

# Start in the Kindergarten

A fairy tale book, a board game, a big graph for the children, and a book for the grown-ups bring new ways of learning to Norwegian kindergartens. What is the earliest age to start learning to be an environmentally conscious user of energy? This was one of the questions raised at the Conference in which the new education network was established. A great example from Norway shows that kindergarten is not too early to start energy education.

By Per Hilmo, Information Centre for Energy Efficiency (ICEE), Norway

## Children Know Why ..

In a growing number of kindergartens, the children help to read the electric meter once a week and record the readings on a big poster. The children now know why energy consumption needs to be reduced and how they can help through their behaviour in kindergarten and at home. In addition to achieving actual results in terms of reduced energy consumption, the children also know that they are helping to protect nature and the quality of life on Earth.

Since the start, about 500 kindergarten teachers from all over Norway have taken the course and are using the methods. At present, about 3,000 copies of the game and about 1000 Tale books have been distributed. The concept is described in the monthly periodicals published by the government and distributed to all 6,200 kindergartens in Norway. The teachers can receive the package, free of charge, from the 20 Regional Energy and Environment Centers. Many of the teachers take the one-day course, which we arrange at ICEE.

## The elements of the educational “package” to teach energy efficiency and the connections to the environment for kindergarten children are the following:

- The **1-Day Course** for the kindergarten teachers.
- A **Fairy-Tale Book** about energy for the children, with colourful illustrations. Fact boxes provide the adult reader with information on the physical realities behind the development related in the tale.

*How Eneragus and Energella Made Things Happen on the Earth*



- A **Board Game** called the Energy Game, which works as an excellent starting point for a discussion of good and bad habits of energy use and stimulates the competitive instincts, making energy reduction fun and positive.

*Rolling the dice*



- The **Energy Monitoring Poster**, to be used once every week throughout the year, thereby not allowing this issue to be forgotten. The children can then talk about how the weather and the activities that have taken place in the last week have had an effect on the difference in the level of energy use compared to that of the previous week.



*It all began back in 1991, when I worked with school children. In 1995, a group of pre-school teachers asked me to help them teach energy-consciousness in the kindergartens, because they felt that starting with this education in the schools is far too late. I developed a set of tools whereby the teachers can teach the children, through their daily activities, how to become more careful energy users.*

Per Hilmo, the author of the books and the game, is senior advisor of the ICEE in Norway. He holds a Ph.D. in Engineering.

*For more information:*  
Per Hilmo, ICEE/Ofe AS, P.B.6734  
Rodeløkka, 0503 Oslo, Norway.  
Ph: +47 22805000, fax: +47 22805050,  
e-mail: perh@ofem.no.

- The Novel **“Veronica’s Veracity”**, for the teachers to read and be inspired in their work. The novel describes the methods and is used as a course textbook. The story takes place in a kindergarten setting, in which the relationship between one’s own energy behaviour and the effects on the environment are discovered gradually in a very read-able way. “

*Preface from the book:*

*“Socrates tells us:”*

*“The person who knows what is good, will do good, and this right insight leads to right actions.”*

*“If Socrates is right, our short-term thinking in resource management is due to lack of knowledge.”*

*“Some claim that a race is taking place these days, between alarming global development and the dissemination of knowledge.”*

*“I hope that an insight into how things are interrelated will lead to a more needs-based and efficient use of energy resources.”*