



Oulu2026  
Euroopan kulttuuri-  
pääkaupunki



# Introduction to Finnish Education System

Full STEAM 2026



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# Today's program



- 09:30–11:30**      **Introduction to Finnish Education System** (*City Hall*)
- 11:30–13:00**      **Lunch** (*Pannu, Kauppurienkatu 10*)
- 13:00–16:00**      **STEAM in Oulu: Introduction to STEAM Pedagogy** (*Oulu10, Torikatu 10*)  
*\*Meeting point on the ground floor lobby*

***We can walk together to lunch and to Oulu10.***

# Important information about school visits



- Don't take photos of students/children
- Many schools have policy to take off outdoor shoes at the entrance – you can use indoor shoes if you have
- Casual dress code
- You can address teachers by their first name
- You can find the full code of conduct on the course materials page

**WARM UP: Discuss shortly with a pair**  
**Why are you interested about STEAM pedagogy?**



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# The Finnish Education System



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# **TASK: While listening to the presentation, reflect and take notes:**



1. Your general thoughts on the Finnish Education System. What are the similarities and differences to your own education system?
2. How does the Finnish Education System offer opportunities for project-based learning such as STEAM?

# Our education system is based on

**TRUST**

**EQUALITY**

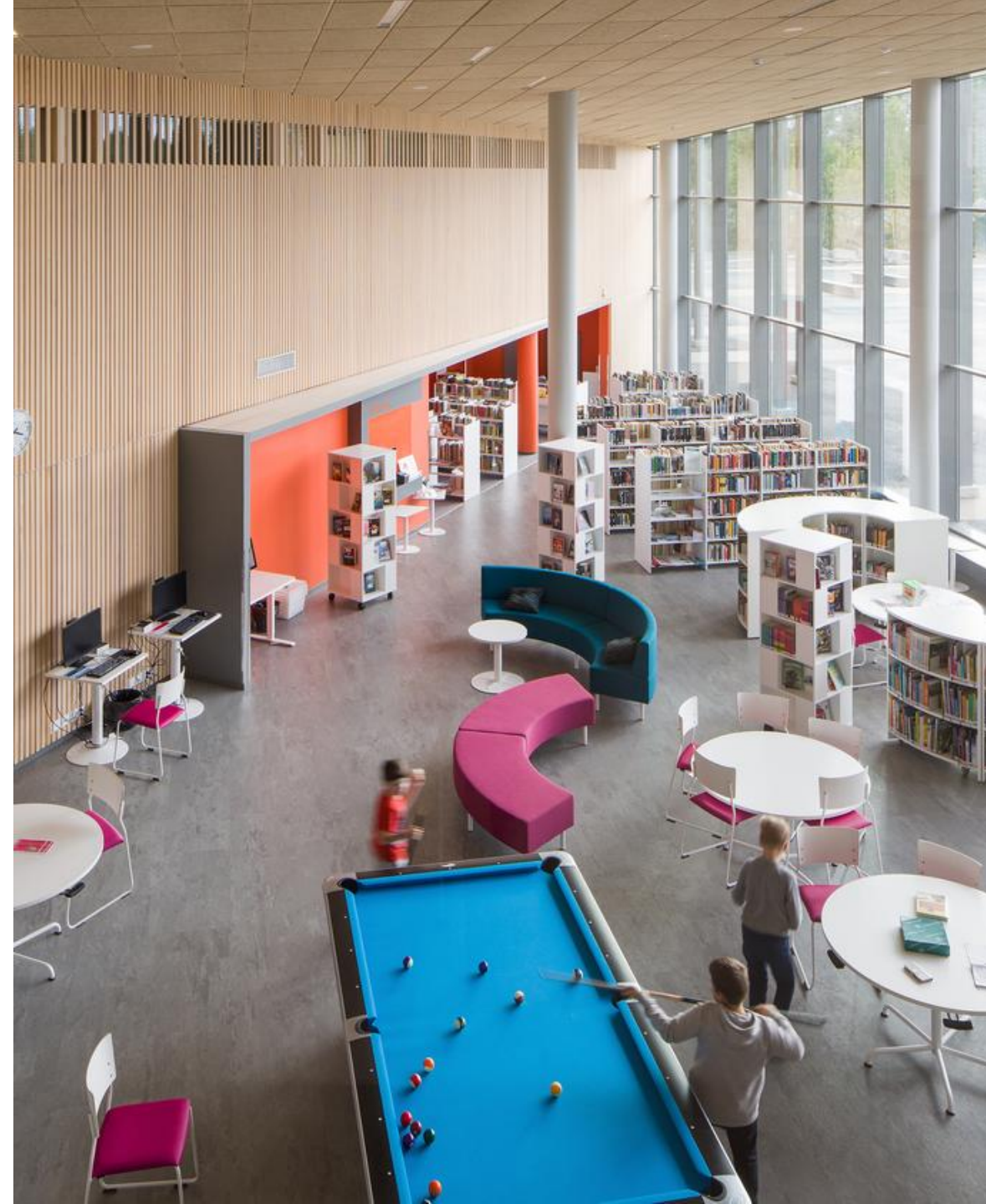
**RESPONSIBILITY**

# Special features of the Finnish education system

- Education is free (incl. meals and materials)
- The society has a positive attitude towards education.
- Finnish teachers are highly educated and strongly committed to their work.
- Only the core curricula are designed for nationwide application.
- A great deal of attention is paid to individual support for pupils' learning and wellbeing.
- Multi-professional cooperation is applied to further improve our schools.
- The nature of the evaluation of learning outcomes at schools is encouraging and supportive.
- Finland has an efficient library system of very high quality.



Photo: Hiukkavaara Comprehensive school



# Finnish Education Policy

- Finnish schools have a high degree of **autonomy** in pedagogical and curricular practices.
- Finnish teachers have considerable degree of **decision-making authority** as concerns school policy and management.
  - deciding which courses the school should offer
  - choice of textbooks and other teaching material
  - determining course content
  - establishing student assessment policies
  - allocating budgets within the school



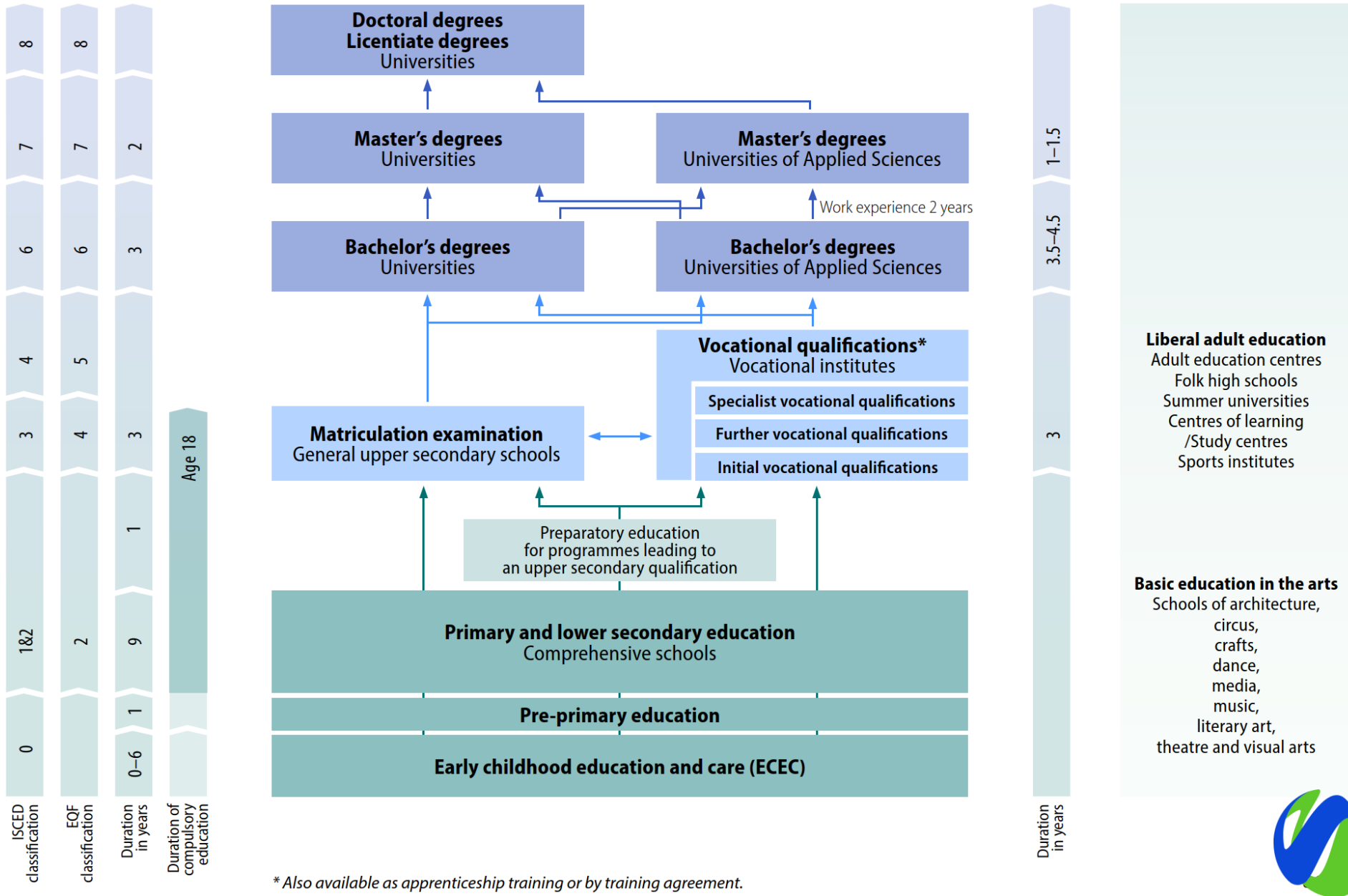
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Source: Jukka Alava, Institute of  
Educational Leadership

Photo: Patamäki Comprehensive School



# EDUCATION SYSTEM IN FINLAND



\* Also available as apprenticeship training or by training agreement.



# Administration from top to bottom

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

THE NATIONAL AGENCY FOR EDUCATION

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION (CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES)

ECEC CENTERS, SCHOOLS AND HEADS

ECEC AND SCHOOL STAFF

# Accountabilities within the curriculum process

## NATIONAL LEVEL

- Ministry of Education and National Agency for Education
- Education Acts and Decrees and Education Policy Guidelines
- Development Plan for Education and Research
- National Core Curriculum

## EDUCATION PROVIDER LEVEL

- Educational Authorities of a City or a Municipality
- Strategic Leadership and Management
- Local Organization, Resourcing, Monitoring and Development
- Decisions on the Local Curriculum

## SCHOOL LEVEL

- Heads and Management Teams
- Pedagogical Leadership
- Goals Leading the Development of School Culture
- Realization and Implementation of the School-Based Curriculum



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# Early Childhood Education & Pre-Primary Education



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# Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

- It supports the development, learning and wellbeing of children.
- It combines education, teaching and care in a systematic and goal-oriented way.
- It emphasizes equal treatment of children and giving due weight to their views.
- It builds the foundation for life-long learning.



**Artistic experiences  
and self-expression**

## **PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE**



**Exploration**



**Playing**



**Physical activity**

# Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

- All children under 7 years old have a right to Early Childhood Education and Care.
- The parents of the child decide whether their child participates.
- Local authorities (cities and municipalities) are responsible for providing it.
- Services can be organized by public or private service providers.
- ECEC is provided at ECEC centers (the most common form) or as family daycare in private homes or as clubs or playground activities, either with full-day or part-time participation.
- The staff-child ratio in ECEC centers is 1:4 for children under the age of three and 1:7 for children between the ages 3-6.
- ECEC is strongly supported by taxes. A fee is charged for early childhood education and care. The fee is based on the family's income and size, and on the time the child spends in ECEC. In the fall 2025 the fee charged for ECEC ranges from 0 € to 311 €.



**In Oulu there are  
143 ECEC centres:**

- **83 public**
- **59 private**

# Pre-primary education

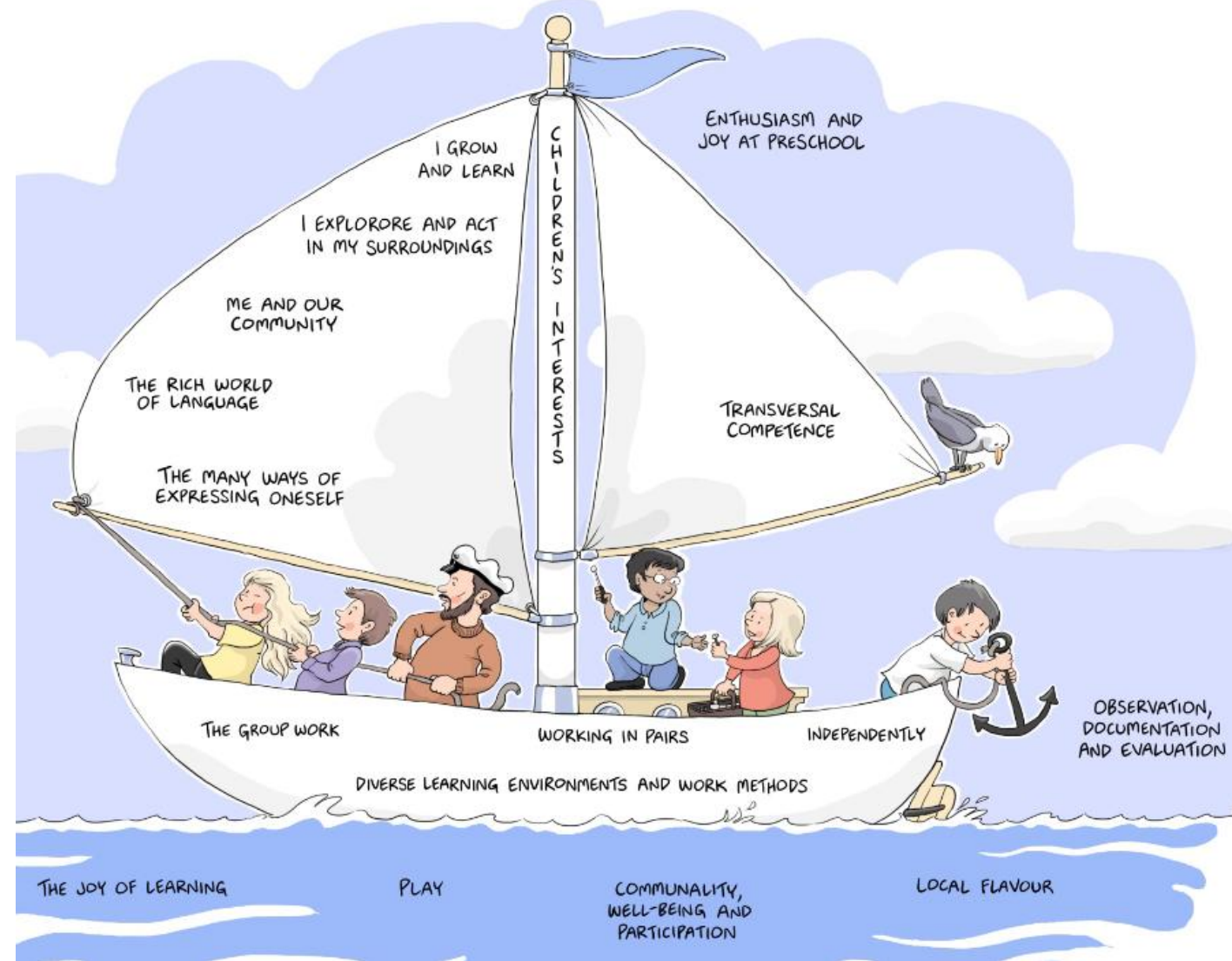
- Pre-primary education is compulsory for all six-year-olds.
- It is free of charge including meals, materials and daily health and welfare services.
- It is provided in ECEC centers or schools.
- It is 4 hours/day in a pre-primary group with a kindergarten teacher, who has MA in early childhood education.
- The group may include at most 13 children if there is one teacher or at most 20 children if there is another adequately trained adult besides the teacher in the group.



# Pre-primary education

- One year providing a continuous learning path from ECEC through pre-primary education to basic education.
- No universal standards – personal learning goals and plans are set for every child.
- Purpose is to improve children's opportunities for learning and support their growth through play-based learning.
- Teaching is not divided into school subjects.
- Teaching is organized according to themes or phenomena that last for different periods of time and are implemented in different ways.

## THE OULU CURRICULUM FOR PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION





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# Comprehensive Education



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# Comprehensive or Basic Education

- Grades 1–9
- Compulsory and there are no admission requirements.
- Free of charge – incl. materials, school meals, healthcare and welfare services and transportation if students live very far from school.
- In primary education, grades 1-6 study with a class teacher.
- In lower secondary education, grades 7-9 study with specialized subject teachers.
- Instruction is arranged in schools near home.
- Less than two per cent of primary and lower secondary school pupils go to a private or state school.

[Click here to see a video on four facts about Finnish comprehensive education.](#)



**In the fall 2025 there are 43  
comprehensive schools in Oulu.**

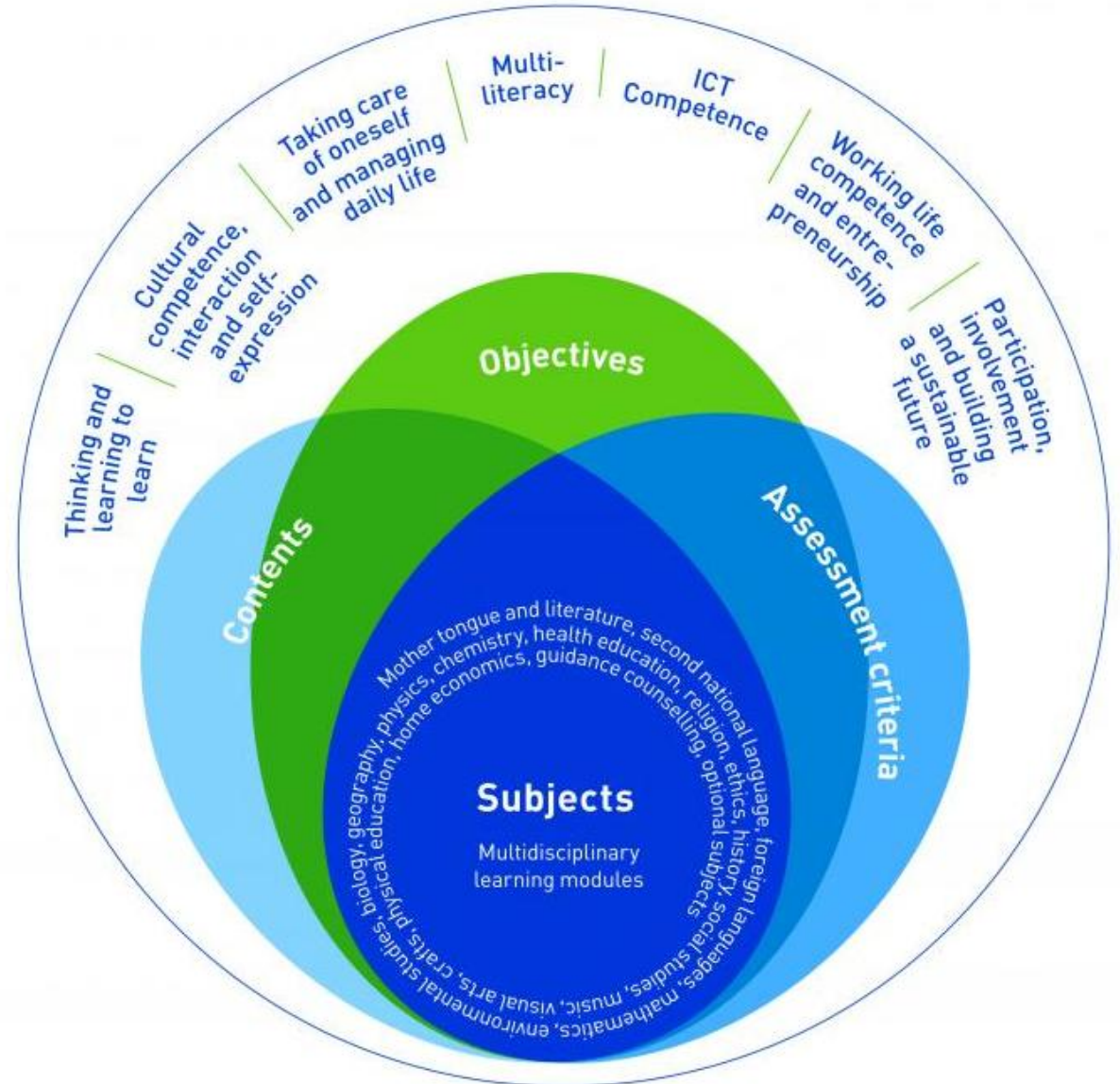
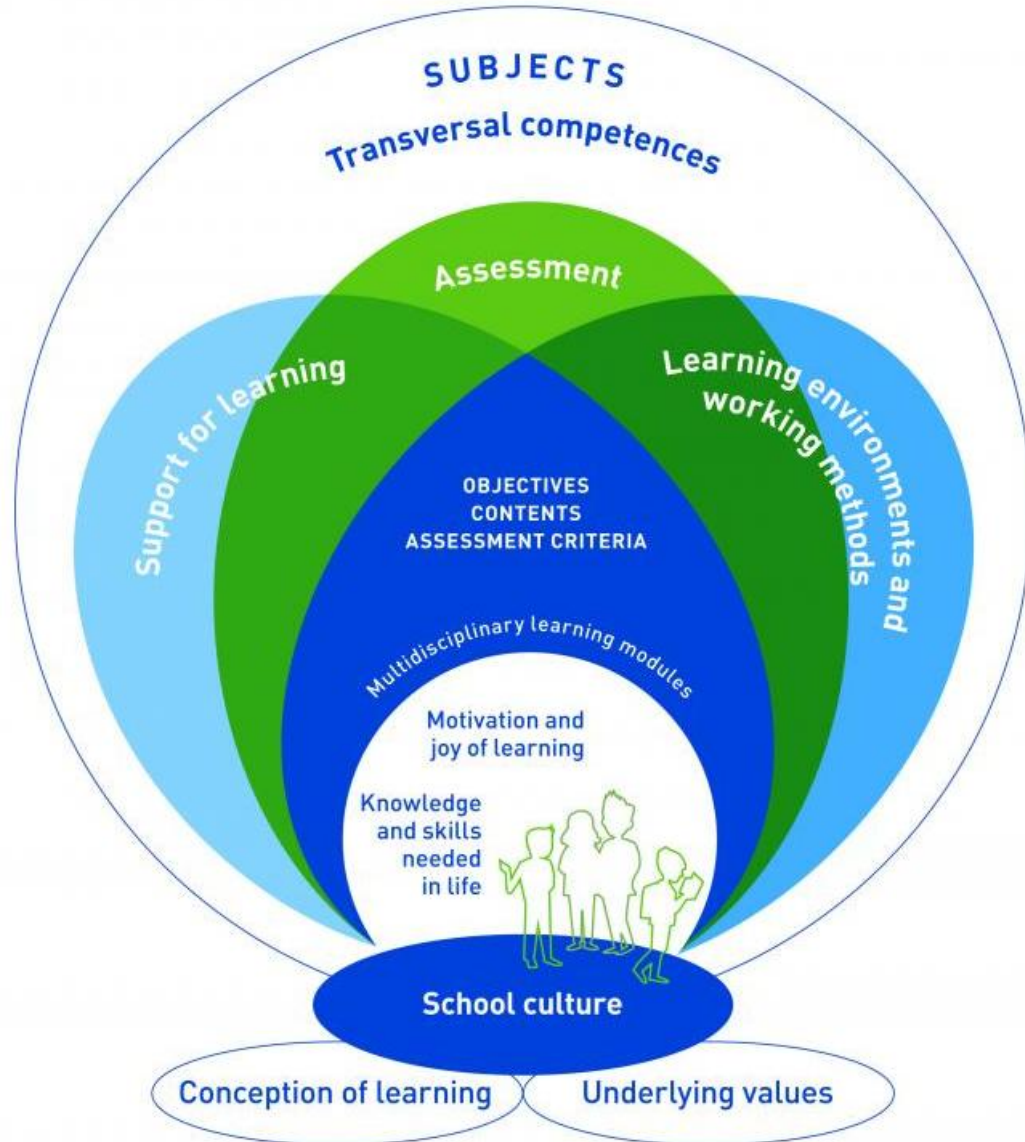
- **17 grades 1-6**
- **23 grades 1-9**
- **3 grades 7-9**

# Comprehensive or Basic Education

- The school year has 190 working days during fall and spring semesters from mid-August until the end of May.
- The minimum number of lessons per week for students varies from 20 to 30. The minimum number of lessons for class teachers is 24 and for subject teachers between 18 and 24 depending on the subject.
- The length of the school days is amongst the lowest in the world in Finland.
- The amount of homework is low compared to other countries.
- The average class size is 20 students.
- Special education is usually closely integrated into normal teaching and is highly inclusive by nature.
- Interruption and repeating a year grade is rare.
- Almost all Finnish children complete comprehensive school (in Oulu 99,6 %).
- Gives no official qualification; final certificate is granted for acceptable completion of the curriculum.
- Provides eligibility for all upper secondary education.



# Curriculum for basic education



# At least one multidisciplinary learning module a year

- Each school year every school must have at least one clearly-defined theme, project or course that combines the content of different subjects and deals with the selected theme from the perspective of several subjects.
- It is planned in cooperation with teachers and pupils.
- The assessment of learning is based on the objectives of the different subjects.

**PHENOMENOM-BASED LEARNING  
PROJECT-BASED LEARNING**





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# Upper Secondary Education



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# Choosing general or vocational upper secondary education after comprehensive school

- Each learner must apply for post-comprehensive school education.
- This means applying for general upper secondary education or vocational education and training.
- Compulsory education ends at the age of 18 or earlier after completion of an upper secondary qualification
- Graduates of general upper secondary or vocational education can apply for further studies at universities or universities of applied sciences



# General Upper Secondary Education

- Provides general education and does not qualify students for any particular profession.
- Usually takes 3 years, but the student can define their own progress rhythm
- Studies can be combined with vocational education to receive dual qualifications.
- Periodic system (4–6 periods per year) with study modules and units
- At the end of general upper secondary school, students take a national examination known as the Finnish Matriculation Examination.
  - Mother tongue (mandatory)
  - At least three other subjects such as foreign language, mathematics, sciences or humanities

# Upper Secondary Education in Oulu

- In the city of Oulu there are 10 general upper secondary schools.
- 3 schools with special focus: Madetoja Music School, International IB Programme in Lyseo Upper Secondary School, Sports Education in Kastelli Upper Secondary School
- Upper secondary education is also offered in the state-run Oulun normaalikoulu and private upper secondary schools Svenska Privatskolan i Uleåborg and Oulu Steiner School.
- Vocational education is provided by private education providers (e.g. OSAO, OPAO, Luovi and SDO).



# DISCUSSION IN GROUPS:

1. Your general thoughts on the Finnish Education System. What are the similarities and differences to your own education system?
2. How does the Finnish Education System offer opportunities for project-based learning such as STEAM?



# Divisions of Educational and Cultural Services



- **Early Childhood Education**
- **Basic Education and Youth Services**
- **General Upper Secondary Education, Liberal Art Education**
- **Cultural Services**
- **Sport Services**
- **Wellbeing Promotion Services**
- **Shared Services**



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# We are a prominent provider of high-quality education in Northern Finland



**83**

**PUBLIC EARLY  
CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION  
UNITS**

59 private

**43**

**COMPREHENSIVE  
SCHOOLS  
GRADES 1-9**

**10**

**GENERAL  
UPPER  
SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS**

+

**3 other than City  
schools**

**~7000**

**STAFF MEMBERS**  
appr. 6000 work  
in the  
educational  
sector (schools,  
sports, culture,  
youth..)

**3** VALUES

**COURAGE,  
FAIRNESS,  
RESPONSIBILITY**

# Education builds Oulu - Our main targets

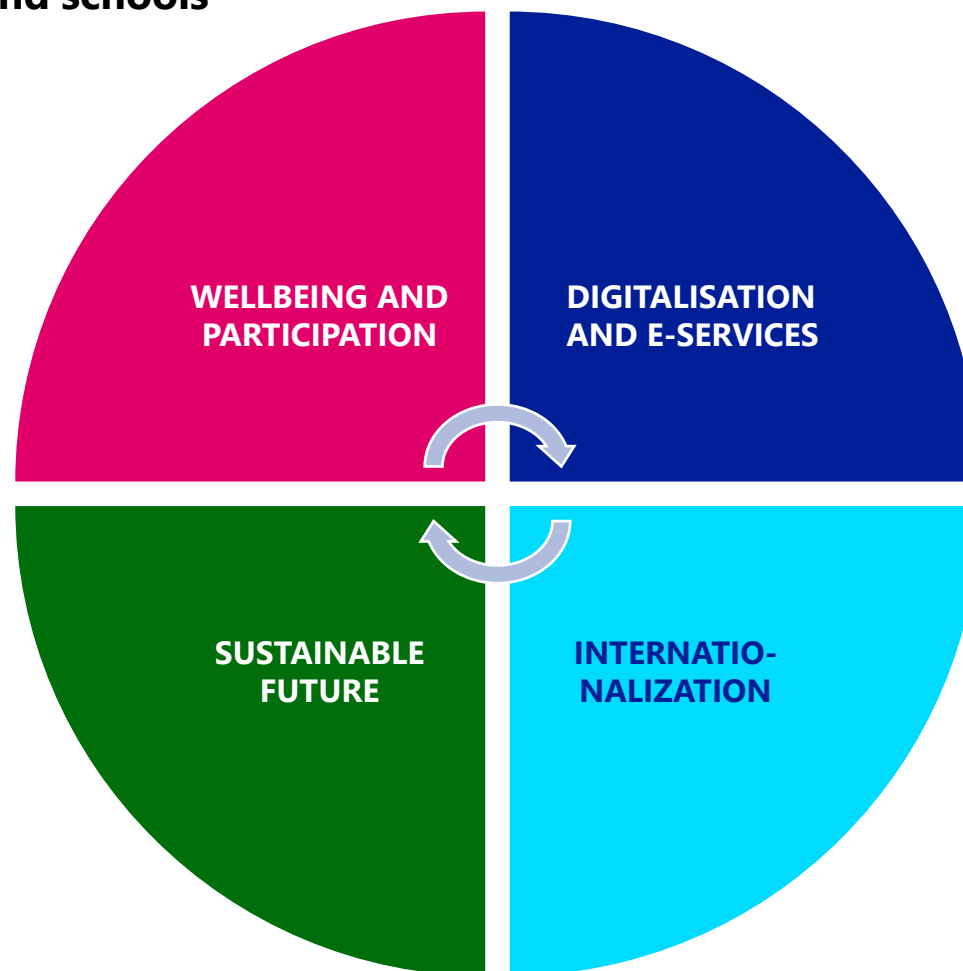
## Wellbeing in daycare centres and schools

- free school meals
- health services
- multiprofessional support
- student counseling
- participation

Schools on the move  
Child-friendly City  
Emotional and safety skills

Learning path for sustainable future

Sustainable library



Roadmap for digitalisation

E-services

STEAM Education

DigiOne for schools and  
eVaka for Early Childhood Education

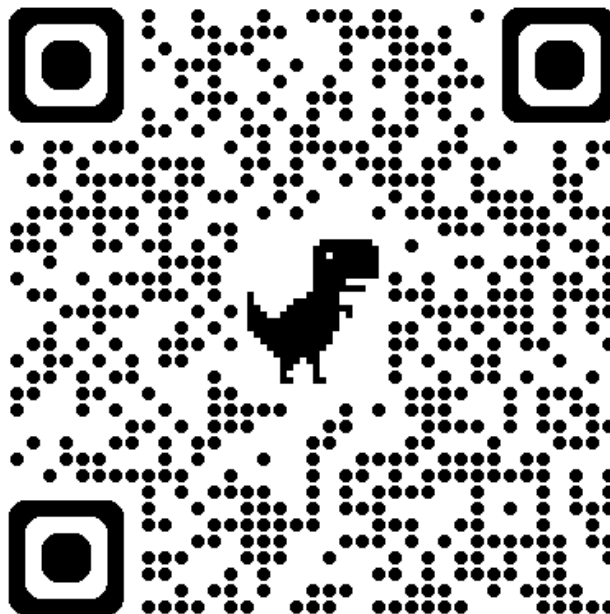
Mobility projects

Networks

Home internationalization and  
Global Citizenship Education

Curriculum and language studies

**You will find the course materials online**  
(We upload the materials after the sessions)



**Lunch in Pannu. We continue at 13:00  
in a different location: Oulu10, Torikatu  
10. We meet in the ground floor lobby**



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Questions?



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