

News release 23 March 2017

## Strike at Skagerak International School

**- The Norwegian teachers' union has today taken out 36 of its members in strike at Skagerak International School. We regret the inconvenience this causes for our students and parents.**

says Hans Jørgen Firing, the director of Skagerak International School. This amounts to 65% of the teaching staff at Skagerak.

### **The Right to Be Different**

The conflict is not concerning the working conditions for the employees. The teachers have similar terms and conditions as teachers in public schools. The reason for the strike is that the union and the school have not reached an agreement on the structure of a new collective agreement for the teachers. The school has offered the teachers a collective agreement through their employer organisation Abelia/NHO. The teachers' union is demanding an agreement directly with the school.

- This concerns the right to be different. Skagerak International School is a charitable foundation that runs an international school for 370 students in Sandefjord. The school is approved and financed through the Independent School Act. The Independent School Act was established to meet the needs of children and parents who seek a school with, among other things, an alternative curriculum from the public schools. In many of the independent schools, new innovative teaching methods are developed that contribute to inspire and challenge the public schools, says Knut Erik Beyer-Arnesen, the chairman of Forum for Friskoler, which is a part of Abelia/NHO.

- Our alternative to the public school is an important reason for parents who choose to send their children here for their education. If we lose this right then we lose our basis to exist. We believe that the right to be different is best taken care of through a collective agreement with all the independent schools, an agreement which is adapted to the independent schools which are approved as an alternative to the public school, says Firing.

### **Strategy Against Private Schools**

The teachers' union with its 170.000 members has decided on a [strategy against the privatization of Norwegian schools](#). It is therefore important that Skagerak stands up for the right to be different. We cannot do this alone, but together with the other independent schools, says Firing.

- Abelia organises over 30 independent schools and all of the international schools in Norway. They fully support Skagerak International School in its effort to be a part of a work organisation through Abelia/NHO, and for an agreement which secures them the right to be different and to fulfil its mission by offering an alternative school adapted to the needs of students and their parents, says Beyer-Arnesen.

Both Skagerak International School and Abelia regret for the negative consequences for students and parents at this time, and hope that the conflict will be as short as possible.

### **For further information**

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