



FINNISH NATIONAL
AGENCY FOR EDUCATION

Education in Finland

Finnish National Agency for Education, 2024

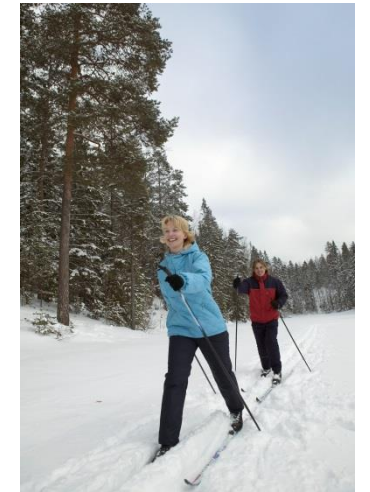
All the underlined parts and slides with the heart
symbol have been added by Ms Maarit Kostamo.



Finland in brief

- population 5.6 million (18 inhabitants / sq. km)
- two official languages: Finnish and Swedish
- persons with foreign background: 8.3% of the population
- education level of the working age population:

- 11% basic education
- 46% upper secondary education
- 43% tertiary education



Underlying educational understanding is based on equity

Everyone has the right to basic education free of charge. The public authorities shall guarantee for everyone equal opportunity to receive other educational services in accordance with their ability and special needs, as well as the opportunity to develop themselves without being prevented by economic hardship.

(Constitution of Finland)

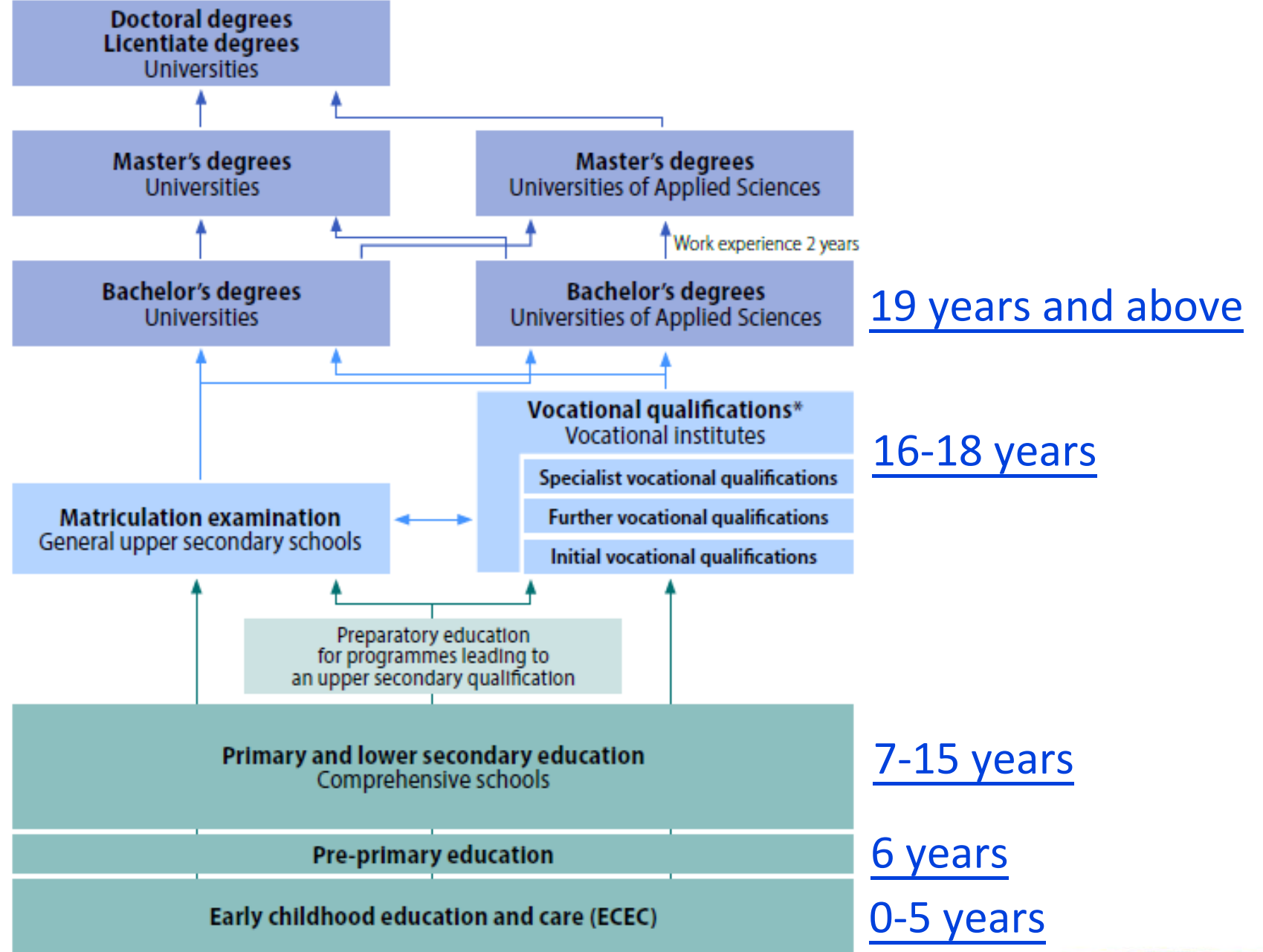




Compulsory education

- "Compulsory education applies to all 6–18-year-olds. It includes pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. After 9 years of basic education there is general upper secondary or vocational upper secondary education and training." <https://www.oph.fi/en/education-system#:~:text=The%20Finnish%20education%20system,-The%20Finnish%20education&text=Compulsory%20education%20applies%20to%20all,upper%20secondary%20education%20and%20training.>
- There is no compulsory school attendance in Finland

Education system in Finland



Classes

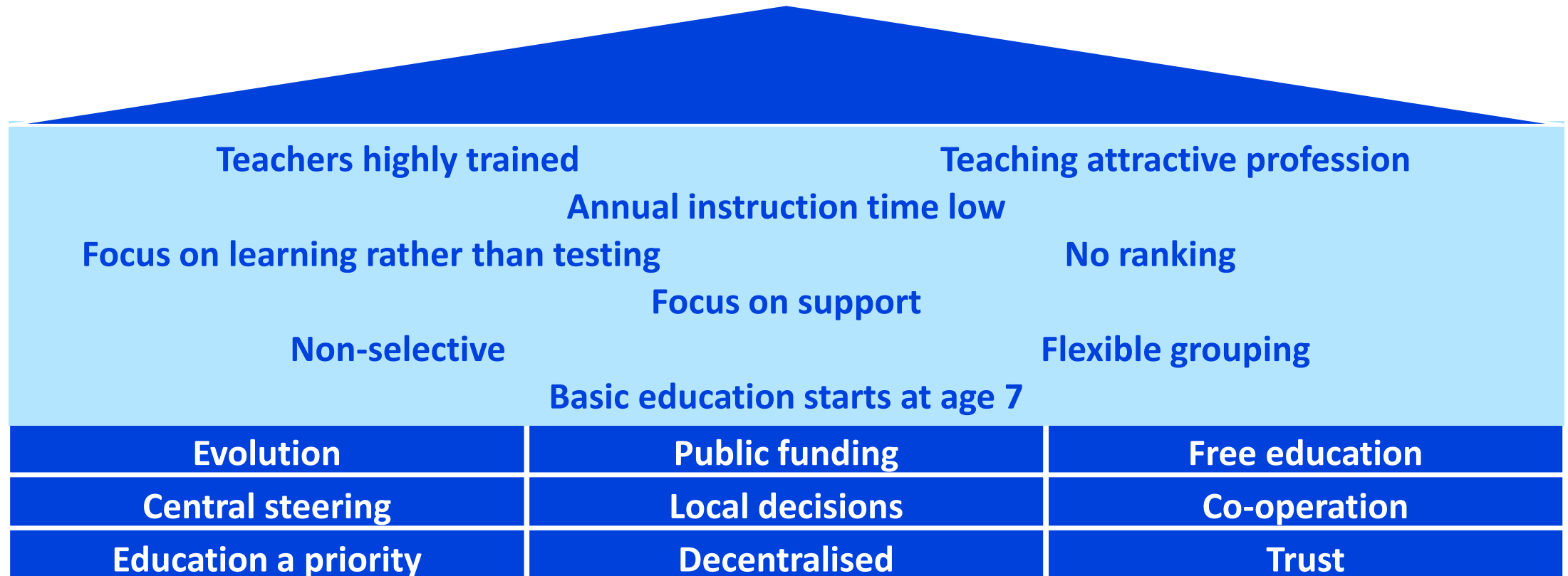


- **Pre-primary school:**
 - Pre-school: 6-year-olds
- **Primary school:**
 - Grade 1: 7-year-olds
 - Grade 2: 8-year-olds
 - Grade 3: 9-year-olds
 - Grade 4: 10-year-olds
 - Grade 5: 11-year-olds
 - Grade 6: 12-year-olds
- **Middle school:**
 - Grade 7: 13-year-olds
 - Grade 8: 14-year-olds
 - Grade 9: 15-year-olds

- **High school**
 - Grade 1: 16-year-olds
 - Grade 2: 17-year-olds
 - Grade 3: 18-year-olds
 - (Grade 4: 19-year-olds)



Specificities of the Finnish education system



Finnish News about Education



- School Closures and Changes
- Education Policies and Practices
- Concerns and Initiatives
- COVID-19 and Back-to-School
- Language Learning and Curriculum

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL yle.fi/a/74-20077996. The article is titled "Seinäjoen kaupunki haluaa vielä kuulla asukkaita kahden koulun mahdollisesta yhdistämisestä" (Seinäjoki city wants to hear from residents again about the possible merging of two schools). The text states that the city is planning to merge Kouran school into Keski-Nurmon school by the end of the year. Below the text is a video player with a play button icon and the text "Kuuntele juttu 1:16". The video image shows children sitting at a desk, working on a crossword puzzle and other schoolwork.

Kunnat

Seinäjoen kaupunki haluaa vielä kuulla asukkaita kahden koulun mahdollisesta yhdistämisestä

Seinäjoen kaupunki suunnittelee yhdistävänsä Kouran koulun Keski-Nurmon kouluun vuoden kuluttua.

Kuuntele juttu 1:16

A photograph showing children's hands and arms as they work on school assignments at a desk. There are papers, a crossword puzzle, and school supplies like pens and pencils visible.

Seinäjoen kaupunki suunnittelee yhdistävänsä Kouran koulun Keski-Nurmon kouluun. Kuva: Antro Valo / Yle

Central steering



Central

- Educational priorities
- Minimum time allocation
- National core curricula
- Size of state subsidies

Local decisions



Local

- Educational priorities
- Local curricula
- Allocation of subsidies
- Class size
- Recruitment
- Teacher "evaluation"
- Quality assurance

Current issues

- learning outcomes are decreasing
- mobile phone use at school
- differences between genders
in learning outcomes
- paying more attention to learners with immigrant background
- admission to higher education heavily dependent on mathematics
- raising educational level among young adults
- quantity of pupils with special education needs is increasing
- mental health problems of pupils are increasing



Basic education is free for
pupils and families



What exactly is free?

- tuition
- learning materials including books, notebooks, pencils and rubbers and other learning materials
- (sports) equipment
- materials (paper, paint, food items in home economics)
- school lunch
- transportation to school
- treatment of injuries occurred during the school hours



Image source: <https://yle.fi/a/74-20050239>

Expenditure on education 2021

- **Operative costs per pupil/student**
 - pre-primary education
 - basic education
 - general upper secondary
 - vocational upper secondary

6 713 € ~ 9 902 Can\$

9 975 € ~ 14 713 Can\$

8 535 € ~ 12 590 Can\$

10 665 € ~ 15 731 Can\$



well-being promotes learning

Pupil and student welfare

**Collective and
individual
approach**

Health care

School meals

Safety

School meals

School meals generally consist of typical Finnish foods.
A good school meal consists of:



warm main course



vegetables



bread and table spread



drink

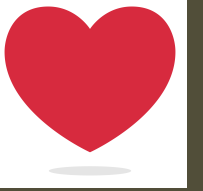
water





- 2 glasses of milk
- Grated carrots
- Green salad
- Cottage cheese
- 9 meatballs
- A scoop of potato mash
- Absent:
- -bread
- -fruit (not offered)
-

Image source: https://www.julkari.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/136806/URN_ISBN_978-952-343-149-2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y



- 2 glasses of milk
- rice porridge
- almonds
- sugar and cinnamon sprinkle
- Absent:
- -bread
- -fruit

Child's overall development
and joy of learning
emphasised in Early Childhood
Education and Care

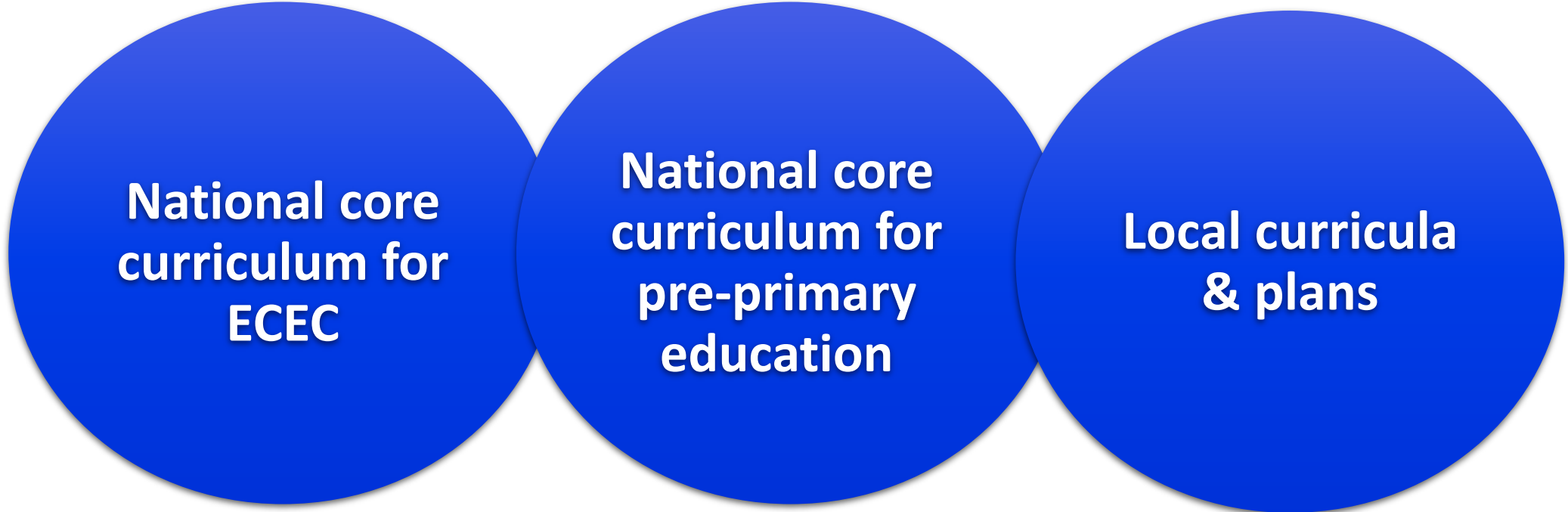
Early childhood education and care (ECEC)



Photo: Liikuntapäiväkoti

- Universal entitlement (0-6 years)
- Main forms:
 - ECEC centres
 - family day care
- Integrated approach to education, care & teaching => EduCare model
- Moderate fees; 0-290 €/month in municipal ECEC

ECEC plans and curriculum



**National core
curriculum for
ECEC**

**National core
curriculum for
pre-primary
education**

**Local curricula
& plans**

Pre-primary education at the age of six

- free and compulsory
- provided in ECEC centres or schools
- minimum 700 hours per year
- promoting child's prerequisites for growth, development and learning
- a continuous learning path from ECEC to school
- integrative education
- learning through play, joy of learning





What is included in pre-school education?

- *My children have been practicing numbers 1-20, seasons, weekdays, colors, and shapes in preschool. They've also been practicing the alphabet. They have been working on recognizing word shapes (my children could read in preschool; one could read before starting, and the other learned during that time). One of the children had an 8-session swimming course during preschool, while the other did not. Otherwise, they have been active, visited the school to practice being a student, gone on excursions, and occasionally received homework.*
- Source: Discussion forum: <https://www.vauva.fi/comment/34464850>
- Image source: https://images.cdn.yle.fi/image/upload/f_auto,fl_progressive/fl_keep iptc/q_88/w_569,h_569,c_crop,x_137,y_0/w_700/v1619072823/39-7974346081159ae0d0e.jpg



What do they teach gifted children who already know the numbers 1-1000 so that they don't get too lazy?

- *"I had a child who was more or less like this. They don't just sit in a row doing tasks for 45 minutes; it's flexible. If they finish their tasks quickly, they can draw, play with Legos, craft, write stories, read, or go outside with those who started their tasks the day before and are now finished. My child painted three Easter eggs instead of the one and filled the notebook with rhyming pairs, and they had fun. They didn't get bored with tasks that were too easy, as during a penmanship exercise, they could simultaneously do mental multiplication or come up with a story for the characters in their cartoon. The teacher provided more challenging math exercises separately, and sometimes they went to the first-grade class for Finnish language lessons.*
- *But with the same enthusiasm as others, they went on excursions, played musical instruments, and engaged in activities like the H-store (where you can only buy items starting with the letter 'H'). They planned performances and built snowmen like everyone else. They didn't get bored, even though they had to wait around whilst those who didn't understand calendars and clocks were still learning them. Instead, they celebrated their own achievements and helped out when asked to do so. Fortunately, in the spring, there were tasks that required practicing asking for help and tolerating not knowing, as that wasn't this child's strongest skill :)* "

• Source: Discussion forum: <https://www.vauva.fi/comment/34464850>

• Image
source: https://images.cdn.yle.fi/image/upload/f_auto,fl_progressive/q_auto/w_3024,h_3024,c_crop,x_756,y_0/w_400/v1683271295/39-11090396454ae1496323.jpg



Basic education:

Every pupil is unique and

has the right to

high-quality education

Basic education includes:



Primary school: grades 1-6



Image source: <https://yle.fi/a/3-5059495>

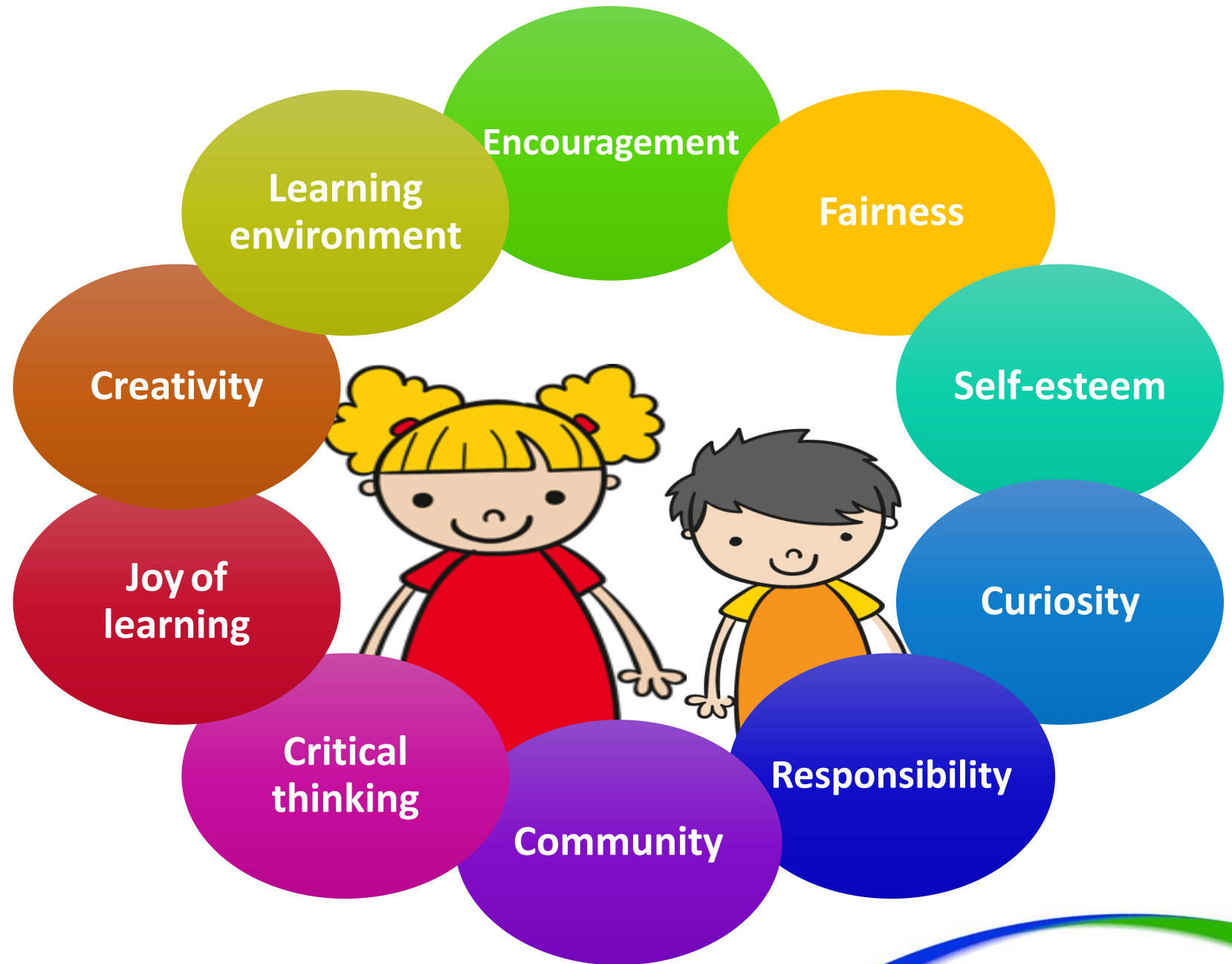
Middle school: grades 7-9



Image source: https://images.cdn.yle.fi/image/upload/f_auto,fl_progressive/q_auto/w_4160,h_4160,c_fill,g_faces/w_400/v1652089958/39-9522266278e03aecd50.jpg

**Maximising
potential:**

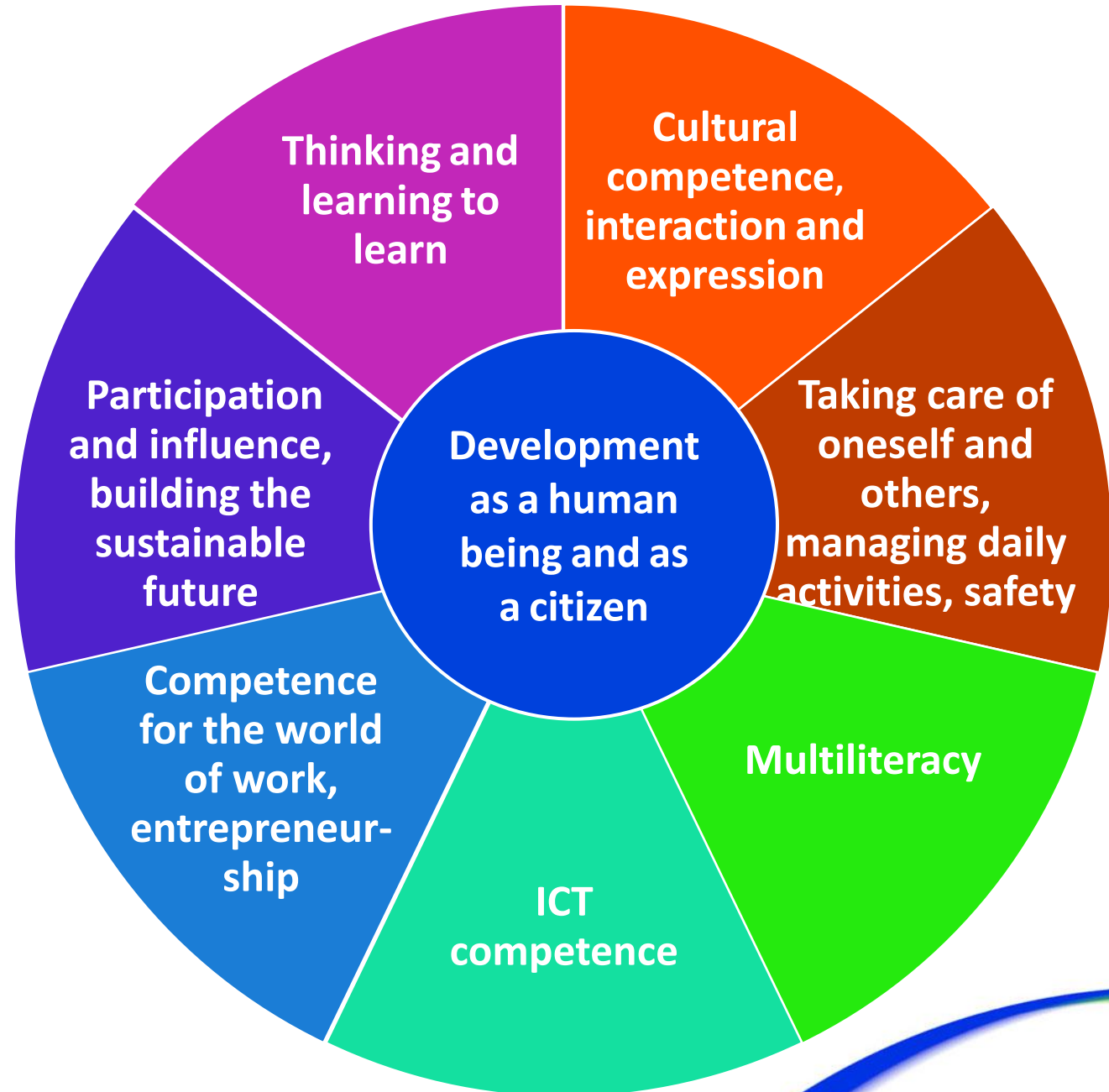
**every
child is
unique**



Rethinking competences

National Goals for Basic Education and Transversal Competences

- knowledge
- skills
- values
- attitudes
- will



National minimum time allocation sample of subjects (annual weekly lessons¹)

Forms	1–2	3–6	7–9	Total
Mother tongue & literature	14	18	10	42
Mathematics	6	15	11	32
A language (1st foreign language)	2	9	7	18
B language (2nd national language)	–	2	4	6

Forms	1–6	7–9	Total
Environment and science	14	17	31
History & civics	5	7	12
Arts, crafts & sports			62
¹ Total annual no. of lessons x 38	Total min		224

Basic education curriculum

Core ideas



Conception of learning

Learner's active role

- Sets targets
- Reflects & analyses
- Solves problems

Interaction

- Learns with others and in different environments
- Understands consequences

Learning to learn

- Recognises own way of learning
- Applies this to promote learning

Self-conception and confidence

- Helps setting targets
- Receives feedback

1st grader's timetable

Lukujärjelmä 2024
1A, A-ryhmä

Luokka:	maanantai	tiistai	keskiviikko	torstai	perjantai
8.00-8.45					X
8.50-9.35		X	X a	US	X
10.00-11.00	X	X	X	LI	X
11.00-11.50	X	LI	X	X	X
12.15-13.00	X a	X	X	X	
13.15-14.00	X a			EN	
14.15-15.00					

Image source: Maarit Kostamo's private collection

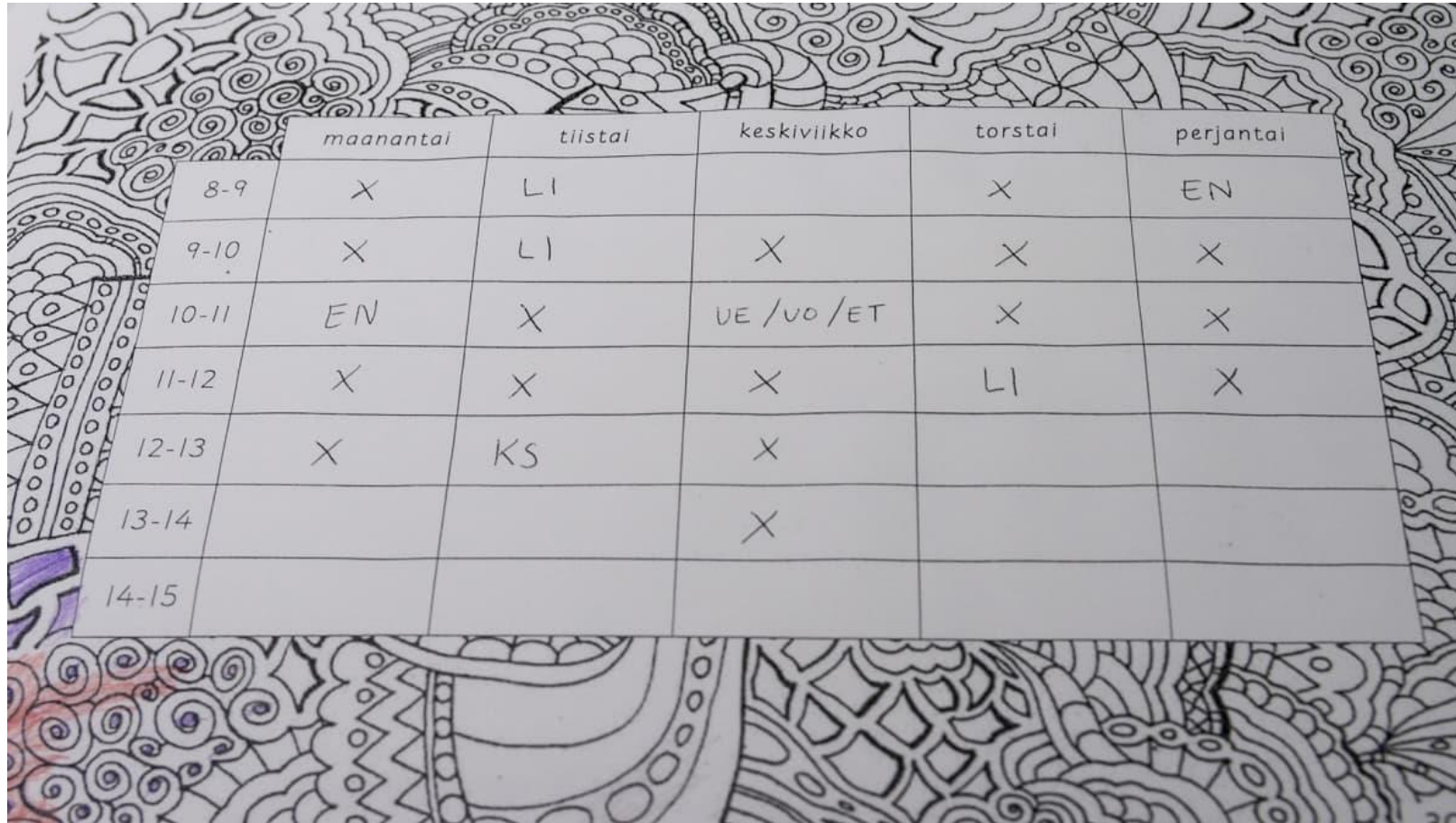
1st grader's timetable, 2023/2024



Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.00am-8.45am					x
8.50am-9.35am		x	x	Religious studies	x
10.00am-11.00am	x	x	x	Sports	x
Lunch	---	---	---	---	---
11.00am-11.50am	x	Sports	x	x	x
12.15pm-1.00pm	x	x	x	x	
1.15pm-2.00pm	x			English as a foreign language (EFL)	
2.15pm-3.00pm					

X= mother language (Finnish), maths, environment and science (biology, geography), music, visual arts, handy crafts

3rd grader's timetable 2017/2018

The table is set against a background of a black and white line drawing of a mandala, featuring intricate geometric and organic patterns. The table itself is a grid with 7 rows and 6 columns. The first column contains date ranges from 8-9 to 14-15. The subsequent five columns are labeled with days of the week in Finnish: maanantai, tiistai, keskiviikko, torstai, and perjantai. The cells contain 'X' marks or abbreviations indicating the schedule for each day.

	maanantai	tiistai	keskiviikko	torstai	perjantai
8-9	X	LI		X	EN
9-10	X	LI	X	X	X
10-11	EN	X	VE / VO / ET	X	X
11-12	X	X	X	LI	X
12-13	X	KS	X		
13-14			X		
14-15					

Image source: <https://yle.fi/a/3-9890779>

3rd grader's timetable 2017/2018



Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8-9am	x	Sports		x	EFL
9-10am	x	Sports	x	x	x
10-11am	EFL	x	Religious studies	x	x
11am-12pm	x	x	x	Sports	x
12.00pm-1.00pm	x	Handicrafts	x		
1.00pm-2.00pm			x		
2.00pm-3.00pm					

X= mother language (Finnish), maths, environment and science (biology, geography), history, civics, music, visual arts

What is an appropriate amount of homework for a first-grader?

- According to Sirpa Eskelä-Haapanen, the Head of the Department of Teacher Education at University of Jyväskylä, there is no set recommended amount for homework because each student is an individual.
- However, there are a couple of general guidelines: a first-grader should spend a maximum of half an hour on homework per day, and there should be no homework on Fridays to allow for free time over the weekend.
- It is especially crucial that not all students receive the same homework. Differentiation ensures that teaching reaches each individual.
- *"If everyone is always given the same homework, only a small portion of pupils learns and keeps up, usually the average. Other students become frustrated, demotivated, or fall behind,"* says Eskelä-Haapanen.
- Source: <https://yle.fi/a/3-12121510>
- Image source: <https://yle.fi/a/3-12121510>



9-year-old Boys Amaze Adults - Discover How to Manage Stress During School Day

- Keltinmäki School in Jyväskylä, Finland, introduced "relaxation breaks" three years ago
- Initiated by fourth-grade boys seeking a nap during breaks for improved concentration
- Boys regularly retreat to the counselor's cozy office on Thursdays for short naps
- Researcher Tuija Aro underscores early well-being education to protect children from prolonged stress
- Students affirm that these breaks enhance focus in subsequent classes, highlighting potential benefits
- Source: <https://yle.fi/a/74-20061703>

Rii
Yle,



9th grader's autumn timetable 2023/2024

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.00am-8.45am		Maths	English		Electives: home economics
9.00am-9.45am	Sports	Social studies	Maths	Health education	Electives: home economics
9.55am-10.40am	Sports	Social studies	Biology	English	Biology
Lunch 30 min,					
11.10am-12.00pm	Maths	Electives: home economics	Health education	Biology	Social studies
12.15pm-1.00pm	English	Electives: home economics	Swedish	Mother language	Mother language
1.15pm-2.00pm	Mother language	Physics	Career counselling	Electives: German	Maths
2.15pm-3.00pm		Physics		Electives: German	

Source: Maarit Kostamo's private collection

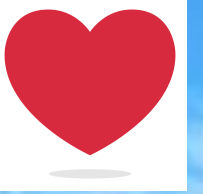
9th grader's spring timetable 2023/2024

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.00am-8.45am				Chemistry	Electives: home economics
9.00am-9.45am	English	Religious studies	Religious studies	Chemistry	Electives: home economics
9.55am-10.40am	Geography	English	Social studies	Maths	Social studies
Lunch 30 min,					
11.10am-12.00pm	Maths	Electives: international cooperation	Social studies	Swedish	Finnish
12.15pm-1.00pm	Maths	Electives: international cooperation	Finnish	Career counselling	Geography
1.15pm-2.00pm	Sports	Geography	Finnish	Electives: German	English
2.15pm-3.00pm	Sports			Electives: German	Maths

General upper secondary education
aims at
broad-based knowledge

High schools in Finland

- 377 high schools
- On average 280 students in each high school, more in bigger cities
- The biggest high school with 1,400 students is Gaudia, in Lahti
- One of the smallest high schools is Kristinestads gymnasium in Kristiinankaupunki with around 40 students



Academic year

- Our academic year: 10th August 2023 to 1st June 2024
- Holidays
 - Autumn break: 1 week: 16/10-22/10
 - Christmas holiday: 2 weeks: 22/12-7/1/2024
 - Spring holiday: 1 week: 26/2-1/3/2024
 - Easter break : 3 days, 28/3-1/4
- Five study periods a year, that is, 5 different timetables

The source: <https://tyk.info/opiskelijalle/>

[illegible]



Academic year

- One study period lasts approx. 7 weeks
- The last 7 school days of each period constitute an exam week where you can have all manner of evaluations
- Subjects in each period: between 5 and 7
 - Normally, students go to high school for 3 years
 - If you go to high school for 4 years, you will have between 4 and 5 subjects in each period
- Each subject has three lessons of 75 minutes each week

The source: <https://tyk.info/opiskelijalle/>

TUNTIKAAVIO

MAANANTAI	TIISTAI	KESKIVIIKKO	TORSTAI
Tiimiäika 8.15 - 9.00	1 8.15-9.30	7 8.15-9.30	7 8.15-9.30
3 9.15 - 10.30	2 9.45 - 11.00	6 9.45 - 11.00	6 9.45 - 11.00
Ryhmänohjaus 10.30-11.00			
5	3	5	3
6	4	2	4
7	8a	1	8b
	75min/90min		75min/90min

»ikkeaa muiden koulupäivien aikataulusta.

o 11.10-13.00. Ruokailu kestää 35 minuuttia. Ruokailuvuorot löytyvät Wilmasta.
sa oma tuntikaavionsa.

järjestetään maanantaisin yleensä joka toinen viikko, mutta tarvittaessa myös useammin.
a tiedotetaan Wilmassa.

Class times – each lesson lasts for 75 minutes



- **Monday**

- 9.15am-10.30am
- 11.10am-1.00pm (with a 35-min. lunch break in the middle)
- 1.15pm-2.30pm
- 2.45pm-4.00pm

- **Tuesday-Friday**

- 8.15am-9.30am
- 9.45am-11.00am
- 11.10am-1.00pm (with a 35-min. lunch break in the middle)
- 1.15pm-2.30pm
- 2.45pm-4.00pm

High school 1st-grader's timetable 2023/2024



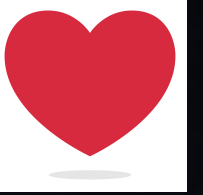
Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.15am-9.30am		Sports			Sports
9.45am-11.00am	Maths	English	German	German	English
11.10am-1.00pm incl. 35-min. lunch	Health education		Health education		
1.15pm-2.30pm	German	Maths	English	Maths	Health education
2.40pm-4.00pm			Sports		

Source: Pia Nyman

At the end of high school: two diplomas

- 1) A diploma for high school studies
- 2) A diploma for the matriculation exam





The white hat of the graduates

Subjects in the matriculation exam (national exam at the end of high school)

1) OBLIGATORY : Finnish as a mother language or a second language

2) EITHER Swedish – advanced or intermediate studies

OR Maths – advanced or basic studies

3) Three of the following subjects

- A foreign language: advanced or basic studies
- Biology
- Geography
- History
- Social sciences
- Religion
- Philosophy
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Psychology
- Health education



Example high school: Remedial education



- In foreign languages and maths, revision courses in the spring during a study period (3 times a week, for 7 weeks)
- Remedial classes in each subject as needed
- Math remedial classes on Tuesdays at 2:45 p.m. (with a maths teacher)
- A well-being café once a month where you can discuss everything (often a dog present)
- A group for those who live independently on Thursdays at 2:45 p.m.
- Studies in a small group with specialized support during the 4th period

Finnish high school from the Canadian perspective



IN A FINNISH SCHOOL:

- lunch is free
- there's free wifi for students at school
- everyone has a laptop provided by the school
- teachers are called by their first names
- there are no bells
- there are more potatoes and bread products than in Canada
- in general: the peanut butter is bad
 - Source: <https://trynnjogsandblogs.wordpress.com/2015/01/16/finland-is-as-finland-does-post-21/> and <https://ylojarvenlukio.fi/blogi/2021/04/23/mielenkiintoisia-kokemuksia-kanadasta/>
- very few clubs and no sports after regular classes as students venture out to their own hobbies
 - (Source: <https://peda.net/laukaa/lukio/opiskelijoille/kansainvalisyys/calgary-vaihto/calgary-vaihto>)
- driver's licence in Finland from 18 years and up (before that you can't drive to school in a car)

Source: https://youtu.be/YbJ_How1wNQ?si=h1Y7YENAyuyLyMiZ



vocational education
and training:

focus on competences and
individual learner



Vocational education and training (VET)

Close cooperation with the labour market

Work-based learning

Flexible learning pathways

Open pathways from VET
to higher and further education

Comparing Finnish education

Finnish education in international comparison

**Instruction
time low**

**Differences
between schools
small**

**Girls outperform
boys**

**Moderate
costs**

**Socio-economic
effect moderate**

**Teachers feel highly
valued**



The crisis in Finnish education

The Crisis in Finnish Education: An Overview



1. Reading skills, especially among boys, are decreasing as they prefer digital devices over books.
2. Girls are outperforming boys in reading, math, and sciences, leading to increasing gender disparities.
3. The decline in Finland's PISA scores is due to weakened appreciation for the importance of education, reduced reading activities, and growing disparities in students' situations.
4. Increased variation in students' competence contributes to the need for more individualized support.
5. Use of mobile devices negatively impacts students' well-being, affecting sleep, concentration, memory, and impulse control.
6. Teachers are overwhelmed with administrative tasks and additional responsibilities, asking for more time for actual teaching and student interaction as that is their primary role.
7. Teachers face well-being issues with excessive workload, as revealed by the OAJ survey



Solutions from teachers of Finland:

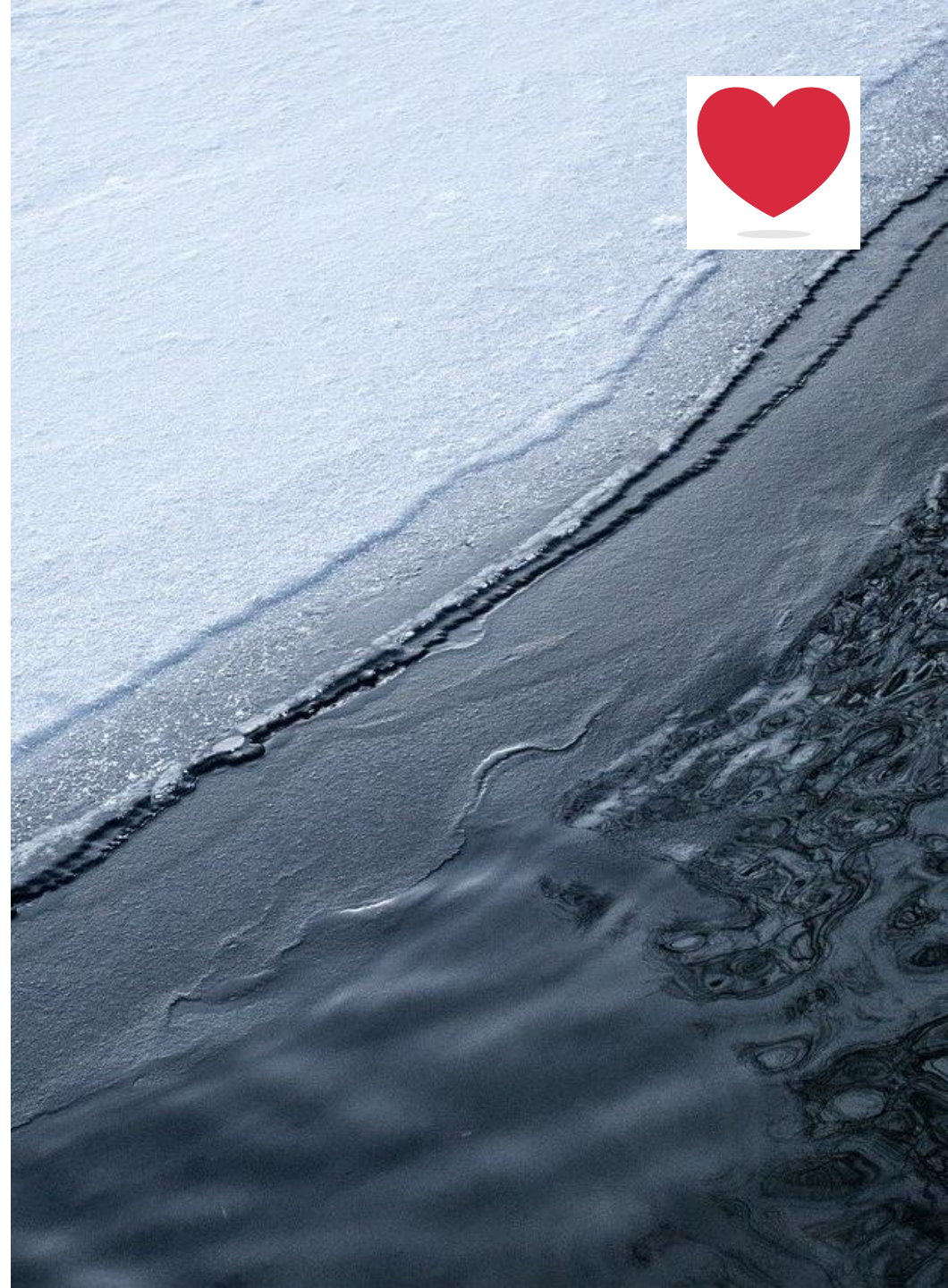
- **Reduce Class Sizes**
- **Allocate More Time for Core Work**
- **Assess Students' Skills**
- **Clarify Teacher Roles**
- **Involve Teachers in Decision-Making**
- Additional suggestions:
 - discipline mobile phone use,
 - re-establish closed learning spaces,
 - reconsidering the extension of compulsory education,
 - increase collaborative teaching,
 - reinstate advanced courses,
 - review teacher salaries and educational material budgets.

• Source: <https://www.is.fi/kotimaa/art-2000008233663.html>



The current challenges in the school system according to 14-16-year-olds

- **Mental Health and Burnout**
- **Responsibility Without Guidance**
- **Differences Between Schools**
- **Sleep Deprivation**
- **Lack of Mental Health Support**
- **Diversity in Learning Approaches**
- **Challenges with Addressing Bullying**
- **Pressure and Performance Expectations**
- **Need for More Comprehensive Health Services**
- Source: <https://www.is.fi/kotimaa/art-2000008229516.html>



Some solutions from 14-16-year-old students

- address mental health issues
- improve support services
- adopt more diverse and engaging teaching methods, which include adding more interactive and project-based learning to the Finnish school system
- Source: <https://www.is.fi/kotimaa/art-2000008229516.html>





Thank you!

- Special acknowledgement to my family, friends, especially Ms Pia Nyman of DKG Zeta, Tampere, Finland
- Maarit Kostamo, maarit.kostamo@tyk.info