

How did Finland become the leader in equitable education: What can Australia learn?

Positive Schools Conference, Fremantle, WA,
AUSTRALIA

25th May 2018

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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

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Sections 

Answer Sheet

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

By Pasi Sahlberg, March 26, 2015 



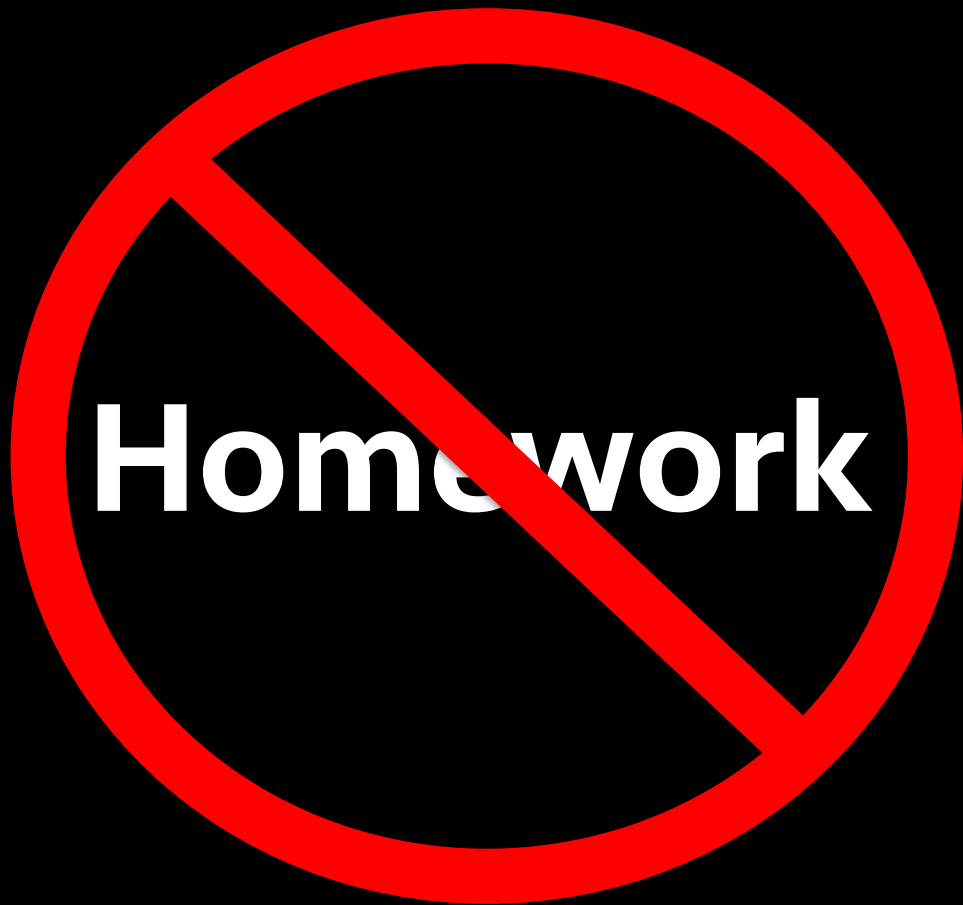
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Multi-disciplinary modules increase dialogue between subjects

*“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.

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

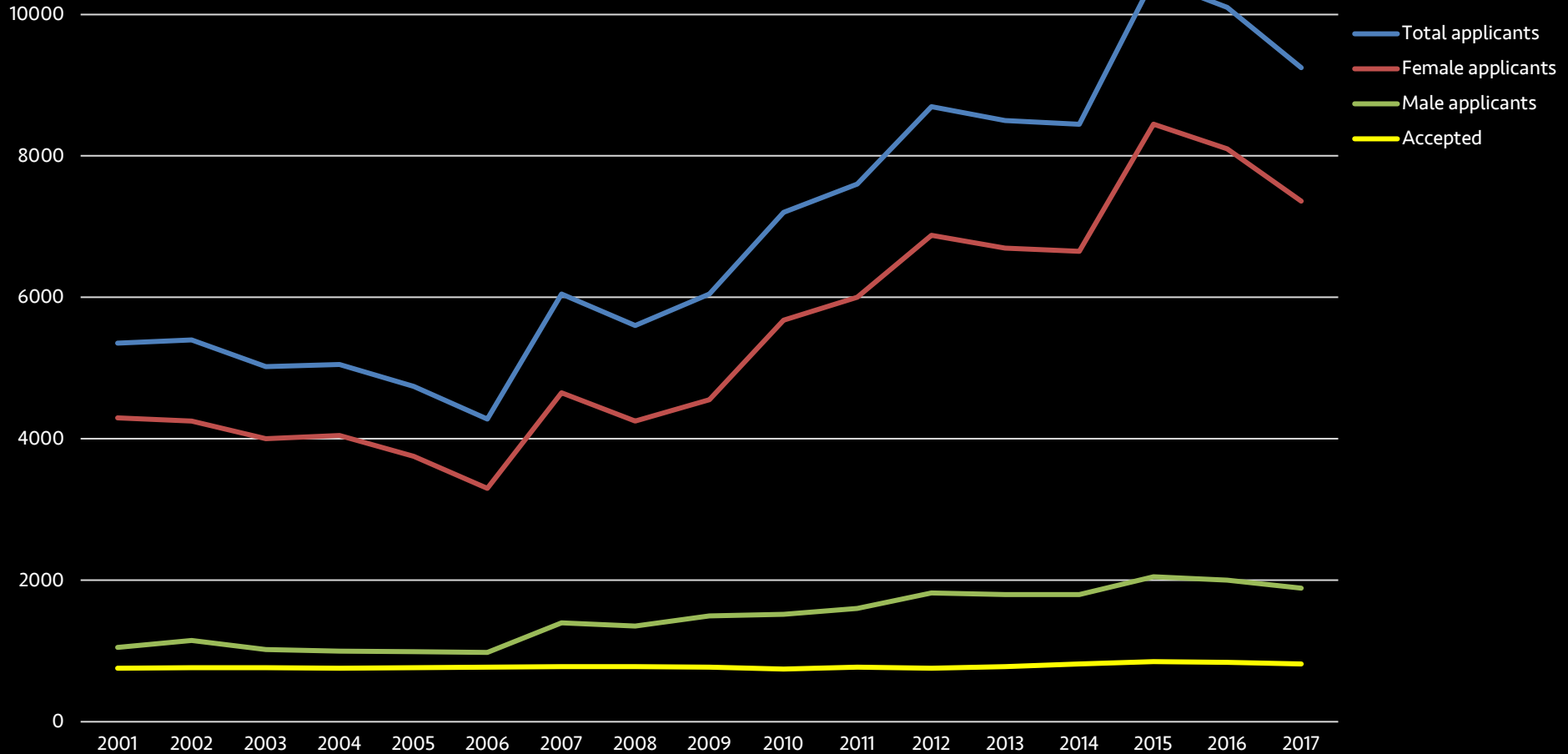
Hobbies, play and being bored are considered as essential elements of growing up.

3 The best and the brightest

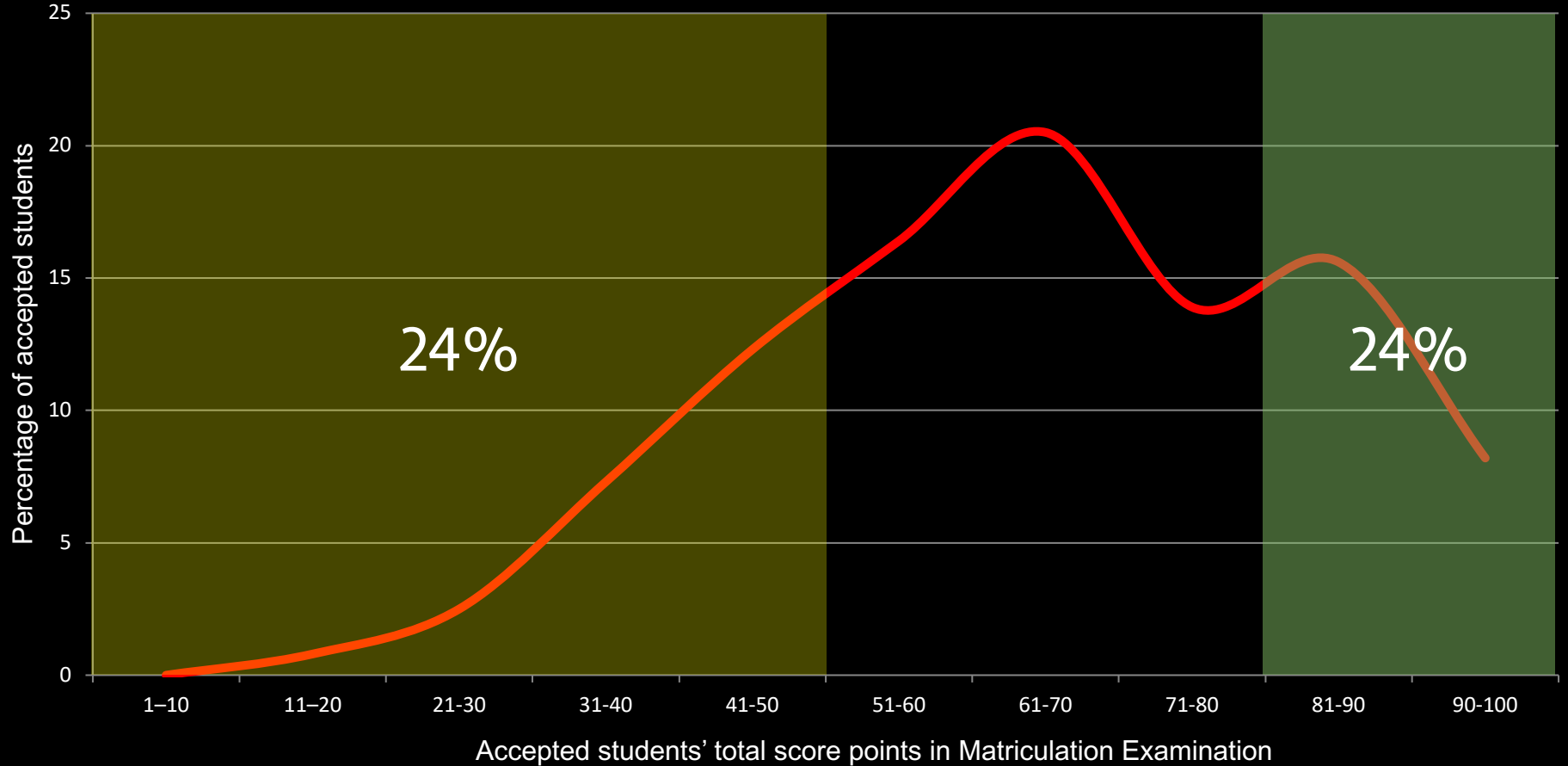
“We need to attract the best and brightest to join the profession. Teachers are the key in today’s knowledge economy, where a good education is an essential foundation for every child’s future success.”

- Andreas Schleicher, the OECD Director of Education and Skills

Applicants to Primary School Teacher Education Programmes in Finland 2001-2017



Achievement Profile of Accepted Primary School Teacher Education Students in the University of Helsinki in 2014



Three facts about Finnish schools



Teacher-led curriculum

Logic: Schools design their own curriculum, including values, aims and syllabi

Theory of action: Build on children's needs and schools' strengths

Impact: Professional collaboration and teacher leadership



Equity-led policies

National policy priorities: equity, inclusion, and wellbeing

Assumption: Children are different and they should grow up that way

Equity and inclusion: individualisation and creativity, not standardisation and prescription



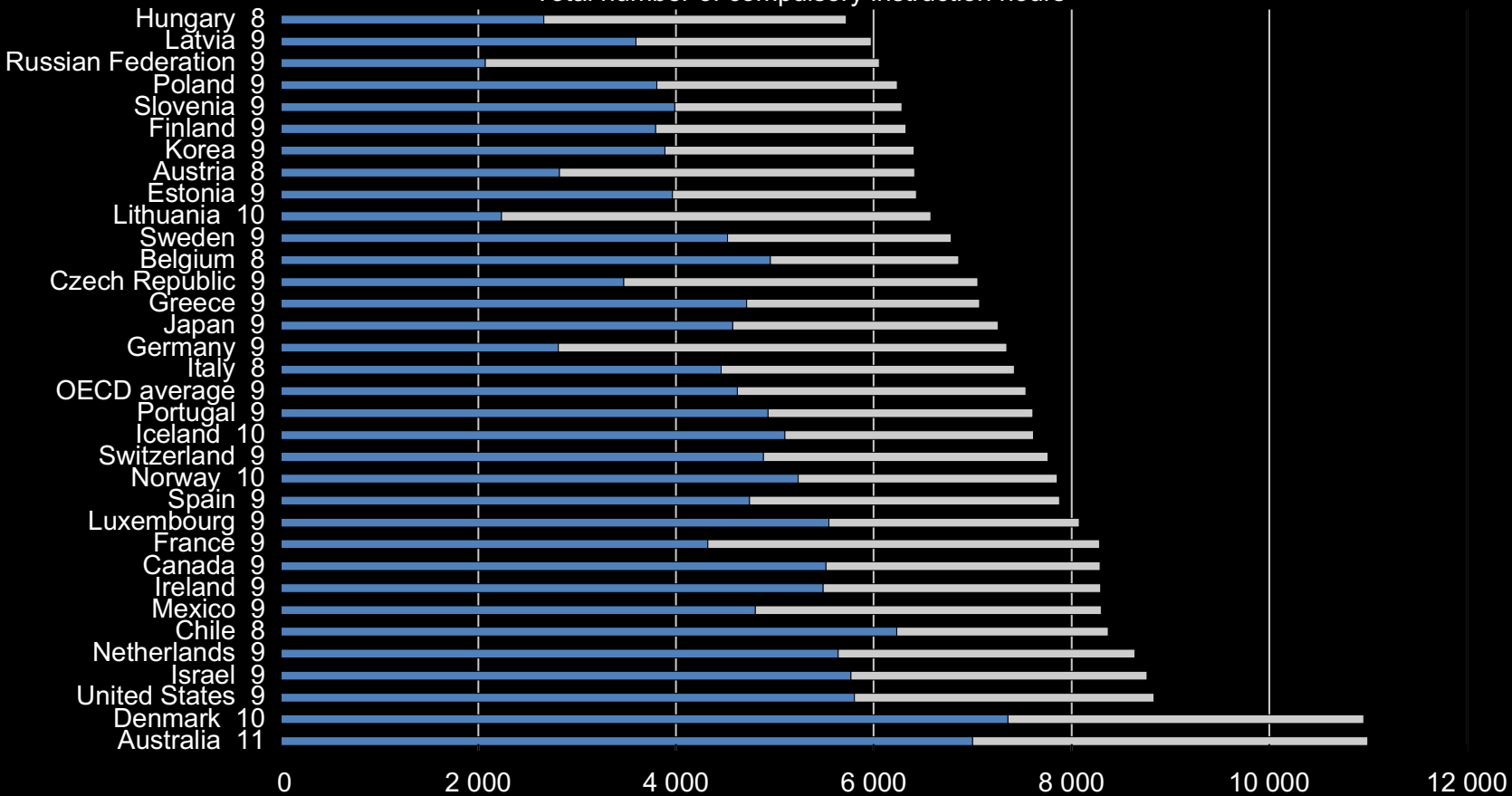
Time for play

Duration of primary and lower secondary education, in years

■ Primary

■ Lower secondary

Total number of compulsory instruction hours





Time for play

Typical 5th grade school day



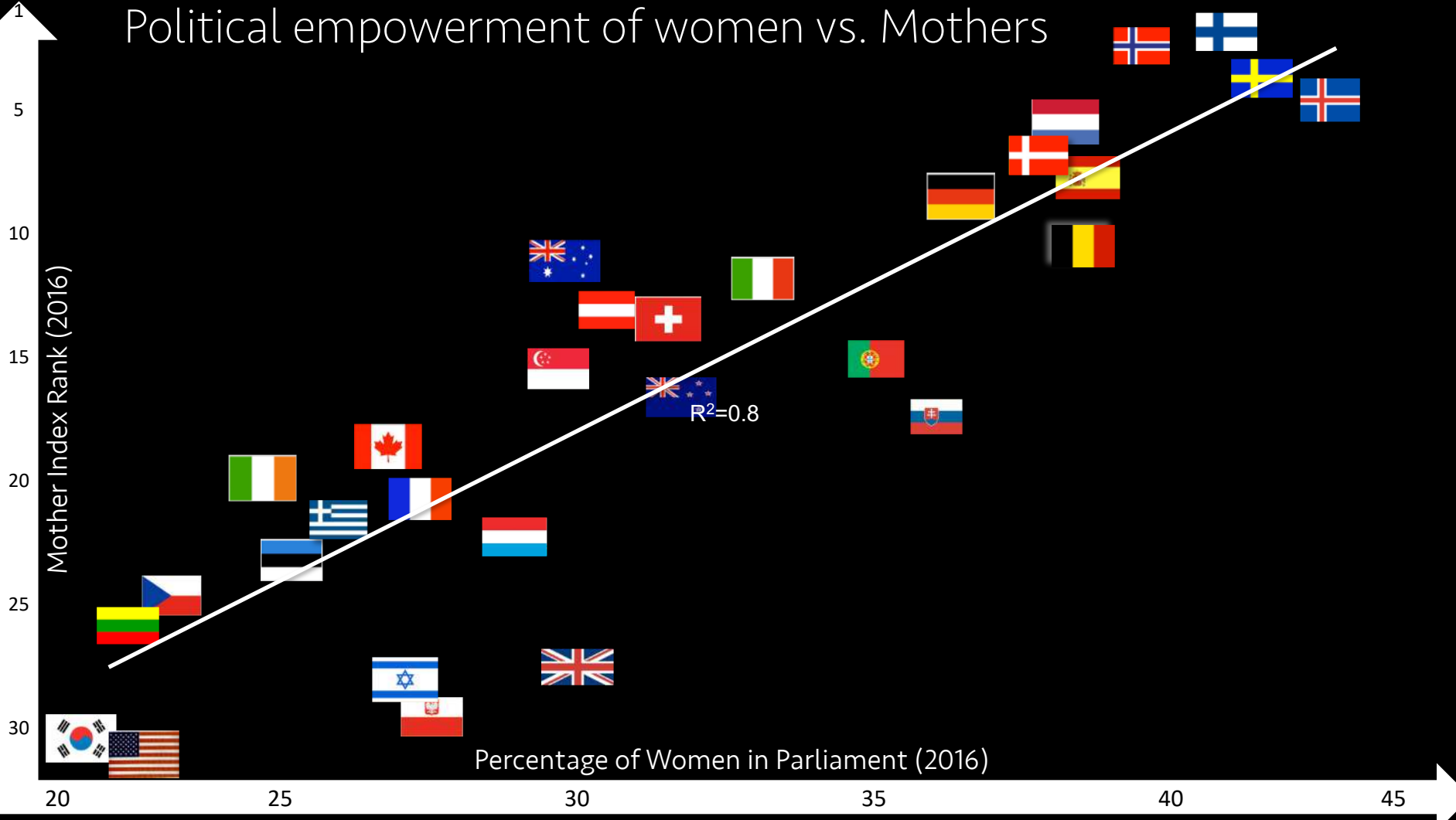
Political empowerment of women vs. Mothers

Mother Index Rank (2016)

Percentage of Women in Parliament (2016)

$R^2=0.8$

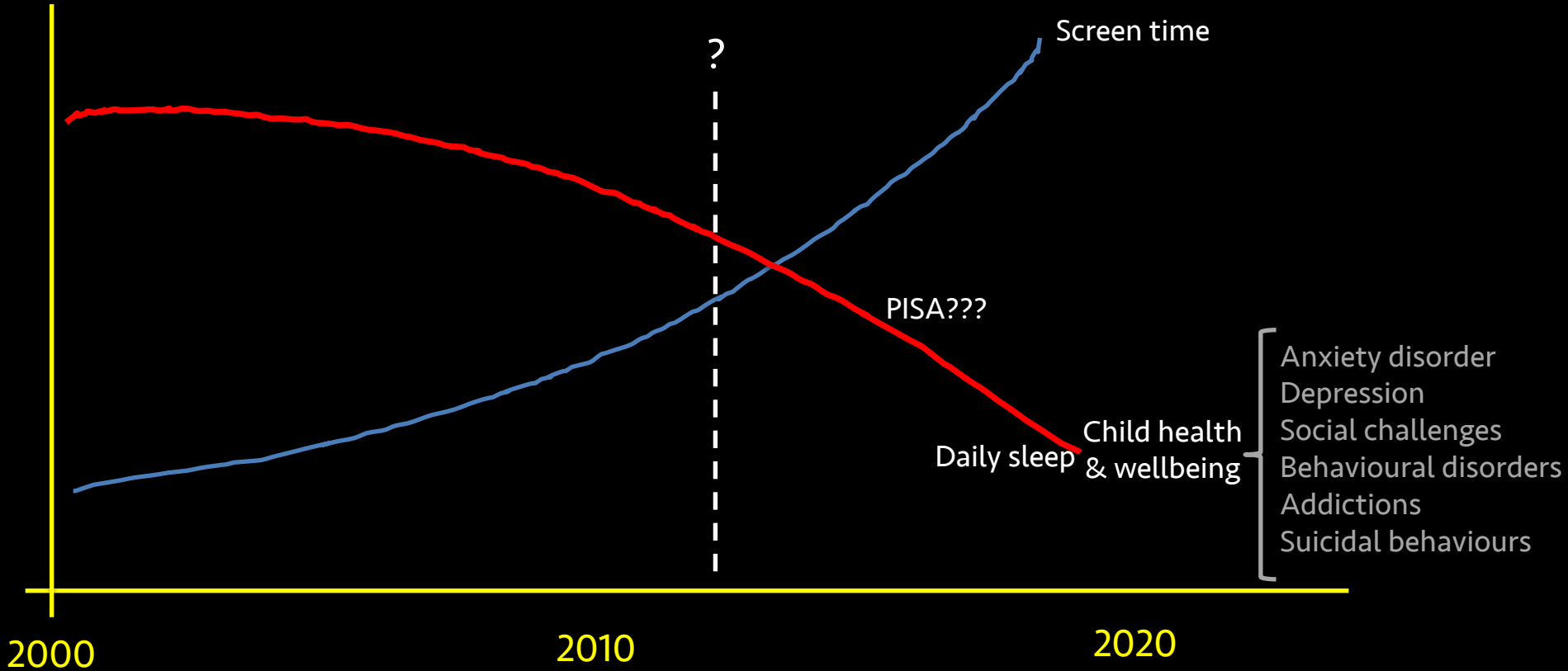
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Three lessons for Australian schools

We have a common problem

Children's wellbeing and PISA



The main challenge in Australian schools is not about teachers or children. The problem is the system that doesn't support a collective culture that empowers schools to do what they must.



Balance excellence and equity

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



Reconsider measuring success

*“Don’t ask how good is your school.
Ask how is our school good.”*



Empower schools by letting go

“Trust teachers by giving them more freedom from administration, and less autonomy from one another.”

WE NEED POSITIVE SCHOOLS FOR KIDS TO...

Enjoy childhood.

Build relationships.

Celebrate being different.

Explore alternative ways to think and do.

Understand health, wellbeing and play as essential skills.

THANK YOU!

