidere findes der et interaktivt danmarkskort på Dansk Friskoleforenings hjemmeside: friskoler.dk > skoler.





7. The stories of three friskoler

7.1. To start from scratch

Gudenådalens Friskole was founded in 1986 by a group of parents who wished to start a Grundtvigian-Kold friskole. In January, a statutory meeting was held, and we were asked to become the leaders (principals) of the new friskole. Our concepts and basic ideas were in keeping with the parents, and we agreed to work together.

A lot had to be done. We had no building. There was nothing to put into the building anyway – no furniture, not even a book. We finally managed to rent a house belonging to an abandoned farm in the village of Bjerring, near Bjerringbro in central Jutland. But it is not enough just to find a house. One has to be approved by the fire department, conform to the zoning-laws, and on and on.

The tenacity of the group meant that we did not sit with our hands in our laps while waiting for the approval of the authorities. A month after the opening of the school, we were finally approved – an approval based on dispensations and provisional authorization.

The stone house we rented was in very poor condition, so we spent summer vacation painting, wall papering, hanging lamps and repairing the tables and chairs we found in the parents' basements. We were not able to find anything we could use from some old

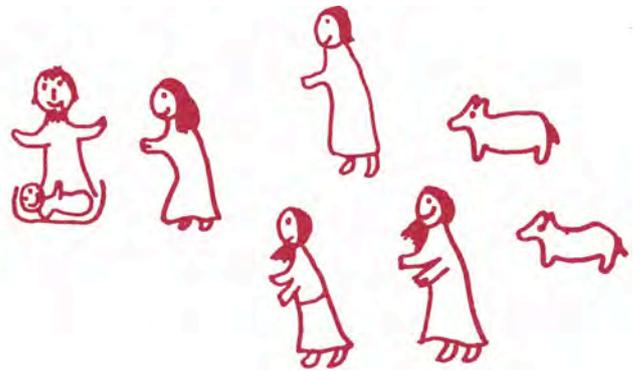
closed-down school. In one way or another, everything had to be obtained. One parent gave the school 2 new blackboards. My wife and I had a leftover box of chalk. A friendly school gave us a used copy machine. All of this was worth its weight in gold to us. In this way, we were able to be ready for our first day of school. The press was invited to come and visit us on the first day of this strange recycled school with 17 pupils.

We didn't have any money. The parents were not the most wealthy, but all homes paid 3 month's tuition in advance. We had to find security for the first half-year's state subsidy, but otherwise we just set to work.

An ideology is of primary importance

During the many meetings we had prior to the opening of the school, it was important to thoroughly discuss many matters. It was especially questions regarding the school's fundamental concepts of religion and humanity that were important to agree upon. Not quite as important was the curriculum, the structure of the timetable – number of hours for each subject, etc.

We agreed, of course, on a number of things which should be included in the day, but most important was that it was agreed that the daily life of the school was the teach-



ers' responsibility. When all of the practical elements are taken care of, the teacher must have pedagogical freedom and responsibility for the daily life of the school.

understand what our school is all about – so there is something to say YES to. It is too easy to say NO to something. A school can not build on negation.

The children are divided into three groups:
 The young group: Kindergarten – 2nd grade.
 The in-between group: 3rd grade-5th grade.
 The oldest group: 6th grade-8th grade.

The home and school

We regard the school as a community built upon the relationship between the home and school.

It is our premise that these groupings give the children a good school experience. During one year the children are in the youngest in a group, the next year they are in-between and the third year, the oldest in a group. The oldest should inspire and help the youngest. We also consider this structure important for learning.

A community where the home and school work closely together – in a manageable environment – can make our tasks sprout and grow – a community where individual consideration is taken, and where there is freedom and responsibility within the community framework.

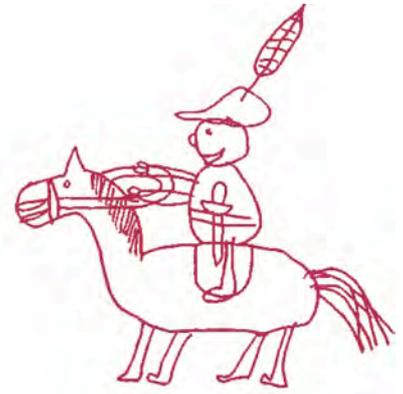
It has always been of great importance that the parents have insight into the daily life of the school and decision-making process. We therefore give the parents a great amount of information – and all meetings held at the school are open for all members of the circle supporting the school.

A homelike school, where both children and parents feel at home, where we work with that which belongs to human life – that which gives clarity to the conditions of life, this is our goal. We tell the children that they belong somewhere – in a country, in a township, in a fellowship.

Most important for us was, and is, the ideology of humanity on which the school is based. It was important to find out what we jointly could say „yes” to. How we should – together – arrange the daily life; exclude what we agreed we didn't like about the schools from which we came. Saying YES to the school has become an important word for us. It is important that new, prospective parents

We work with getting to know our history – our roots and our background.

We wish to create an understanding of our culture by using the narrative to tell about our history, Bible history and literature. The narrative, in contrast to television, for example, enables us to create pictures with our imagination. It uses the language of the heart.



And through partnership with the parents, in parents' meetings, we will also learn about our culture. Here, it is especially important for us to look outward – welcome others than just the children's parents. Everyone is welcome – members of the group supporting the school, child or adult.

The parents participate actively in the practical doings of the school: cleaning, and maintenance, for example. All of the parents have a key to the school so one can work when one can.

The parents are members of various committees with different responsibilities. Some take care of the playground, others plan events at the school, etc. This work is very important for the child's schooling. The parents' involvement rubs off on the children – and contributes to our meeting joyful and satisfied children.

Our biggest joint project up until now, was the building of our new school.

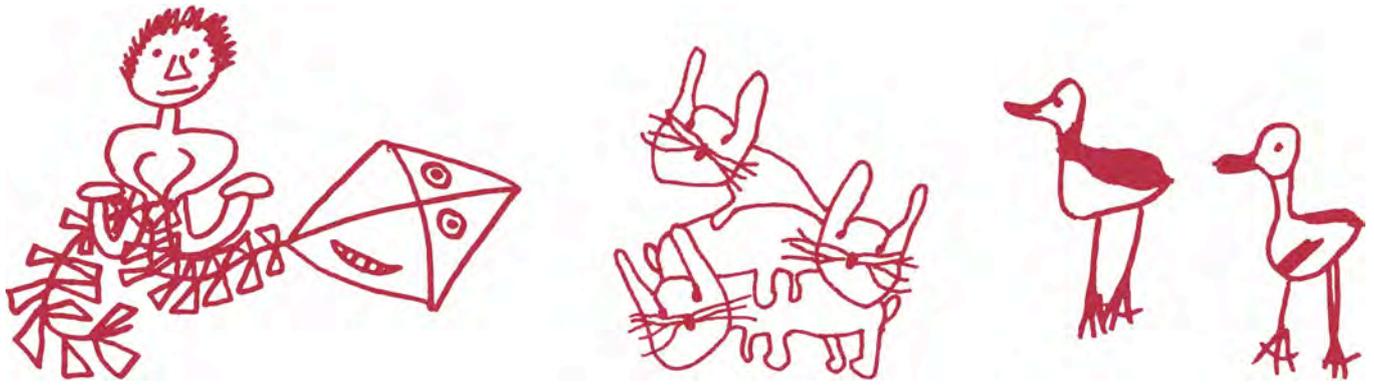
As previously mentioned, we were not able to get permanent permission to remain in our

rented stone house so we had to look around for other possibilities. We first rented an adjacent field and erected a pavilion which we were lucky to be able to buy cheaply. In 1990, we started building. The parents have built most of the school themselves. There were, however, some trades which weren't represented among the parents, so we had to pay tradesmen to have this work done.

The parents pay school fees. We have found a reasonable level for the amount of the fees: and the discount price for two or more children. This gives the school an economy that can make the ends meet. We cannot, however, be extravagant, but we can afford to obtain something new once in a while.

When it is possible to run a school with so few means, it is because the state subsidizes our running costs. Approximately 75% of the average expense per child in the municipal schools is given as subsidy to the friskoler. The rest we must manage ourselves.

We started with 17 children and almost 2 full-time and 2 part time teachers. That's all we could manage in 1986. We now have 58 children and 6 teachers.



7.2. Influenced by generations

Odense Friskole lies in the centre of Odense, a city of 176,000 inhabitants, with 38 municipal primary schools and 11 very different private primary schools. Half of Odense Friskole's buildings are from the beginning of this century, the rest are new. There is not much room, and the school is surrounded by apartment buildings. The rather bleak environment is compensated by art exhibitions about the school and other environmentally creative initiatives.

The school is 132 years old and one of the few Grundtvigian-Kold friskoler which is located in a bigger city. There are 360 families connected with the school. These families are spread throughout the city. 490 children from the age of 6 to 17 attend the school from 8-12,00/14,30 depending on their grade. They can go to the school for 11 years.

Besides this, 115 of the children are in the before-and-after school day care arrangement which is open all year round from 7:00 AM-5:00 PM. 42 teachers and educators are employed by the school.

The school circle behind the school which forms its democratic base is made up of parents and others with connection to the school. They elect the school's board which has the full responsibility for the school, meaning the planning of the curriculum, hiring and firing of employees, as well as responsibility for the economy and buildings.

A fellowship of commitment

Odense friskole does not adhere to one particular ideology or pedagogical principle. It was not founded by an organization, but by a group of parents, the majority of whom were tradesmen who were inspired by N.F.S. Grundtvig and Christen Kold. In 1863, these parents founded a school for all who wished to attend.

The school is a living tradition influenced by generation after generation and in order to understand it, one must take an active interest in what is going on. Therefore, it is imperative that children, parents and teachers meet often. The parents must be a part of the life of the school, but this does not mean that they can make changes at their pleasure. On the contrary. It is the task of the school circle to maintain the traditions and the basic ideas of the school and from this develop a school that is in tune with the times. In this connection, it is important to emphasize that we, in fellowship, have the freedom to plan the structure and lessons precisely as we find right.

The parents may not check or control the teachers. They must have unreserved confidence that something good, both educationally and human will come out of the interaction between child and teacher. Such trust comes through shared activities and discussions starting from the belief that the *entire* school is a collective responsibility for



everyone – children, parents and personnel. In return, the teachers must meet the parent's trust with an educational responsibility, a respect for the parents' right to bring up their children. The relationship between schooling and upbringing is a subtle balance where one can often overlap the other.

Throughout the year, we, in cooperation with the parents, arrange many meetings, activities and discussions with and for the parents. It is a difficult task when there are approximately 360 homes involved, but this is given high priority. We arrange lectures, song evenings, folk dancing, common meals, plays and concerts with and without pupils. At least once a month, all of the parents have the possibility of participating in one or another activity at the school. We expect the parents' active participation.

The whole person

We see our task to help develop the entire human being, the whole person. It is not enough to teach only concrete knowledge – to develop skills. It is not enough to teach the children to spell and read, to learn foreign languages and mathematics. This is, of course, important, but as Christen Kold put it, *„Knowledge is a good servant, but life must come first. We must be cautious, we don't know what we are educating the children to. Knowledge makes them conceited and makes them more vulgar than before. We have enough egoists and braggarts. Let us not deck the youth out with knowledge and give*

them the claws of wild beasts so they can accumulate worldly goods”.

It is also our task to teach the children creativity, dance, song, self-development, consideration, to be joyful, to be active and to respect each other. We must adhere to the belief that life is mysterious, and that everything cannot be put into a formula. We must hold on to diversity, to the unpredictable nature of life. We must try to make the children understand that there are no fixed answers when the questions are about life. This is the way we must always work with them.

We try to create a school that speaks to the imagination and feelings of the child through the narrative: discussions, storytelling, dramatics, song, games and creative activities. We wish to keep the tradition of the narrative alive because *„there is a truth which only can be understood by the heart, not by reason, and here, the narrative is a good means”*. By identifying oneself with the material, it becomes living and at the same time becomes a common experience. Besides the daily schooling, there are, throughout the year, activities and other events in and out of school, in groups, in the classroom either for or with all the pupils of the school. These can be personal, artistic, creative or practical experiences.

Musical activities and education have a high priority partly as a means of artistic expression, but more important as a fellowship-creating activity.



Group singing, ensembles, chorus, instrumental instruction, playing for each other and concerts mark the year.

Children have the right to be children

We intend to safeguard the children's right to be children. We wish to ascribe to childhood and thereby schooling its own value. The traditional school aims at preparing a child for adult life. We should not be apprehensive about the future of the child and make them into small adults. They should not always be confronted with problems with which even adults have difficulty in coping. We do not, however, feel that we should isolate the child from reality. But we should help him to see the possibilities in life.

We put emphasis on the children's shared

responsibility for the daily life of the school. When they are a little older, they are actively included in the planning and implementation of activities. It is important that they learn the democratic rules and processes.

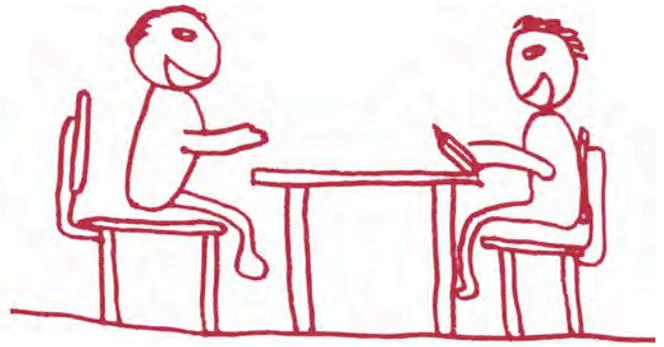
Two final comments

What I have talked about here is an expression of what we consider important. In addition to the above, one can find many other views, subjects and initiatives at Odense Friskole which can also be recognized in many other types of schools.

Odense Friskole is a living organism. It is jumbled dissimilarity with many different viewpoints. These cannot be put into a formula. A friskole is difficult to describe; it must be experienced.



The friskoler are binding ententes where the individual is part of the whole. This whole has deep historic roots which extend far into the future. The tree which stands with deep roots and reaches toward heaven is a symbol which is often used in order to illustrate the connection between the past and the future. At Herning Friskole the tree is a living reality in the middle of the school's playground.



7.3. From municipal school to friskole

In the middle of the 70th, the birthrate began to fall drastically. This decrease was especially serious in thinly populated areas in Western Jutland and Sdr. Vium was not exempt. From 1960 to 1976 Sønder Vium municipal school had a student body of 120-140 pupils spread throughout seven grades.

But when the birth rate began to fall, a strong emotional debate regarding school structure began, and many suggestions were given by the schools which were threatened most. „If you send your children to our school..... or, can't the town-children be bussed to the country?“ etc. This soon developed into a fight for survival – everyone against each other – and the children were almost forgotten, for it was said, „They can adapt anywhere!“

If one wasn't a warrior, there was no other possibility than to think in new directions. Even though we didn't want to acknowledge it, we had to admit that we were not warriors, and this pushed the development of alternative forms of education.

Now it was the parents' turn

The reckoning with the grade-divided school (the material shall fit the child, not the opposite), student groups of children from 2-3 grades with two teachers, the close teacher-parent cooperation – all of these ideas were introduced when the school was still a municipal school. Many patted us on the back and praised us, and it was our hope that by

creating a school which was a little different, we would be permitted to keep it. But this was not to be, the decision was made – Sønder Vium school would be shut down.

Now it was the parents' turn. In cooperation with the local parish association, a handful of people got together and set up a working group whose aim was to establish a friskole which was built on the basic pedagogical ideas one had in the municipal school. – The working group contacted the Danish Friskole Association and together they planned what they would do until the statutory general meeting. Countless meetings were held before the last pieces of the puzzle fell into place.

Was it possible?

There were especially two major problems which had to be solved:

1. Could we get permission to buy the school buildings and everything in them from the municipality, and, if so, what would they cost?
2. Could we convince the teachers to give up their municipal public servant security and work for a friskole whose survival was a question mark?

The school was bought, and the enthusiasm and commitment of the working group rubbed off so that all of the personnel, from maintenance to the teachers and principal, found that the friskole was an exciting challenge.



There were many more things one had to keep in check, for example, we didn't have any money, and we had no guarantee that parents would send their children to a school where they had to pay. Despite these elements of uncertainty, the working group called a statutory meeting. It was an evening with both fervour and enthusiasm. There was 100% support for the plans of the friskole, and the working group received much praise and was elected as Sønder Vium Friskole's first board.

Local solidarity

All of the children from the abolished school district, approximately 50, registered for the friskole, and the newly elected board now had the task of ringing doorbells in the area to find initial capital. This went better than expected, and there was widespread joy in the whole parish that by standing together, we were able to establish our own school. Unfortunately, not all took part in our happiness. The municipal school administration, some local politicians and some of our colleagues from the municipal schools in the area looked askance at us. Instead of being looked upon as an exciting alternative, we were considered a dangerous competitor to the municipal school. Today, the relationship with the municipal authorities has been normalized, but there are still some neighbouring schools that feel we „take their children”.

It was a gigantic task to start such a friskole, but the reward wasn't long in coming. We

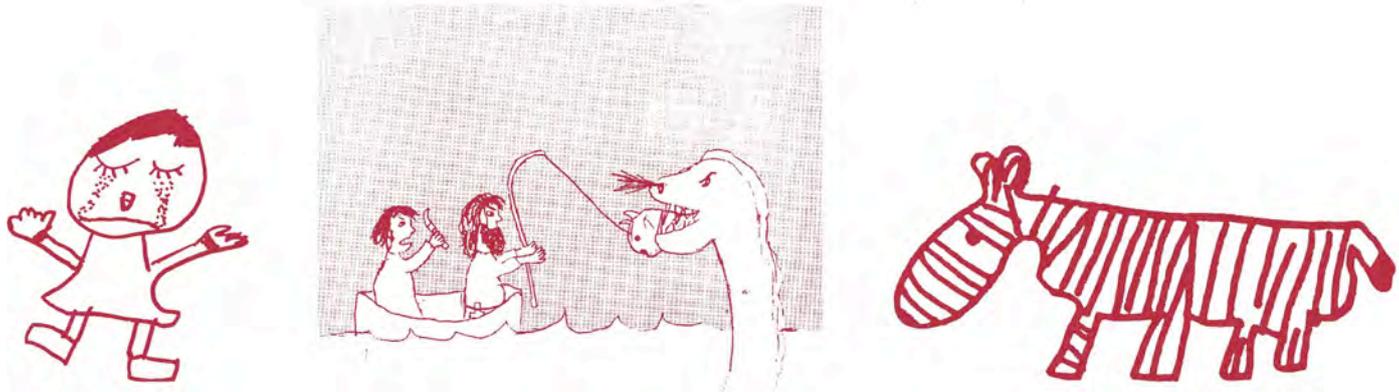
experienced a parental involvement and a parish solidarity which we hadn't experienced previously. We didn't have more money at our disposal, on the contrary, but we had the freedom to use the resources in a completely different way, which was extremely beneficial to our school.

The children feel that it is their school, and that one must take good care of it. Everyone in the parish is willing to offer a few Saturdays, if there is something that needs to be done. The school should also be regarded as a local cultural centre. It is important that all generations feel at home here.

Great demands

Great demands are placed on the friskole teacher. If he or she cannot live up to these demands and expectations, the person in question can be fired, and this should be seen as a sign of health. To work at a friskole is not just a job; it is a way of life.

The number of students has now almost doubled. We are pleased that parents from neighbouring parishes have started to send their children to our school. When we started, we were a small, manageable school where the individual child thrived, and where the home and school had the freedom to choose which pedagogical ideas and which spirit should prevail. We should keep this in mind while our school is growing.



8. Useful addresses

Friskolernes Kontor

(The Friskole Office)
 Prices Havevej 11
 DK-5600 Fåborg
 Tlf. (+45) 6261 3013, fax. (+45) 6261 3911

Den frie Lærerskole

(The Free and Independent College of Education)
 Svendborgvej 15, Ollerup
 DK-5762 Vester Skerninge
 Tlf. (+45) 6224 1066, fax. (+45) 6224 1485

Efterskolernes Sekretariat

(The Efterskole Information Office)
 Vartov, Farvergade 27, opg. H
 DK-1463 København K
 Tlf. (+45) 3312 8680, fax. (+45) 3393 8094

Højskolernes Sekretariat

(Folkehøjskolernes Information Office)
 Nytorv 7
 DK-1450 København K
 Tlf. (+45) 3313 9822, fax. (+45) 3313 9870

Danske Gymnastik og Idrætsforeninger

(Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations)
 Vingsted Skovvej 1, Box 569
 DK-7100 Vejle
 Tlf. (+45) 7940 4040, fax. (+45) 7940 4080

Undervisningsministeriet

(The Ministry of Education, Department for Youth and Adult Education.)
 Folkeoplysningsafdelingen Frederiksholms Kanal 25 D
 DK-1220 København K
 Tlf. (+45) 3392 7900, fax. (+45) 3392 5592

Undervisningsministeriet

Økonomiafdelingen
 (The Ministry of Education, Department of Economy)
 Frederiksholms Kanal 21

DK-1220 København K
 Tlf. (+45) 3392 5000, fax. (+45) 3392 5547

Danmarks Privatskoleforening

(The Association of Private Primary & Secondary Schools)
 Sankt Kjelds Gade 3
 DK-2100 København Ø
 Tlf. (+45) 3916 0690, fax. (+45) 3918 0254

Lilleskolerne – En sammenslutning af frie grundskoler

(The Association of Little Schools)
 Sankt Kjelds Gade 3
 DK-2100 København Ø
 Tlf. (+45) 3929 5004, fax. (+45) 3929 6004

Foreningen af Kristne Friskoler

(The National Association of Christian Friskoler)
 Østergade 28, 1.
 DK-6900 Skjern
 Tlf. (+45) 9735 2099, fax. (+45) 9735 2534

Foreningen af Katolske Skoler i Danmark

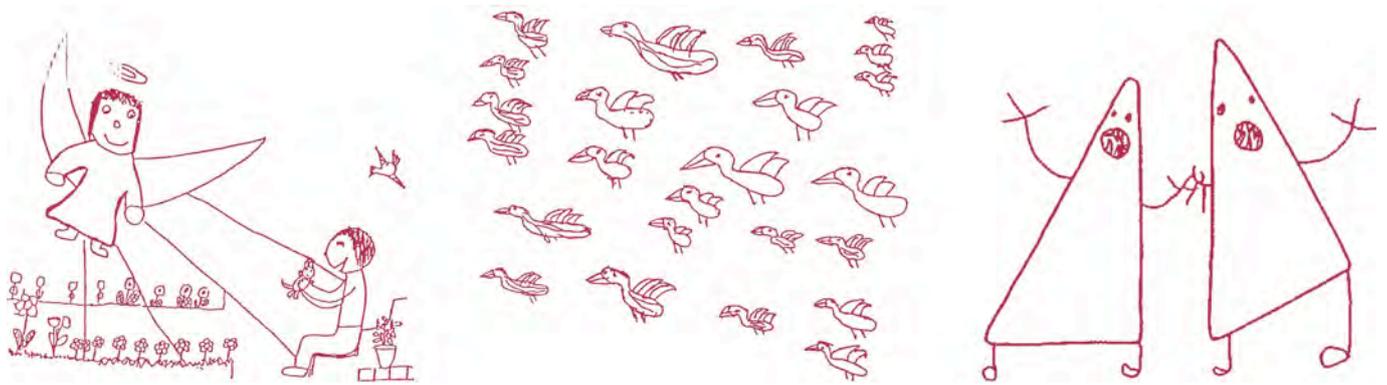
(The Association of Catholic Schools)
 Skovgårdsvej 11
 DK-2920 Charlottenlund
 Tlf. (+45) 3964 1282, fax. (+45) 3964 1261

Deutscher Schul- und Sprachverein für Nord-schleswig

(The German School and Language Association)
 Ramsherred 49 A, Box 242,
 DK-6200 Aabenraa
 Tlf. (+45) 7462 4103, fax. (+45) 7462 7361

Foreningen af Private Gymnasieskoler

(The Association of Private Colleges)
 Sct. Kjeldsgade 3, 2.
 DK-2100 København Ø
 Tlf. (+45) 3920 1479, fax. (+45) 3920 1497



Christen Kold was not a writer. He worked mainly through his personal contribution, his „living word”, which started a whole generation of friskoler. This inspiration was carried on as a living oral, not written, committed pedagogical tradition – and this is the way it still is.

Kold, however, left a single written work, the little pamphlet, „Om børneskolen” (About the Primary School) from 1850 which was first published after his death. The following texts are from this pamphlet.

A true and real education

„In order for education to be true and real, two things are required:

First; that the teacher’s personality and nature are filled with love and interest for the subject in question so that the pupil’s personality opens up and absorbs the thoughts, feelings and concept of the subject through the unfathomable power of the living word.

Second, that the matter which is to be communicated, is such that the pupil, at his spiritual level, is able to receive it in such a way that it can either awake or nourish his spiritual life.

These two things are absolutely necessary for a spiritual stimulation of the human being to take place – and this is the fundamental principle of education.

If the Danish folk are to be elevated to be a truthful, independent, strong folk who can and will use their freedom for the benefit and pleasure of themselves and society, the spirit must first be liberated from the narrow-minded, selfish and depressive which prevents development, and which the structure and character of the municipal schools promote way too much”.



Christen Mikkelsen Kold, Teacher (1816-1870). Photo from approx. 1866

Christen Kold was the son of a shoemaker. He was educated as a teacher, but was unable to get permanent employment as a teacher because of his views regarding a living personal education which were contrary to the prevailing pedagogical principles regarding effective learning. He found work as a private tutor in the houses of prosperous farmers and worked in various locations for many years until he, in 1851, founded a folkehøjskole in Ryslinge and the year after, a friskole in Dalby, Funen. His schools had a great following, and when he died, only 54 years old, he was the principal of a big folkehøjskole and left behind a living source of inspiration for future schools.

He became, along with Grundtvig who was a great inspiration for him, the father of the Danish folkehøjskole, efterskole and friskole movements, and he has had vital influence on the entire development of Danish education.

– Perhaps his influence will be even greater in the decades to come.

This booklet is about the Danish friskole. These schools are a part of the independent school tradition which – with common roots in N.F.S. Grundtvig's and Christen Kold's concepts of schooling – also among others include the folkehøjskoler and efterskoler.

The Danish educational system is built on compulsory education – not compulsory schooling. Danish parents are free to choose the municipal school or one of many types of private primary schools subsidized by the state. Parents can also, if they have the courage and tenacity, establish a new school based on the principle's they find right. There are many types of private primary schools in Denmark. These are described in a separate segment. But what we talk about in this booklet is first and foremost the Grundtvigian-Kold friskole and principles of freedom which influence them.

There is no common recipe which creates these friskoler. It is more a view of humanity, which is built basically on our wonder regarding our existence: that each individual is a unique divine experiment. It intensifies the understanding that difference and variation is a richness and strength.

It is not our intention to convince others to adopt our views of schooling. We hope that this account of the Danish friskole tradition will give others courage and inspiration to – just like „Numskull Jack” (Klods-Hans) in the fairy tale – create schools according their own ideas – schools one feels are what a school should be.



The Danish Friskole

— a segment of
the Grundtvig-Kold school tradition



Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783 – 1872)
Clergyman, hymn-writer, historian, educational reformer and politician
Drawing by P.C. Skovgaard 1847

No other person in recent times has meant so much for Denmark as N.F.S. Grundtvig. No one has had such a versatile influence as he. It has been said, „one meets him at the border”. This is still true. If you cross the Danish boarder, you will, at one time or another, encounter tension between a modern scientific technical mentality on the one hand and a more or less hidden legacy from Grundtvig on the other. His thoughts regarding mankind, freedom and living interaction are still a living inspiration. His thoughts live on in his many well-known and loved patriotic songs and hymns.

Grundtvig became the father of the independent Danish school forms, among these the folkehøjskoler (folk high schools), efterskoler (continuation schools) and friskoler. This tradition has left an indelible mark on the entire Danish school and educational world. It has left an equally deep imprint on Danish church services. Almost always when one attends a church service some of his hymns is sung.