

Global Education Policy Leadership Program

Education Policy in Denmark and Norway: Promoting Child & Adult Well-Being 2026 Program Description

Program Co-Coordinators

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In this period of shifting international priorities, realignment of strategic partners, and growing concern over the impact on children and youth of social media and artificial intelligence (AI), the 2026 MSU Global Education Policy Leadership Program (Global EPLP) will examine innovative policy initiatives, school practices, and cultural traditions in Denmark and Norway designed to promote student and adult well-being and healthy lifestyles.

In Denmark, Norway, and numerous other countries, government leaders, parents and educators are grappling with growing concerns about social media's influence on mental health, brain development, and the need to protect children from potential abuse. The worldwide trend of childhood obesity and related health concerns can be linked to the growth of "screen time" and the preference of today's youth to conduct much of their social activity online. Growing up in the digital world combined with a lack of physical activity can influence lifestyle choices at an early age. Policy initiatives to restrict screen time, promote age-appropriate experiences for teens, limit social media for younger age groups, increase outdoor activities, and adopt healthier lifestyle practices are potential solutions under wide consideration.

The 2026 Global EPLP has been inspired by a comprehensive 2019 report published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD), through its Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) titled *21st Century Children: The Nature of Modern*

Childhood. This report examines various challenges presented by technological change and its impact on children and their relationships with families and friends.

“Education must evolve with our societies, anticipating change rather than simply reacting to problems... and the 21st Century Children project focuses on the nature of modern childhood. It asks the questions: what does life look like for children in the digital age? What does this mean for education? How can teachers and schools work together with parents and communities to protect and guide children while allowing them to be children, and learn by making mistakes?” (OECD, *21st Century Children: The Nature of Modern Childhood*, 2019)

Through a collaboration with OECD, based in Paris, and in partnership with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), in Trondheim, Norway, and the National Centre for Teaching and Learning Resources in Denmark, the 2026 Global EPLP participants will examine a series of topics including promising practices in developing emotional well-being, physical health, relationships with family and peers, the impact of social media and digital technology, and how policy leaders in Nordic countries are addressing these challenges. During the 2024 Norway Global EPLP the program participants examined several innovative policy initiatives including the non-grading of students, nature barnehage (outdoor-oriented early childcare), and opportunities to experience risky play. This year the Norwegian government will release its new long-range education planning report, including recommendations for the future. With the support of our partners, these initiatives will be re-examined during the 2026 program.

Purpose of the Program

The Global EPLP is an international education policy and leadership-oriented program that annually provides a focused professional development opportunity for a small, diverse group of academics, research associates, and education leaders to examine innovative education policy strategies and current challenges facing the host country. Participants acquire a broader global perspective by studying education policy initiatives in economically developed and developing countries. To date, we have offered 12 successful field-based programs for approximately 160 senior U.S. education policy leaders in China (2011, 2012, 2017), England (2013, 2022), Bhutan (2015), India (2016), Germany and Switzerland (2017), Iceland (2021), New Zealand (2023), Norway (2024), and Costa Rica (2025). Each program includes a mix of academic and policy briefings, school/university visits, and cultural experiences.

Program Goals and Expectations for 2026

The lives of modern children are increasingly complex and heavily impacted by digital technologies. How today’s students relate to their parents, teachers, friends and communities are key to their emotional well-being and success in life. Growing up in the digital world brings new opportunities for learning and creative expression but also risks such as cyberbullying and exploitation. School systems, universities and communities must adapt to these rapid cultural changes and Norway and Denmark offer several examples of innovative policy and practice.

Better understanding the complexities of modern childhood and how education systems can support students, parents, and communities are among the goals of the 2026 Global EPLP. Through participation in a series of monthly two-hour Zoom predeparture seminars (August, and September), an October in-country field study, and a post-trip November Zoom debriefing, the 2026 Global EPLP Senior Fellows will engage with school, university, government and community leaders in Copenhagen, Denmark and Trondheim, Norway to examine:

- Strategies for integrating student emotional well-being policies in teaching and learning
- Policies and curriculum resources designed to enhance teacher education programs
- Social media's impact on youth and efforts to promote age-appropriate experiences
- The Nordic model of early childcare programs (nature barnehage) and "risky play"
- Traditional academic vs vocational programs and apprenticeships
- Policy roles of higher education and government agencies
- The challenges surrounding AI use and accessibility in teaching and learning

Schedule of Global EPLP Meetings in 2026 (Dates are tentative and subject to change, except for the trip) Note: ***All times are in the Eastern Time Zone.** Meeting times were selected to enable policy experts from Denmark and Norway to participate in the meetings, given the five-hour time difference.*

The two-hour seminars will be held on-line using Zoom software communications. Each session is designed to help prepare participants for the field experience in Denmark and Norway as well as a post-visit program analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Friday, August 21, 2026. 10:00AM to 12:00 Noon Program orientation, introductions, and expectations. *An Overview of Education Policy in Denmark and Norway.*
Guest Expert: Dr. Henning Fjørtoft, Professor, National Centre for Writing Instruction and Research, NTNU, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Friday, September 11, 2026. 10:00AM to 12:00 Noon *Overview of OECD's 21st Century Children: The Nature of Modern Childhood and Discussion of Contemporary Issues in Danish Education.*
Guest Experts: Francesca Gottschalk, OECD, Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, and (TBD)

Wednesday, September 30, 2026. 10:00AM to 12:00 Noon *Challenges Surrounding AI Use and Accessibility in the Nordic Countries.* Guest Expert: Dr. Lise Vikan Sandvik, Professor, Department of Teacher Education, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Friday, October 16 - Saturday, October 24, 2026, Field Study in Denmark and Norway

The field study is designed to provide Senior Fellows with an opportunity to:

- Develop relationships with educators at both basic and tertiary levels.

- Attend briefings at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), the Danish Ministry of Education, University of Copenhagen, and leading education policy organizations.
- Visit outdoor-oriented early childcare programs and primary and secondary schools.
- Collect data related to the optional Global EPLP policy analysis projects.

October 2026 Global EPLP Day-By-Day Program Itinerary (Tentative Draft)

Friday, October 16, 2026 - DEPART USA

Departure and connecting flights from the U.S. to Copenhagen Int'l Airport, Kastrup (CPH)

Saturday, October 17, 2026 – ARRIVE Copenhagen, Denmark

Morning: Morning arrival, baggage claim, and immigration/customs process. Meet local representative in arrivals hall for group transfer to hotel.

Afternoon: Half-day private guided city cultural tour and exhibits, including Rosenborg Castle, Nyhavn district, the Little Mermaid, and one-hour boat tour of harbor area. L/D on your own.

Sunday, October 18, 2026 – Copenhagen and Regional Areas

All Day: Scenic coach tour to Roskilde, historic capital of Denmark for cultural visits to the Viking Ship Museum, Roskilde Cathedral, and Luisiana Art Museum. B/L provided, D on your own.

Monday, October 19, 2026 – Copenhagen

Morning: Proposed MOE or Univ. of Copenhagen policy briefing (TBA)

Afternoon: Primary and/or secondary school visits (TBA). B provided, L/D on your own.

Tuesday, October 20, 2026 – Copenhagen and Transfer to Trondheim, Norway

Morning: University or policy briefing (TBA)

Afternoon: Lunch and briefing (TBA). Late afternoon transfer by coach to CPH Int'l Airport for flight to Trondheim, Norway and hotel check-in. B/L provided, D on your own.

Wednesday, October 21, 2026 – Trondheim

Morning: Walk to Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) campus for policy briefings and working lunch.

Afternoon: Transfer by coach for kindergarten visits to Naturbarnehave. Return by coach to NTNU campus for discussions. B/L provided, D on your own.

Thursday, October 22, 2026 – Trondheim

Morning: Transfer by coach for private school and traditional folk high school visits (TBA).

Afternoon: Return by coach to NTNU for lunch and briefings. B/L provided, D on your own.

Friday, October 23, 2026 – Trondheim

Morning: 8:30AM: Briefing at NTNU partnership school focused on digital learning (TBA).

Afternoon: Lunch at NTNU and briefing on digital learning in primary and lower secondary schools followed by GEPLP field study synthesizing discussion. B/L provided, D on your own.

Saturday, October 24, 2026 - Return flight to U.S.A. Early morning group transfer via coach to Trondheim Værnes Airport for flight to Oslo International Airport (OSL) or other destination city for international flight home or for extended travel plan connections.

2026 Field Study Debriefing

Friday, November 13, 2026. 10:00AM to 12:00 Noon

Debriefing the Denmark and Norway Field Study. Post-trip reflections and closing thoughts. Global EPLP Coordinators and Senior Fellows.

Global EPLP Policy Analysis (Optional)

Completion of a Global Education Policy Analysis. Each Senior Fellow will have the opportunity to complete a written capstone policy analysis of an education policy initiative in Denmark and Norway. Working individually, or in small (2-4 person) collaborative teams, Senior Fellows analyze an education policy initiative and identify any implications this challenge might have on education in the U.S. and/or the organization that sponsors the GEPLP experience. The focus of this policy brief would be identified prior to the October field experience. One or more researchable questions would be developed prior to our departure and would focus on the data gathering process for the study. The post-tour November 13, debriefing will provide opportunities for fellows to share and discuss their findings and possible implications for U.S. education. Details about the policy analysis will be provided during the August 21, online meeting.

Suggested Readings and Media:

Note: Articles and links will be provided to program participants as electronic documents for your educational use only. Additional readings may be assigned by our monthly Danish and Norwegian on-line guest experts.

OECD (2019), OECD, *21st Century Children: The Nature of Modern Childhood*, Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, OECD Publishing, Paris.

<https://www.oecd.org/en/about/projects/21st-century-children.html>

Forsström, S., Njå, M., Munthe, E., Álvarez-Galván, J.-L., & Houldsworth, L. (2025). The impact of digital technologies on students' learning. *OECD Education Working Papers*.

<https://doi.org/10.1787/9997e7b3-en>

Haidt, Jonathon, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. Penguin Press, New York, 2024.

Rønneberg, V., & Nilsen, C. (2022). Teachers' talk about giving feedback to young text writers, and about giving feedback on handwritten and typed texts. *Writing & Pedagogy*, 13(1–3), 207–226. <https://doi.org/10.1558/wap.21501>

Tømte, C. E., & Wollscheid, S. (2024). The changing role of ICT-coordinators in schools: A longitudinal study. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 0(0), 1–17.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2024.2406893>

About the Global EPLP Co-Coordinators

Bob Monson coordinates the Advanced Education Policy Leadership Program in New York. From 2000 to 2009, he was a senior lecturer and program coordinator in education leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University. From 2001 to 2022, he coordinated the Education Policy Fellowship Program in the Department of Education Policy & Social Analysis at Teachers College. In 1977, he was a postdoctoral fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Across seven states he has served public school children in the capacities of teacher, high school assistant principal, high school principal, assistant superintendent, and four superintendent positions in Ohio, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and New York. In 2010 he was a visiting fellow in education at Oxford University. From 2011-2015 he was a consultant to the University of Cambridge (UK) International Education as well as a consultant in Bhutan, China, the U.A.E., Nicaragua, and India.

Dan Schultz is Senior Policy and Program Advisor for the Office of K-12 Outreach in the College of Education at Michigan State University. He serves as Coordinator Emeritus for the Michigan Education Policy Fellowship Program (MI EPFP), a program he co-led for more than 35 years. He has developed and led over 25 academic and policy-oriented study tours to China, India, Botswana, Bhutan, Germany, Switzerland, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Costa Rica, and the U.K. His background includes executive leadership and policy roles in state government in Michigan, where he was Assistant State Superintendent and Director of Technology and Grants for the Michigan Department of Education. He holds academic degrees in economics and education administration. He is the recipient of the Michigan Reading Association's Advocacy Award, the MSU College of Education Alumni Association's Distinguished Alumni Award, the Institute for Educational Leadership's National Leadership Award, and the International Friendship Award from Southwest University in China.

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