

THE FINNISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM EXPERIENCE & INSIGHTS

2019

ADLA, Archdiocese of Los Angeles

University of Tampere

Learning Scoop

*Prepared by: Dr. Fidela B. Suelto,
Principal, Holy Family Grade School - Glendale, CA*



ADLA FINLAND DELEGATION





Finland is a Northern European nation bordering Sweden, Norway and Russia. Its capital, Helsinki, occupies a peninsula and surrounding islands in the Baltic Sea. The Northern Lights can be seen from the country's Arctic Lapland province, a vast wilderness with national parks and ski resorts.

Currency: Euro

Population: 5.503 million
(2017) Eurostat

FINLAND IS RANKED #1 AS THE HAPPIEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD
The latest UN report stated that Finland is now the happiest country in the world. The Nordic countries are in general always at the top, but Finland made a big climb this year from number 5 to number 1.

FINLAND

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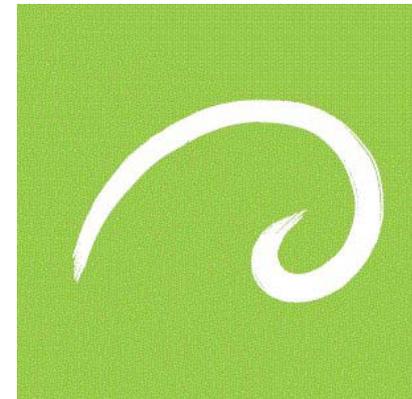
UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE



- The University of Tampere was a public university in Tampere, Finland that was merged with Tampere University of Technology to create the new Tampere University on 1 January 2019. The University offered undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programmes with 20,178 degree students and 1,981 employees as of 2016.
- **Address:** Kalevantie 4, 33100 Tampere, Finland
- **Doctoral students:** 1,646 (2016)
- **Total enrollment:** 20,600 (2017)

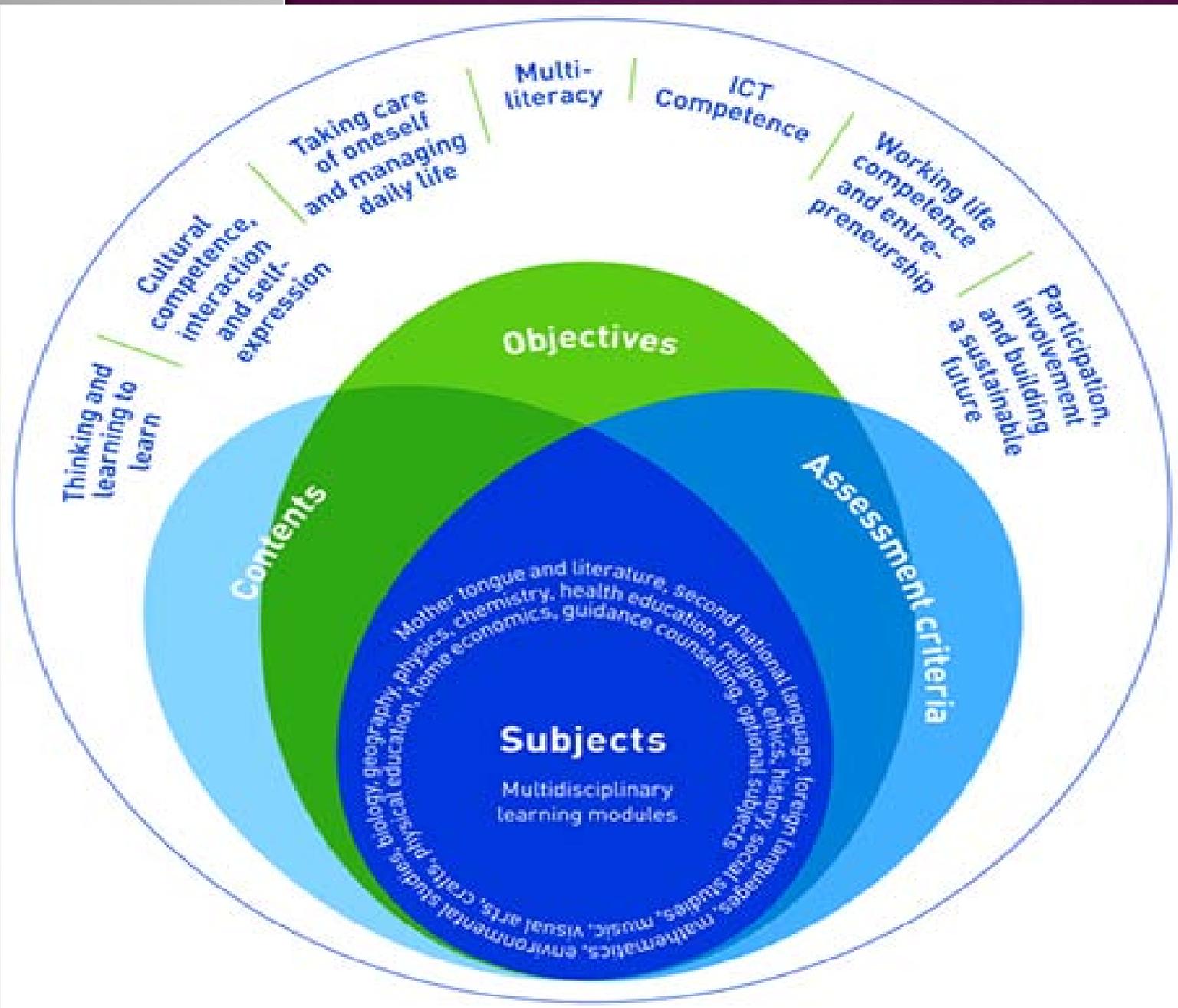
LEARNING SCOOP

- **What happens during a Study Tour?**
- Learning Scoop provides an inclusive Study Tour where participants have the opportunity to become familiar with the Finnish education system and the factors influencing its success. The programme includes theoretical lectures with practical orientation, activating workshops and visits to Finnish schools to observe Finnish education onsite.



TOP INSIGHTS OF THE FINNISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

- ◉ **No standardized tests, no stress.**
- ◉ Finland's education system is consistently ranked best in the world.
- ◉ Finland's intellectual and educational reforms have completely revolutionized their educational system. The Finnish system doesn't encourage cramming or standardized tests.
- ◉ Finland's common-sense practices and a holistic teaching environment strives for equity over excellence.
- ◉ Finland has no standardized tests. There is only exception is something called the National Matriculation Exam, which is a voluntary test for students at the end of an upper-secondary school (equivalent to an American high school.)
- ◉ All children throughout Finland are graded on an individualized basis and grading system set by their teacher. Tracking overall progress is done by the Ministry of Education, which samples groups across different ranges of schools.



- ◉ **Accountability for teachers (not required)**
- ◉ A lot of the blame goes to the teachers and rightfully so sometimes. But in Finland, the bar is set so high for teachers, that there is often no reason to have a rigorous “grading” system for teachers.
- ◉ All teachers are required to have a master's degree before entering the profession. Teaching programs are the most rigorous and selective professional schools in the entire country. If a teacher isn't performing well, it's the individual principal's responsibility to do something about it.

Rethinking competences

National Goals for Basic Education and Transversal Competences

- knowledge
- skills
- values
- attitudes
- will



- ◉ Cooperation not competition
- ◉ While most Americans and other countries see the educational system as one big Darwinian competition, the Finns see it differently. Sahlberg quotes a line from a writer named Samuli Paronen which says that:
 - ◉ "Real winners do not compete."
 - ◉ Ironically, this attitude has put them at the head of the international pack. Finland's educational system doesn't worry about artificial or arbitrary merit-based systems. There are no lists of top performing schools or teachers. It's not an environment of competition - instead, cooperation is the norm.



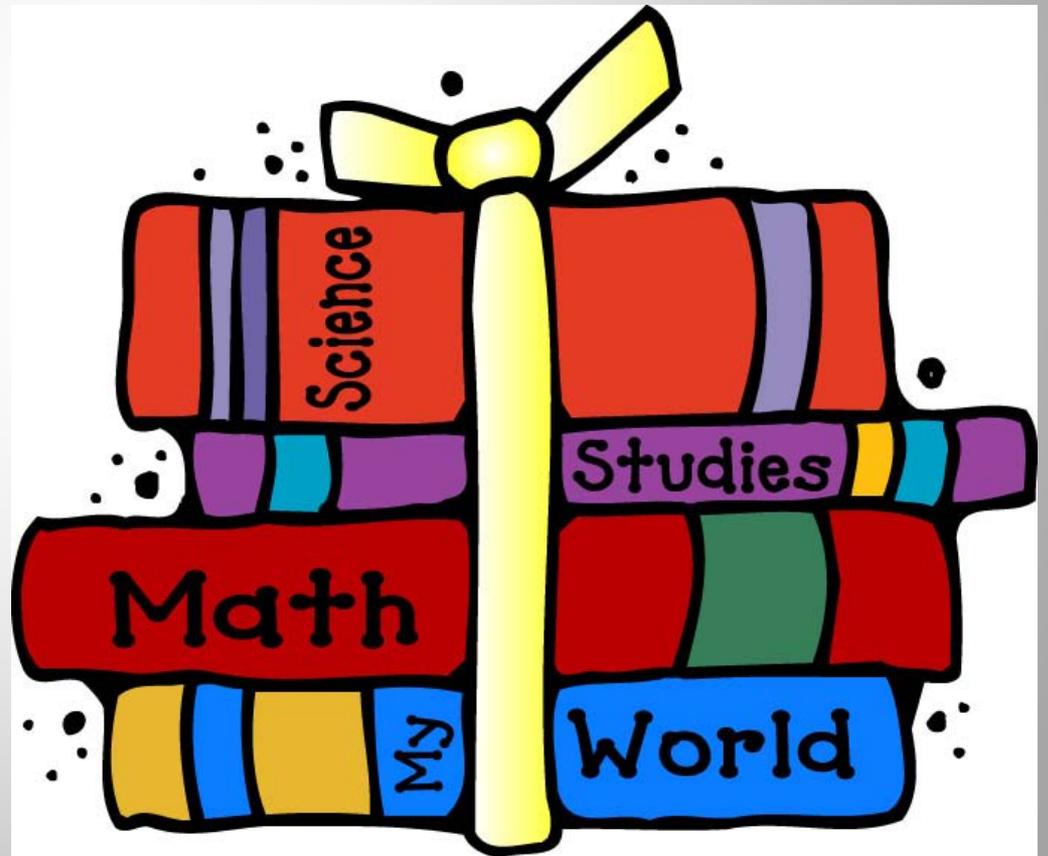
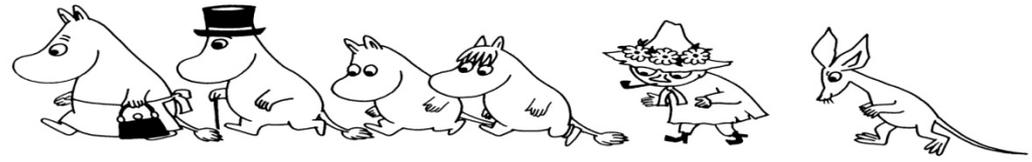
COOPERATION



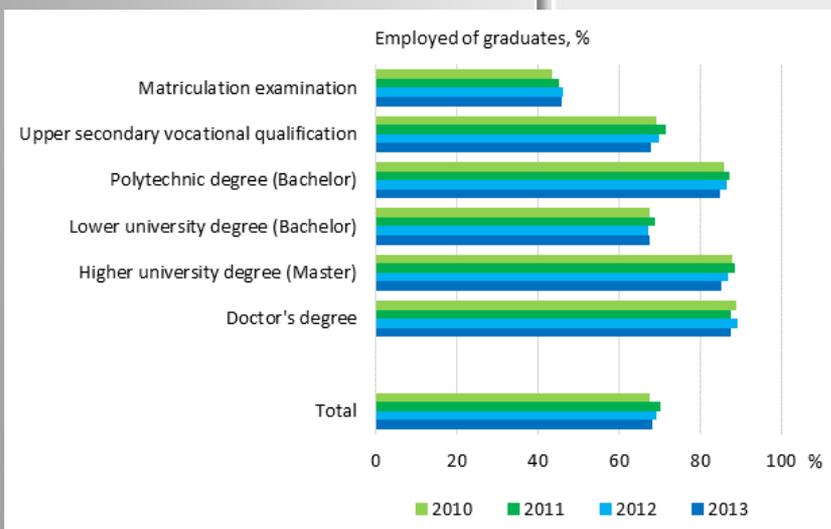
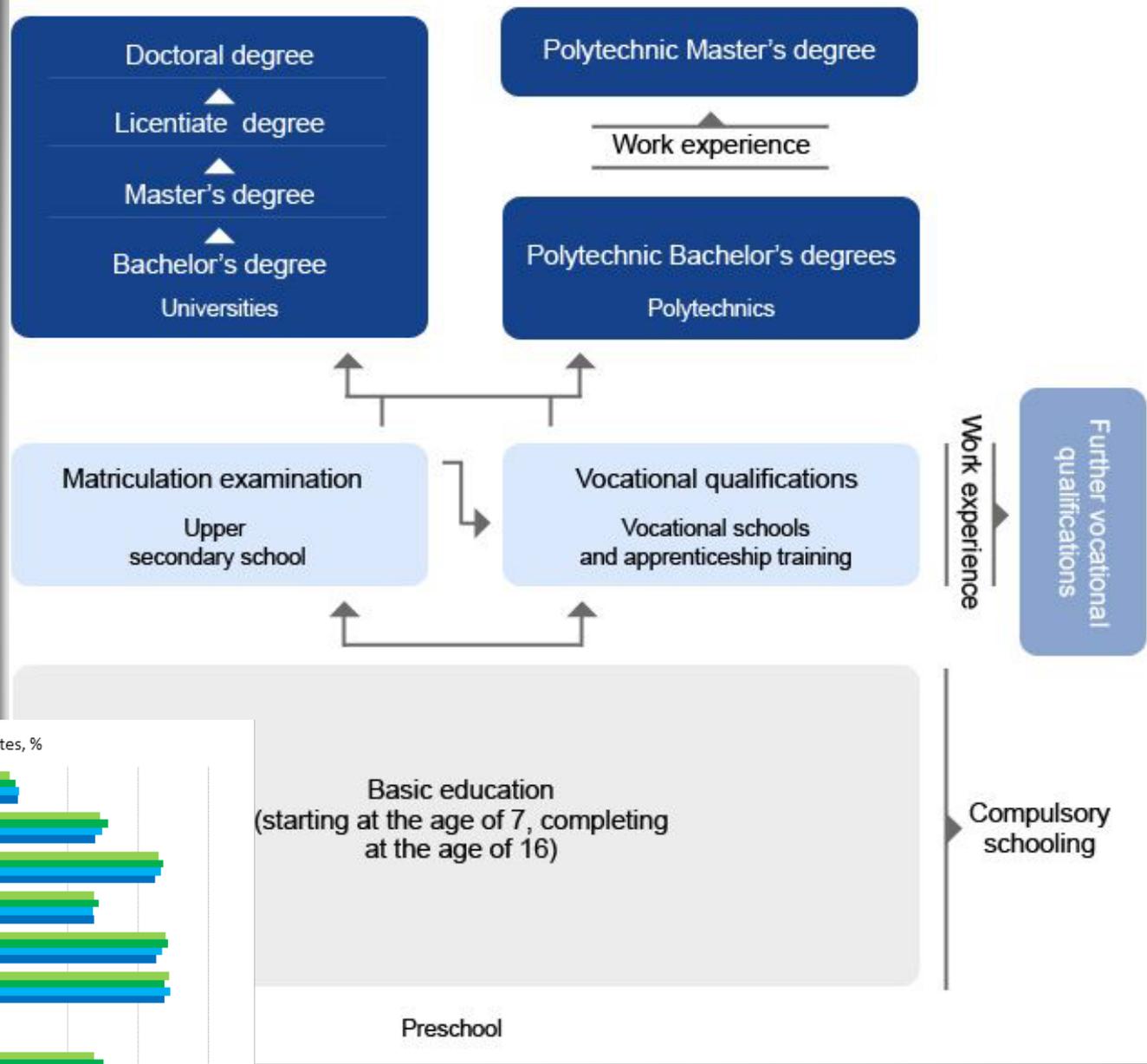
- ◉ Make the basics a priority.
- ◉ Many school systems are so concerned with increasing test scores and comprehension in math and science, they tend to forget what constitutes a happy, harmonious and healthy student and learning environment. Many years ago, the Finnish school system was in need of some serious reforms. The program that Finland put together focused on returning back to the basics. It wasn't about dominating with excellent marks or upping the stake. Instead, they looked to make the school environment a more equitable place.
- ◉ Since the 1980s, Finnish educators have focused on making these basics a priority:
- ◉ Education should be an instrument to balance out social inequality.
 - All students receive free school meals.
 - Ease of access to health care.
 - Psychological counseling
 - Individualized guidance
- ◉ Beginning with the individual in a collective environment of equality is Finland's way.



- ◉ Starting school at an older age
- ◉ Here the Finns again start by changing very minute details. Students start school when they are seven years old. They're given free reign in the developing childhood years to not be chained to compulsory education. It's simply just a way to let a kid be a kid.
- ◉ There are only 9 years of compulsory school that Finnish children are required to attend. Everything past the ninth grade or at the age of 16 is optional.
- ◉ Just from a psychological standpoint, this is a freeing ideal. Finland alleviates this forced ideal and instead opts to prepare its children for the real world.



- ◉ Providing professional options past a traditional college degree
- ◉ In America, children are stuck in the K-12 circuit jumping from teacher to teacher. Each grade a preparation for the next, all ending in the grand culmination of college, which then prepares you for the next grand thing on the conveyor belt. Many students are trying to find purpose in college and incur massive debt.
- ◉ Finland solves this dilemma by offering options that are equally advantageous for the student continuing their education. There is a lesser focused dichotomy of college-educated versus trade-school or working class. Both can be equally professional and fulfilling for a career.
- ◉ In Finland, there is the Upper Secondary School which is a three-year program that prepares students for the Matriculation Test that determines their acceptance into a University. This is usually based off of specialties they've acquired during their time in "high-school"
- ◉ Next, there is vocational education, which is a three-year program that trains students for various careers. They have the option to take the Matriculation test if they want to then apply to University.



The Finnish Matriculation Examination



...The Finnish Matriculation Examination

- The Matriculation Examination is held biannually, in spring and in autumn, in all Finnish upper secondary schools, at the same time.
- The tests: the examination consists of at least four tests; one of them, the test in the candidate's mother tongue, is compulsory for all candidates. The candidate then chooses three other compulsory tests from among the following four tests: the test in the second national language, a foreign language test, the mathematics test, and one test in the general studies battery of tests (sciences and humanities). As part of his or her examination, the candidate may additionally include one or more optional tests.

- ◉ Finns wake up later for less strenuous schooldays.
- ◉ Waking up early, catching a bus or ride, participating in morning and after school extra-curriculars are huge time sinks for a student. Add to the fact that some classes start anywhere from 6am to 8am and you've got sleepy, uninspired adolescents on your hands.
- ◉ Students in Finland usually start school anywhere from 9:00 - 9:45 AM. Some researchers have shown that early start times are detrimental to students' well-being, health, and maturation. Finnish schools start the day later and usually end by 2:00 - 2:45 PM. They have longer class periods and much longer breaks in between. The overall system isn't there to ram and cram information to their students, but to create an environment of holistic learning.

MOST EFFICIENT EDUCATION SYSTEMS

EFFICIENCY SCORES

PISA RANK (2012 Maths)

Source: GEMS Education Solutions

Rank	Country	Efficiency Score	PISA Rank (2012 Maths)
1	FINLAND	87,8	5
2	KOREA	86,7	1
3	CZECH REPUBLIC	84,4	14
4	HUNGARY	84,1	24
5	JAPAN	83,9	2
6	NEW ZEALAND	83,3	12
7	SLOVENIA	83,3	10
8	AUSTRALIA	81,2	9
9	SWEDEN	80,6	23
10	ICELAND	79,4	17



- ◉ Consistent instruction from the same teachers
- ◉ There are fewer teachers and students in Finnish schools. You can't expect to teach an auditorium of invisible faces and breakthrough to them on an individual level. Students in Finland often have the same teacher for up to six years of their education. During this time, the teacher can take on the role of a mentor or even a family member. During those years, mutual trust and bonding are built so that both parties know and respect each other.
- ◉ Different needs and learning styles vary on an individual basis. Finnish teachers can account for this because they've figured out the student's own idiosyncratic needs. They can accurately chart and care for their progress and help them reach their goals. There is no passing along to the next teacher because there isn't one.



The Finnish basic education as we want to see it

**Learning
culture**

High standards for all
Encouraging, enabling

Ethos of trust

**Professionalism of
teachers**

Empowerment of teaching
profession
High quality of teacher
education

Supportive ethos

Early intervention
Individual approach
Active role of student

Education system:

comprehensive, non-selective, central steering, local
implementation and innovation

- A more relaxed atmosphere
- There is a general trend in what Finland is doing with its schools. Less stress, less unneeded regimentation and more caring. Students usually only have a couple of classes a day. They have several times to eat their food, enjoy recreational activities, and generally just relax. Spread throughout the day are 15 to 20-minute intervals where the kids can get up and stretch, grab some fresh air, and decompress.

This type of environment is also needed by the teachers. Teacher rooms are set up all over Finnish schools, where they can lounge about and relax, prepare for the day or just simply socialize.

Teachers are people too and need to be functional so they can operate at the best of their abilities.



- ◉ **Less homework and outside work required**
- ◉ Students in Finland have the least amount of outside work and homework than any other student in the world. They spend only half an hour a night working on stuff from school. Finnish students also don't have tutors. Yet they're outperforming cultures that have toxic school-to-life balances without the unneeded or unnecessary stress.
- ◉ Finnish students are getting everything they need to get done in school without the added pressures that come with excelling at a subject. Without having to worry about grades and busy-work they are able to focus on the true task at hand - learning and growing as a human being.

HOMEWORK

HOW MUCH IS
TOO MUCH?

KIDS HAVE MORE TIME TO BE KIDS.

AN AVERAGE US 5TH
GRADER HAS 50 MIN.
OF HOMEWORK
PER DAY.

Finnish students
rarely do homework
until their teens.

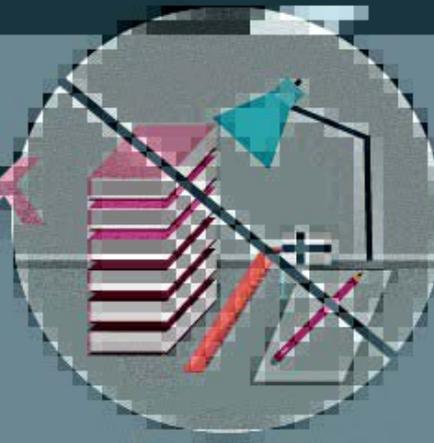


And while US elementary students
average 27 minutes of recess...

... **STUDENTS IN FINLAND GET
ABOUT 75 MINUTES A DAY.**

THERE'S

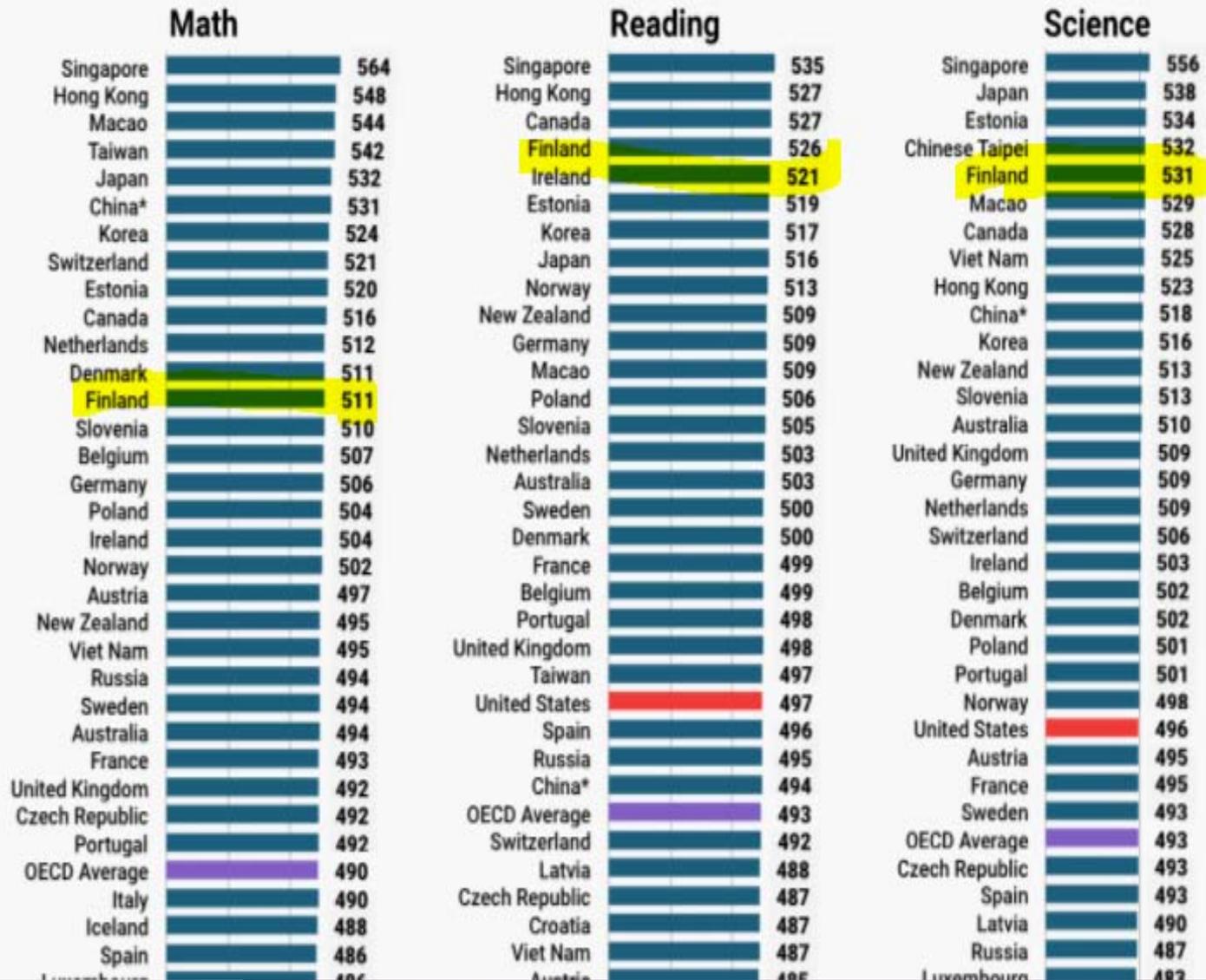
No Homework In Finland



○ How does Finland's top-ranking education system work?

- Finland has been a top contender on every Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey.
 - The country built a comprehensive education structure designed to offer citizens free education with no dead ends.
 - The inspiration for Finland's approach was American education research and philosophers such as John Dewey.
- Finland's education system enjoys a lot of buzz lately. It is considered one of the best education systems in the world. It routinely outperforms the United States in reading, science, and mathematics. And it has been a top performer since the first **Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)** triennial international survey back in 2000.

2015 PISA AVERAGE SCORES





BASIC EDUCATION (PLUS A FREE MEAL) (GRADES 1-9/ AGES 7 -16 / 9 YEARS FOR BASIC ED)

- ◉ When your child turns 7, it'll be time for basic education. Finland doesn't divide its basic education into elementary and junior highs. Instead, it offers single-structure education for nine years, 190 days per year. As with ECEC, policymakers leave plenty of room for local school administrators and teachers to revise and revamp the curriculum to meet the needs of their unique student body.
- ◉ "The ideology is to steer through information, support and funding," writes Finnish National Agency for Education (which sets core curricula requirements). Their stated goal for basic education is "to support pupils' growth toward humanity and ethically responsible membership of society and to provide them with the knowledge and skills needed in life." This latitude includes what tests to give, how to evaluate student progress and needs, and even the ability to set daily and weekly timetables.
- ◉ Such autonomy may sound scary to some parents. What if your child spends all day learning phenomenological regressions of the Konami Code? Finland's parents, however, don't have such concerns as teaching is a highly respected and professional field in Finland.
- ◉ Most teachers hold a master's degree, and basic-ed teachers are required to hold them. Eighty percent of basic-ed teachers also participate in continuing professional development.
- ◉ "It is understandable that the pragmatic, child-centered educational thinking of John Dewey has been widely accepted among Finnish educators," Pasi Sahlberg, Finnish educator and scholar, wrote for the Washington Post. "Many Finnish schools have adopted Dewey's view of education for democracy by enhancing student's access to decision-making regarding their own lives and studying in school."
- ◉ Nor are schools left entirely to their own devices. The Finnish National Agency for Education promotes self-evaluation and improvement for both schools and their teachers. In terms of basic education, it's true that Finland does not use national standardized tests; however, they do implement national evaluations of learning outcomes.
- ◉ However, Finland's evaluations are sample-based, not comprehensive. They are also not tied to school funding nor used to rank schools. Instead, the evaluations look to assess the school's qualifications and are then provided to the administrators for developmental purposes.

UPPER-SECONDARY EDUCATION OR VOCATIONAL UPPER SECONDARY IN FINLAND (GRADES 10-12/ AGES 16 - 19 / 3 YEARS)

- ◉ After basic education, your child can choose to continue to upper-secondary education. While not compulsory, 90 percent of students start upper-secondary studies immediately after basic. Because of Finland's devotion to no dead ends, the other 10 percent can choose to return to their education later at no cost.
- ◉ Upper secondary is split into two main paths, general and vocational, and both take about three years. General education takes the form of course work, but students have a lot of freedom to decide their study schedules. At the end of general, students take the national matriculation exam, Finland's only standardized test. Their scores are used as part of their college applications.
- ◉ Vocational education is more job-focused and incorporates apprenticeships as well as school learning. About 40 percent of students start vocational education after basic. This path ends with competence-based qualifications after the student completes an individual study plan.
- ◉ It's worth noting that students aren't locked into these paths. As part of Finland's devotion to education and decision-making, the two are permeable so students can discover new interests or create a path that threads between the two.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND BEYOND (BACHELOR - 3 YEARS/MASTERS - 1 YEAR / DOCTORATE - 2 YEARS)

- ◉ Higher education, like basic and upper secondary, is free.
- ◉ Remember, equal access to education is a constitutional right in Finland. Students are only required to pay for books, transportation, and other school supplies – and student financial aid is readily available.
- ◉ Finnish colleges are divided into two types: universities and universities of applied sciences. Universities focus on scientific research, while universities of applied sciences emphasize practical applications. Students usually receive a bachelor's degree in four years of full-time study, comprising studies, electives, and a project. Master's degrees take five to six years, and as a rule, students are admitted to study for a master's right away.
- ◉ If your child chose the vocational path, they can continue their education at a university, typically a university of applied science. But again, Finland's educational paths are highly adaptable.
- ◉ It will come as no surprise that Finland supports robust adult education to promote social equity and a competent labor force. Companies can purchase in for staff development, and labor training is provided for the unemployed. While not free, adult education is highly subsidized with costs dependent on personal circumstances.

- SURVEY:

- Go to www.menti.com and use the code:

88 21 72

- What elements of the Finnish Educational System could we possibly and realistically implement in our school system?

*Thank
you*

Kiitos!

REFERENCES:

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