

# Education and student welfare in Finland

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# Basic Education

- \* Basic education encompasses nine years and caters for all those between 7 and 16 years. Schools do not select their students. Every student is allocated a place in a nearby school, but they can also choose another school with some restrictions.

# Curriculum

- \* All schools follow a national core curriculum, which includes the objectives and core contents of different subjects. The education providers, usually the local education authorities and the schools themselves draw up their own curricula within the framework of the national core curriculum.

# Education is free at all levels

- \* In Finland education is free at all levels from pre-primary to higher education
- \* In pre-primary and basic education the books, daily meal and transportation (over 5 km) are free for the parents
- \* At secondary level and in higher education books are not free
- \* At secondary level the students have right to a free meal and in higher education meals are subsidised by the state
- \* Adult education is the only form of education that may require payment, but there is a well-developed system of study grants and loans

# Educational guidance and counselling

- \* The current thinking in Finland is that the potential of each pupil should be maximised
- \* Guidance and counselling aims to support, help and guide pupils and students so they can all perform as well as possible in their studies and be able to make correct decisions concerning their education and careers
- \* Guidance and counselling is seen as the work of all education personnel

# Support for pupils and students

- \* The fundamental principle of Finnish education is to provide equal opportunities for learning and growth to every pupil or student. Support for learners plays a key role. This entails removing barriers to learning, physical, attitudinal or pedagogical, early intervention and support and welfare.

# A law on student welfare services


1.8.2014


- \* The goal of the law is to enhance the well-being of the school environment and also to ensure support of learning, health and well-being
- \* Working towards better well-being concerns all school employees of their title
- \* There are also the multidisciplinary teams in the schools

# Support in basic education

- \* Everyone is entitled to **general support**. It is a natural part of everyday teaching and the learning process. Intensified and special supports are based on careful assessment and long-span planning in multi-professional teams and on individual learning plans for pupils.



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- \* If general support is not enough, pedagogical assessment shall be done and a plan for the **intensified support** handled in the pupil welfare group of the school. Following this a learning plan is drawn up for the pupil.

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- \* If intensified support is not enough, new and more extensive pedagogical statements on the pupil shall be done. The education provider collects information from teachers and the school's welfare group. Based on this information, the education provider makes an official decision concerning **special support**. Following this decision, an individual education plan shall be drawn for the pupil.

# Support in upper secondary education

- \* All students in vocational education and training have the right to receive sufficient personal and other educational guidance as needed.
- \* Vocational special needs education and training is primarily provided in regular vocational institutions with all other students. There are seven separate vocational special schools. These provide special facilities and services to promote the vocational education and training primarily for students with the most severe disabilities or chronic illnesses.

In the future all classes will be inclusive, i.e. all pupils work in the same classroom as far as their working and learning skills enable them. When necessary a pupil can work alone or in a smaller group with a special education teacher. Or the special education teacher will be working in the classroom together with the classteacher or subject teacher.



## Themes

- KiVa-school is a research-based antibullying program that has been developed in the University of Turku, Finland, with funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.
- Pro-school program aims at developing a more positive atmosphere in schools

### Pupil and parent involvement:

- Student council enables pupils to participate in planning our school work and in the decision-making of our school,
- Parents' council helps the parents to take part in and plan our school work.

# Special needs education

- \* The ideology is to provide special needs education primarily in mainstream education
- \* If a pupil cannot be taught in a regular teaching group, he or she can have a place in a smaller special education group
- \* This education is provided at regular schools wherever possible
- \* In Finland we have some special education schools (hardly handicaps, visually impaired etc.)

# Three levels of support

## 1. General support

- ❖ All pupils have the right to have guidance and support from all education personell (teachers, Special education teachers, school assistents)

## 2. Intensified support

- ❖ Must be given to those pupils who need regular several forms of support at the same time
- ❖ The aim is to prevent existing problems from becoming more serious or expansive

## 3. Special support

- ❖ Systematic help from special education teacher so the pupils can complete compulsory education and be eligable for upper secondary education



### General support

- temporary
- minor difficulties
- can manage without constant assistance
- class/subject teacher
- co-operation with guardians (observation and general support check-list as a tool)

### Mainstream education

Differentiation: content, materials, tests, homework...

Home-school co-operation, parent-teacher-student conference etc.

### Assistant teacher

Tutorial lessons, student counselling

### Part time special education

Clubs, project clubs, after school homework help

### Team/simultaneous teaching

### Lessons in block

### Intensified support

- frequent
- significant difficulties
- need guidance in every situations
- class/subject teacher
- special education teacher
- co-operation with guardians
- Personal learning plan

Mainstream education/ small group  
Personal learning plan

### Part-time special education

Support acc. to personal learning plan

### Intensified teaching methods

### Assistant teacher

Class prior to gr 1  
Repeating the grade

### Team/simultaneous teaching

### Special support

- constant
- constant need of care/supervision
- class teacher specialized in Special education
- Individualized education plan

Mainstream/ special group/ small group  
Individual Education Plan (IEP) Subject specific and/or general agreements on organizing learning at school

### Statement of special support

### Assistant teacher

### Regular special education

Special education class in special schools

### Home schooling

### Hospital school

Pedagogical assessment

Pedagogical appraisal

# Finland – Your country

Differences?

Similarities?



# Student welfare



# A community welfare team

- \* Consist (for example) of the principal, special education teacher, guidance counselor (for junior high), school social worker, school psychologist and school nurse
- \* There can also be the student and parents representatives in this team
- \* Important topics are increasing students' participation in school affairs, co-operation between homes and school and collaboration with various outside parties

# A multidisciplinary team

- \* Can be gathered for matters regarding individual students and planning their support measures
- \* It's in spirit of this new law that the students' affairs are handled in even stronger co-operation between the student, guardians and school staff
- \* Depending on the matter, the multidisciplinary team can include class teacher, special education teacher, guidance counselor (junior high), school nurse, school social worker and/or school psychologist
- \* If the student or guardians wish, other authorities outside school may also attend the meetings

# One-on-one meetings

- \* Students have to access to the school social worker's, school psychologist's and the school nurse's services
- \* The new law aims to facilitate and speed up organizing the first meeting (max 7 days)
- \* In the meeting the students can discuss their matters confidentially one-on-one
- \* Students are entitled use these student welfare services without guardians' consent

# Finland – Your country

Differences?

Similarities?

# Curriculum reform 2016

- \* Ms Irmeli Halinen, Head of curriculum development with Finnish National Board of Education, discusses the basic education curriculum reform in Finland

[http://oph.fi/english/education\\_development/current\\_reforms/curriculum\\_reform\\_2016](http://oph.fi/english/education_development/current_reforms/curriculum_reform_2016)



Thank you!