Stockholm University

Nordic School Conference

12 March 2026 / 09:00-16:45 / Free online

Effective Interventions to Promote Learning, Participation, and Positive Classroom Environments in Schools

PROGRAM

09:00 – 09:15: Introduction and welcome by the head of the department, Jenny Wilder
09:15 – 09:55: Thomas Nordström – *Evidence-based Teaching and Nordic Intervention Research: From Policy to Practice*
10:00 – 10:40: Oddny Judith Solheim – *A Decade of Educational Intervention Research in Norway: Drivers, Insights and the Road Ahead*
10:50 – 11:30: Mikko Aro – *Understanding Efficient Support for Learning Disabilities:The Role of Non-cognitive Factors*
11:35 – 12:15: Åsa Elwér – *Understanding Mathematical Word Problems in the Early Grades: Classroom Approaches and Targeted Interventions*

12:15 - 13:15 LUNCH

TRACK 1:
13:15 – 13:55: Markus Talvio - *How do Teachers Benefit from Training on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)?*
14:00 – 14:40: Laura Ferrer Wreder and Tina M. Olsson – *Interventions Across Developmental Periods: A Swedish Follow-Up Study*
14:45 – 15:25: Børge Strømgren – *Feasibility and Efficacy of the Norwegian Version of the PAX 'Good Behavior Game' in Regular Classrooms: Protocol for a Multiple-Baseline Single-Case Research Design Study*

TRACK 2:
13:15 – 13:55: Mari-Ann Sørlie – *Effects and Lessons Learned After Two Decades with the PALS/ SWPBIS Model in Norway*
14:00 – 14:40: Mika Paananen – *Behaviour Support Through Check-In Check-Out in Finnish PBS Schools and ECEC Units: Intervention Response and Core Components*
14:45 – 15:25: Nina Klang - *Feasibility Study of Check-in Check-out*

15:30 – 16:10: Leif Strömwall and Lotta Ryk - *Promoting Mental Health in Children:Two Systematic Reviews with Focus on SEL Programmes*

16:15 – 16:45 – Panel Discussion – *Bridging Research to Practice: Challenges and Future Directions for Intervention Research in the Nordic School Context*
Mikko Aro, Thomas Nordström and Oddny Judith Solheim

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PROGRAM / 09:00-10:50

09:00 – 09:15: Introduction and welcome by the head of the department, Jenny Wilder

09:15 – 09:55: Thomas Nordström – ***Evidence-based Teaching and Nordic Intervention Research: From Policy to Practice***

Recent Swedish curricula have strengthened the requirement that teaching should be evidence-based. This is an ambitious goal that demands a solid research foundation built on well-conducted intervention studies, access to (open) research data, and a sufficient volume of research to enable systematic reviews and meta-analyses - the central method for synthesizing evidence. The challenge is clear: how do we create a knowledge base that is both robust and useful for educational practice? This presentation discusses these requirements and other insights from the research group Evidence in Learning and Didactics (ELD) based on our work with research syntheses. It also introduces an upcoming mapping of Nordic intervention research from the past ten years. The study will provide a unique overview of conducted interventions and identify critical gaps in knowledge. The results will form the basis for strategies aimed at strengthening the evidential foundation and making research findings more accessible and relevant for teaching.

10:00 – 10:40: Oddny Judith Solheim – ***A Decade of Educational Intervention Research in Norway: Drivers, Insights and the Road Ahead***

In Norway, there has been a marked increase in high-quality intervention research in the education sector over the past ten years. In this presentation, Solheim will explore the factors driving this development and share insights from her own work as an intervention researcher during this period. She will discuss what we have learned so far, highlight persistent challenges, and reflect on what it will take for intervention research to more effectively inform and strengthen research-based practice in preschools and schools.

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PROGRAM / 10:50-11:30

10:50 – 11:30: Mikko Aro – *Understanding Efficient Support for Learning Disabilities: The Role of Noncognitive Factors*

Research shows that learning disabilities (LDs) are both concurrently and developmentally often associated not only with other neurodevelopmental problems, but also behavioral-emotional problems. However, the mechanisms and developmental dynamics underlying this association are not sufficiently understood. Further, one common finding in intervention studies of LDs is the existence of non-responders and large variation in response to support.These issues are currently understudied aspects of LDs.This presentation discusses our findings concerning the association between learning and non-cognitive factors (e.g., learning motivation, learning-related emotions and self-beliefs) both developmentally and in LD intervention context.The findings underline that for understanding LDs, and developing efficient support for learners with LDs, the focus should be widened from cognitive domain to cover socioemotional factors relevant for active engagement in learning.

11:35 – 12:15: Åsa Elwér – *Understanding Mathematical Word Problems in the Early Grades: Classroom Approaches and Targeted Interventions*

Many young students struggle to solve mathematical word problems in the early grades, and the challenge is often amplified for second-language learners who are still acquiring the language of instruction. The language of word problems is dense, highly specific, and often unfamiliar, and the short format offers little redundancy, every word must be understood precisely. The presentation has two parts. First, Elwér will discuss findings from an observation and interview study in a multilingual school, examining how teachers work with word problems and how students interpret them.The results reveal frequent challenges with both context and vocabulary, widespread reliance on guessing strategies, and a strong need for extensi-ve teacher support. Second, Elwér will introduce preliminary insights from an intervention study currently under development. One intervention targets the linguistic and structural features of word problems, while the other combines explicit vocabulary instruction with schematic visualizations of the underlying mathematical structure.

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PROGRAM / TRACK 1: 13:15-15:25

13:15 – 13:55: Markus Talvio - ***How do Teachers Benefit from Training on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)?***

Developing teachers' social and emotional learning (SEL) is crucial, as they are key to teaching SEL to students and fostering supportive environments.This presentation details studies on SEL interventions for teachers.The first study involved Finnish teachers who attended Gordon's Teacher Effectiveness Training (TET) workshops, rooted in humanistic psychology.To assess SEL development, a new method, Dealing with Challenging Interaction (DCI), was developed. Post-TET, teachers significantly increased their use of the studied skills and were more likely to support student autonomy and agency compared to comparison groups.The research expanded to global investigations of the Lions Quest teacher workshops. Studies from ten countries showed that teachers benefited, particularly in their readiness to develop SEL competencies worldwide. Diverse interventions consistently boosted teachers' readiness to implement SEL, especially increasing their sense of competence in teaching it.This research enhances both the theoretical and practical understanding of teachers' continuing professional development globally.

14:00 – 14:40: Laura Ferrer Wreder and Tina M. Olsson - ***Interventions Across Developmental Periods: A Swedish Follow-Up Study***

Universal interventions have several advantages such as programmatic reach, equity, and accessibility.This talk concerns the Applied Developmental Science research group's experience with the implementation of a universal social emotional learning (SEL) intervention in Sweden.We will briefly describe the intervention trial and have a larger focus on a subsequent follow up study which included a booster intervention for parents.The talk then focuses on the results of an economic evaluation of the SEL intervention that has implications for long-term outcomes.The talk concludes with a reflection on lessons learned about interventions and their long-term potentials for beneficial change.

14:45 – 15:25: Børge Strømgren - ***Feasibility and Efficacy of the Norwegian Version of the PAX 'Good Behavior Game' in Regular Classrooms: Protocol for a Multiple-Baseline Single-Case Research Design Study***

This talk concerns a multiple-baseline, single-case research design to investigate the feasibility of the Swedish/Norwegian version of the 'PAX Good Behavior Game' (PAX GBG) in regular classrooms. Participants were teachers and students from kindergarten (1st grade) to 3rd grade, and the intervention was implemented over a period of 21, 23 and 35 weeks in the schoolyear of 2023-2024. Main outcomes were students' disruptive, engaged and on-task behaviors in the classroom, teachers' communication behaviors in the classroom and students' social network. Secondary outcomes were students' social competence, and teachers' self-reports of stress, depression, and anxiety. Other outcomes were social validity as assessed by students and teachers. Outcomes will be reported by visual and statistical analyses.

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PROGRAM / TRACK 2: 13:15-15:25

13:15 – 13:55: Mari-Ann Sørlie - *Effects and Lessons Learned After Two Decades with the PALS/ SWPBIS Model in Norway*

PALS (positive behavior, interactions and learning environment in school) is a whole-school, multi-year and multi-level intervention model to prevent behavior problems and to promote pro-social behavior in school children through the establishment of supportive and inclusive learning conditions for all students, dominated by joint, proactive, and positive teaching practices. PALS is an adapted version of the American SWPBIS (school-wide positive behavior and interventions in school) model and has been implemented in Norwegian schools for more than two decades.

Several longitudinal effectiveness studies have been conducted throughout the years – all showing mainly positive outcomes. The studies have, however, also shown that the quality with which the PALS-model is implemented has been a major challenge for the schools. Initially, in this section Sørlie will shortly describe the Norwegian model development and implementation structure. In the following, she will give examples from the research studies and discuss how the results indicate further improvements of the model.

14:00 – 14:40: Mika Paananen - *Behaviour Support Through Check-In Check-Out in Finnish PBS Schools and ECEC Units: Intervention Response and Core Components*

Socio-emotional and behavioral issues among children in school and early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings are common, and these issues have a negative impact on the well-being of both staff and children. Traditionally, behavioral interventions based on the conscious use of antecedents and feedback have been shown to effectively change children's behavior. One such intervention is the Check In Check Out (CICO) program, which is widely used in Positive Behavior Support (PBS) schools for pupils who do not benefit enough from universal-level support and require individualized behavioral support. Research in Finnish elementary schools and ECEC settings suggests that CICO is effective for pupils demonstrating problematic behavior. This presentation will elaborate on the CICO research findings, clarifying the mechanisms underlying its effects and outlining the core components required to facilitate positive behavioral change in children.

14:45 – 15:25: Nina Klang - *Feasibility Study of Check-in Check-out*

The aim of this project was to evaluate the feasibility of the program Check-in-Check-out (CICO) at two schools. Drawing on the feasibility model by Gadke et al. (2021), three dimensions were focused: the practicality of the program, the potential for integration of the program into existing school support structures and social acceptability. Interviews were conducted with teachers, social workers, headmasters, paraprofessionals and CICO instructors (n=15). In addition, CICO team meetings were observed and the observations were documented in field notes. Social validity and acceptance in CICO were investigated through interviews with children and their families. Children's progress in the intervention was documented through CICO-cards and questionnaires. The results show that CICO is perceived as feasible and socially acceptable by children, parents and professionals but organizational readiness and additional professional competencies are required to enhance its implementation.

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15:30 – 16:10: Leif Strömwall and Lotta Ryk - ***Promoting Mental Health in Children: Two Systematic Reviews with Focus on SEL Programmes***

The presentation contains general information about SBU's mission in undertaking independent assessments of interventions used in, among other sectors, health, medical and dental services.We also present two systematic reviews examining universal school-based interventions aimed at promoting mental health for children, from kindergarten to high school.The first is a comprehensive HTA (Health Technology Assessment) report examining and synthesizing quantitative and qualitative data on a broad range of health promoting programs.The second is an in-depth examination of SEL (socio-emotional learning) interventions and outcome moderators such as gender, age and socio-economic status. In short, both systematic reviews found that students who have been part of SEL programs show higher levels of both socio-emotional competencies and resilience.

16:15 – 16:45 – PANEL DISCUSSION - ***Bridging Research to Practice: Challenges and Future Directions for Intervention Research in the Nordic School Context***

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SPEAKERS

Mikko Aro - Professor of Special Education, and co-director of the Center of Excellence in Learning Dynamics and Intervention research. His main research interests relate to typical and atypical development of learning skills, especially in literacy and mathematics, and efficient school-based support of learning difficulties.
https://www.jyu.fi/en/people/mikko-aro

Åsa Elwér – Associate Professor of Education at Linköping University, Sweden. Her research focuses on various aspects of reading comprehension, with particular interest in cognitive processes, developmental trajectories, instructional approaches, and reading difficulties.
https://liu.se/medarbetare/asael36

Laura Ferrer-Wreder – Professor of Psychology, at Stockholm University (Sweden) and the University of Agder (Norway). Laura conducts research that integrates the study of human development, culture, and intervention/implementation science. She has a particular focus on positive development, which includes the development of social emotional competence in diverse children and youth.
https://www.su.se/english/profiles/lferr-1.186806

Nina Klang - Professor of Education at Mälardalen University, Sweden. Her research focuses on instruction for students with disabilities from the perspective of inclusion.
https://www.mdu.se/staff?id=nia01

Thomas Nordström – University Lecturer in Psychology at Linnaeus University, Sweden. He conducts research within the field of Evidence in Learning and Didactics (ELD), which aims to generate evidence for various instructional approaches, including methods for teaching reading and writing.
https://lnu.se/personal/thomas.nordstrom/

Tina M. Olsson - Professor of Social Work and Head of Discipline at the Department of Social Work and the Research School of Health and Welfare. Professor Olsson's work centers around issues relevant to the development, implementation, and testing of social interventions in practice settings.
https://ju.se/en/personinfo?id=4066

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SPEAKERS

Lotta Ryk - Senior researcher in environmental medicine, statistician, project leader, and coordinator of the statistical group at SBU (Swedish Agency for Health Technology Assessment and Assessment of Social Services). Special interests in scientific methodology, statistics, and teaching.

Oddny Judith Solheim - Professor of Education and director at Knowledge Centre for Education at University of Stavanger. Her research focuses on factors and instructional practices that promote student learning and engagement, and how such practices can be adopted by teachers. She has a specific focus on literacy instruction and at-risk students.
https://www.uis.no/nb/profile/oddny-judith-solheim

Børge Strømgren – Associate Professor at the Department of Behavioral Science, Oslo Metropolitan University. His research focuses on applied and experimental behavior analysis, with emphasis on school-based interventions and evidence-based practices for children with special needs.
https://www.oslomet.no/en/about/employee/bstromgr/

Leif Strömwall - Professor of psychology, Head of Unit for Mental Health, SBU (Swedish Agency for Health Technology Assessment and Assessment of Social Services). Especially interested in applying scientific findings to real-world settings, and in scientific methodology.

Mari-Anne Sørlie – PhD and researcher at NUBU – Nasjonalt utviklingssenter for barn og unge. Her reserach includes behavioral problems among children and adolescents, social competence, school-based interventions, intervention evaluation, evidence-based practice, and implementation quality.
https://www.nubu.no/en/ansatte/mari-anne-sorlie

Markus Talvio – Associate Professor in Educational Psychology at University of Helsinki. His research focuses on social and emotional learning, teacher professional development, and communication skills in educational settings.
https://www.helsinki.fi/sv/om-oss/personer/personsokning/markus-talvio-9065997