



How did Finland become the leader in equitable education:

What can Australia learn?

Positive Schools Conference, Brisbane, AUSTRALIA

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Talk Plan:

- 1 Three myths about Finnish schools
- 2 Three facts about Finnish schools
- 3 Three lessons for Australian schools
- 4 Conversation

STAND UP IF YOU AGREE THAT
COMPARED TO FIVE YEARS AGO...



“more parents believe that children are
under pressure to grow up too quickly.”

Three myths about Finnish schools

1

News › World › Europe

Finland schools: Subjects scrapped and replaced with 'topics' as country reforms its education system

With Finland radically reforming the way its children are taught, Richard Garner visits Helsinki to find out if the teachers approve

Richard Garner | Friday 20 March 2015 |  4 comments

   329K shares



Sections 

Answer Sheet

No, Finland isn't ditching traditional school subjects. Here's what's really happening.

By Pasi Sahlberg, March 26, 2015 



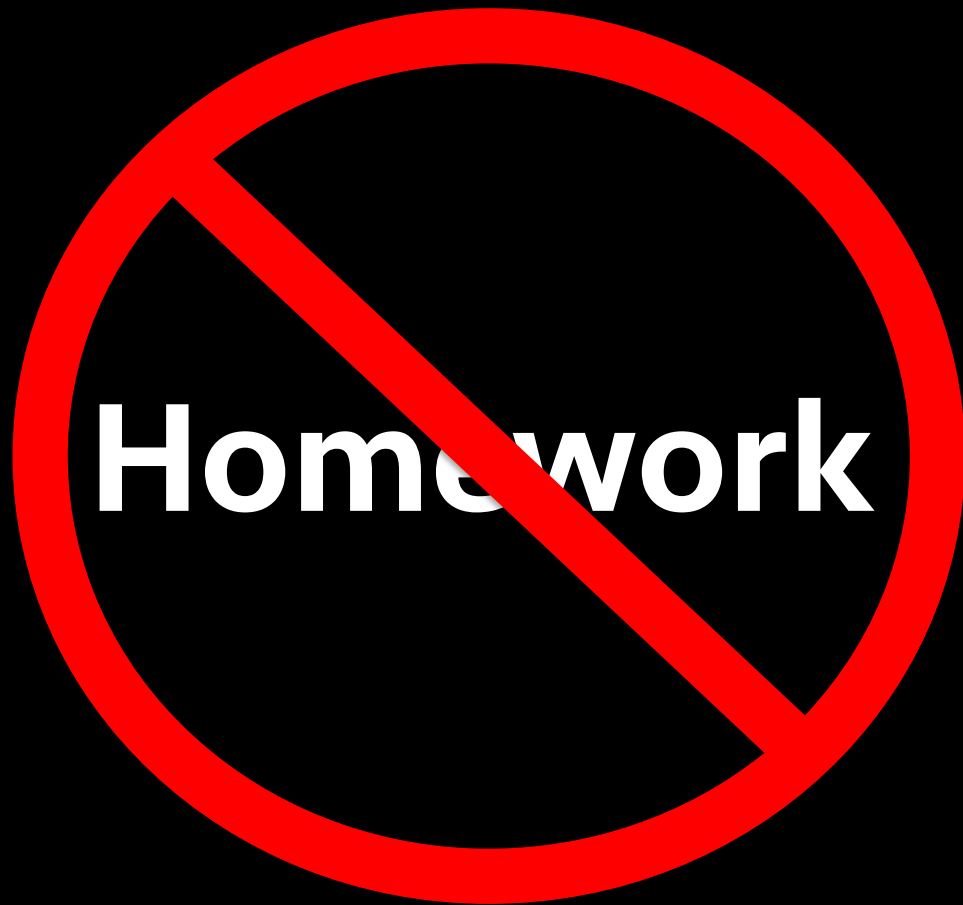
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Multi-disciplinary modules increase dialogue between subjects

“Multi-disciplinary learning modules are tools for integrating learning and for increasing the dialogue between different subjects. For the first time it is compulsory for the schools to organise one such module at least once every school year. The core curriculum obliges the schools to plan and implement these in cooperation between different subjects and involving pupils in their planning. Apart from these obligations, the municipalities and schools have the freedom to plan the modules according to local needs and interests.”

2



Homework facts

Homework is not mandatory but widely practiced in Finnish schools.

Primary school children often do their study assignments in school before going home.

Homework must be educationally justified and perceived as students' responsibility.

Hobbies, play and free time are considered as essential elements of growing up.

3 The best and the brightest

“We need to attract the best and brightest to join the profession. Teachers are the key in today’s knowledge economy, where a good education is an essential foundation for every child’s future success.”

- Andreas Schleicher, the OECD Director of Education and Skills

Multi-talented teachers for whole-child education

Academic ability and test scores don't always promise great teachers

Primary school teachers go through deep, broad-based graduate-level education

Key teacher qualities are: Understanding whole-child, valuing collaborative professionalism, and being a reflective practitioner

Three facts about Finnish schools



School-based holistic curriculum

Schools design their own curriculum including basic values, aims and syllabi

Theory of action is to base teaching and learning on each school's strengths

Enhances engagement, agency, collaboration, community and professionalism



Equity and inclusion as priorities

Widely accepted foundations of schooling are: equality, inclusion and wellbeing

School education is built on an assumption that everybody has special needs

Individualization and creativity, no standardization and prescription



Time to play

Extended childhood through play and identity-building

Significantly shorter school days allow time to hobbies and play

Regular daily recess, physical activity and music in every school

Three lessons for Australian schools



Balance excellence and equity

“Best performing education systems are those that combine excellence and equity.”



Redefine success and how it is measured

“Don’t measure how good is your school. Assess how is your school good.”



Empower schools by letting go

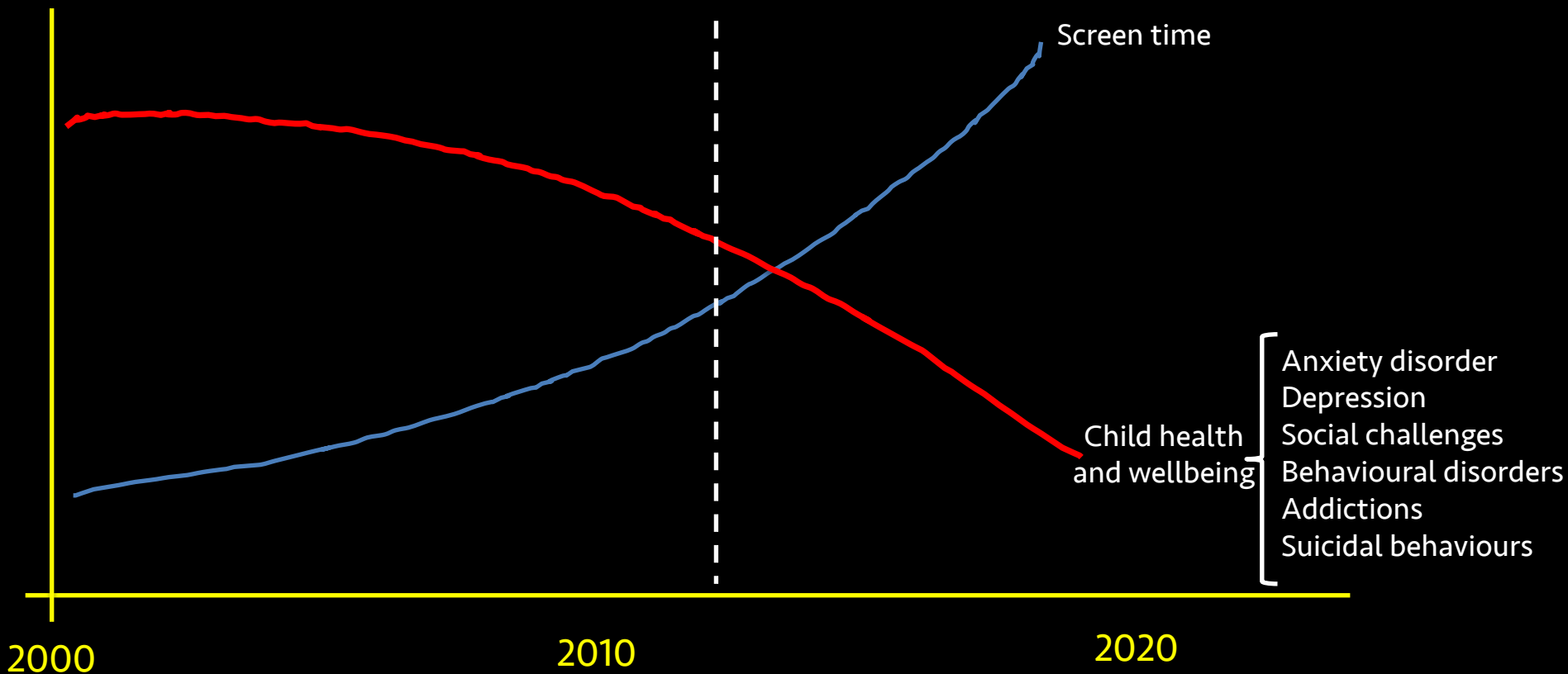
“Trust teachers by giving them more freedom from bureaucracy but less autonomy from one another.”

STAND UP IF YOU AGREE THAT
COMPARED TO FIVE YEARS AGO...



“there are more students with socio-emotional challenges in our school.”

Child wellbeing and time spent with digital gadgets and screens



Growing Up Digital

(Alberta Teachers Association &

Harvard Medical School)

DISCONNECTING

Alberta teachers have observed dramatic changes in their student populations over the past three to five years.

EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES



of teachers say that the number of students with emotional challenges has increased.



of teachers say that the number of students with social challenges has increased.

85%

of teachers say that the number of students who need behaviour support has increased.



“ Is a student's increasing online presence decreasing real-world satisfaction and positive peer-to-peer interaction? ”

— Elementary school teacher

MOOD DISORDERS

3 out of 4 teachers say that the number of students with cognitive challenges has increased.



STUDENT CHALLENGES

ANXIETY DISORDER **85%**

DEPRESSION **73%**

WE NEED POSITIVE SCHOOLS FOR KIDS TO...

Enjoy childhood.

Build relationships.

Celebrate being different.

Exploring alternative ways to think and learn.

Understand health and wellbeing as essential skills.

THANK YOU!



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