

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM EDUCATIONAL CHANGE IN FINLAND

2022 EDCA Spring Conference
“The Power of the Pause”
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University**

Part 1: Facts and myths about Finland's schools

Part 2: The power of early childhood education and care

Part 3: Lessons for you and others

PRE-PANDEMIC EDUCATION

Education before the C-19 pandemic



260 million children are not at school and only three quarters of 15-year-olds in middle income countries attend school, and just half of them achieve the basic level of proficiency required. – Global Education Monitoring Report 2020



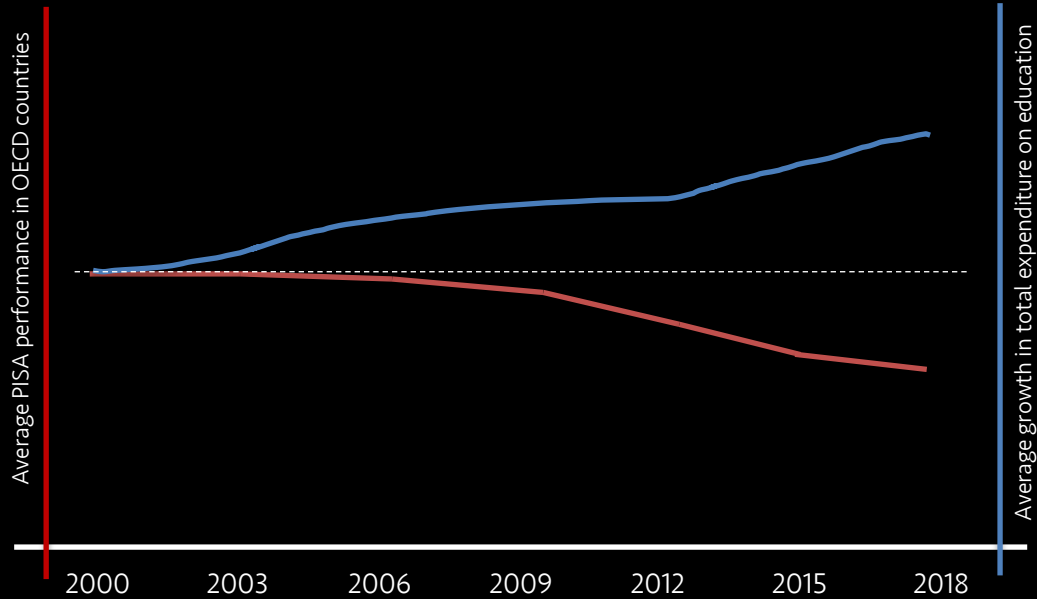
The performance differences across the OECD countries between the most socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged students are significant and growing. –PISA 2018



There is a global learning crisis that amplifies educational inequalities that severely hobbles the disadvantaged youth who most need the boost that a good education can offer. – World Bank Human Development Report 2018

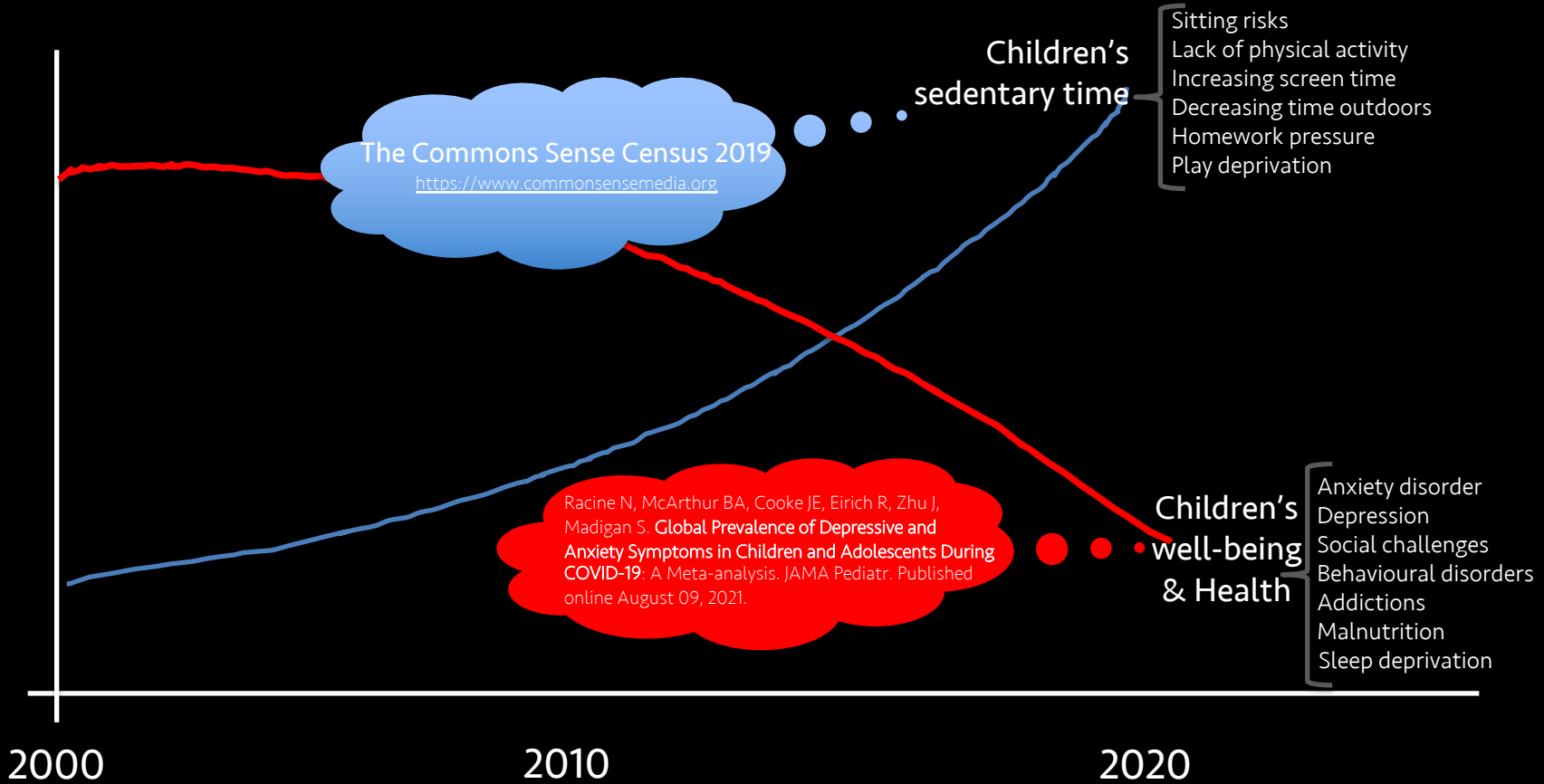
Crisis!

Global trends: Student learning and education spending



Source: OECD database (2020)

Global trends: Student wellbeing and sedentary time



Part 1: Facts and myths about Finland's schools

"It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble.
It's what you know for sure that just ain't so."

- Mark Twain

1

The most important single factor in improving quality of education is teachers.

MYTH!

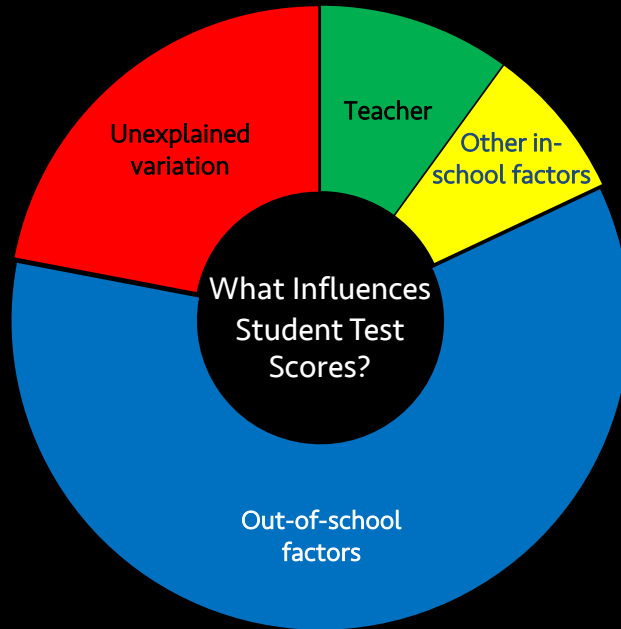
1. "The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers"
2. "The only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction"
3. "High performance requires every child to succeed"

Source: McKinsey (2007). "How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top."

"The conclusion that family background is far more important than people realized has remained a solid empirical finding for 50 years."

- Stephen Morgan (2016)

Teachers are important, but...



What does this mean?

If teachers account for about 10% of the variability in students' test scores, then the most opportunities for quality improvement are found in the system-level conditions.

2

Standardised tests are reliable measures of the quality of education in Finland.

MYTH!

**INTENDED PURPOSE OF
STANDARDISED TESTS**

Appropriateness

Monitoring education
system performance

OK

Accountability

maybe

School improvement

no

Individual student
learning and growth

no

Information on school
quality

no

“I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail.”

- Abraham Maslow (1966)

Why standardised tests are not used in Finland to measure the quality of teaching in school?

Student performance on standardised tests is mostly influenced by three causative factors of which only one is linked to teaching quality:

- (a) a student's native intellectual ability,
 - (b) a student's out-of-school learning, and
 - (c) what's taught in school.
- } Beyond teacher's control

Finns obey Campbell's Law (1975):

"The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor."



How students are assessed in Finland?

No high-stakes standardised tests before the end of high school

No grades (e.g., A-F) before 4th grade

Students are continuously assessed by teachers against their own potential

Children are educated to assess their own learning and growth

Sample-based national assessments monitor system-level progress

3

Finland has scrapped subjects in schools.

MYTH!

News > World > Europe


 INDEPENDENT

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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The Independent Online



What actually happens ...

Schools are encouraged to move towards more integrated learning

Every school must have at least one period of integrated instruction

All children are engaged in planning and assessing their learning during those periods

Schools have freedom to find their own ways to do this.

FACTS

Trust in teachers

Academic teacher
preparation

Inclusive public
education

The Finnish Way
"An Alternate Universe"

Early childhood education
as children's right

Equity as a
policy priority

Part 2: The power of early childhood education and care

Finland

Early childhood education and care (age 1-6)

85% of 3-5-year-olds in ECEC; 100% in 1-year pre-school (at the age of six)

Heavily subsidized by local governments

Curriculum designed on wellbeing and play

Right of the child to high quality ECEC

Parental leave: 105+158 working days

Australia

Formal and informal ECEC (age 1-4)

60% of 1-4-year-olds in ECEC; 90% in 1-year preschool

Subsidized but can be (very) expensive

Programs often academically focused

Parents' choice, educational quality varies

Parental Leave: Up to 90 working days

The Finnish ECEC

CORE VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

- Intrinsic value of childhood
- Growth as a human being
- Rights of the child
- Equity, equality, and diversity
- Healthy and sustainable way of living

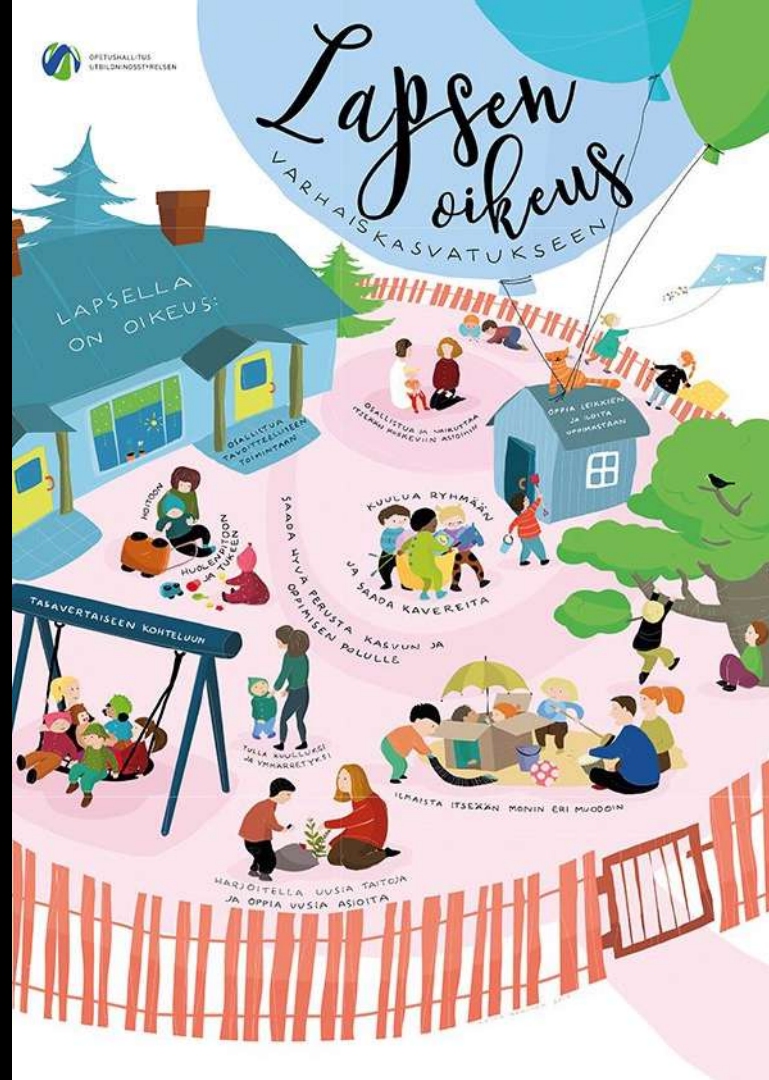
PEDAGOGY

- Right to play, learn and participate
- Respecting child's interests and needs
- Individual education plan for every child
- Teachers have academic qualifications

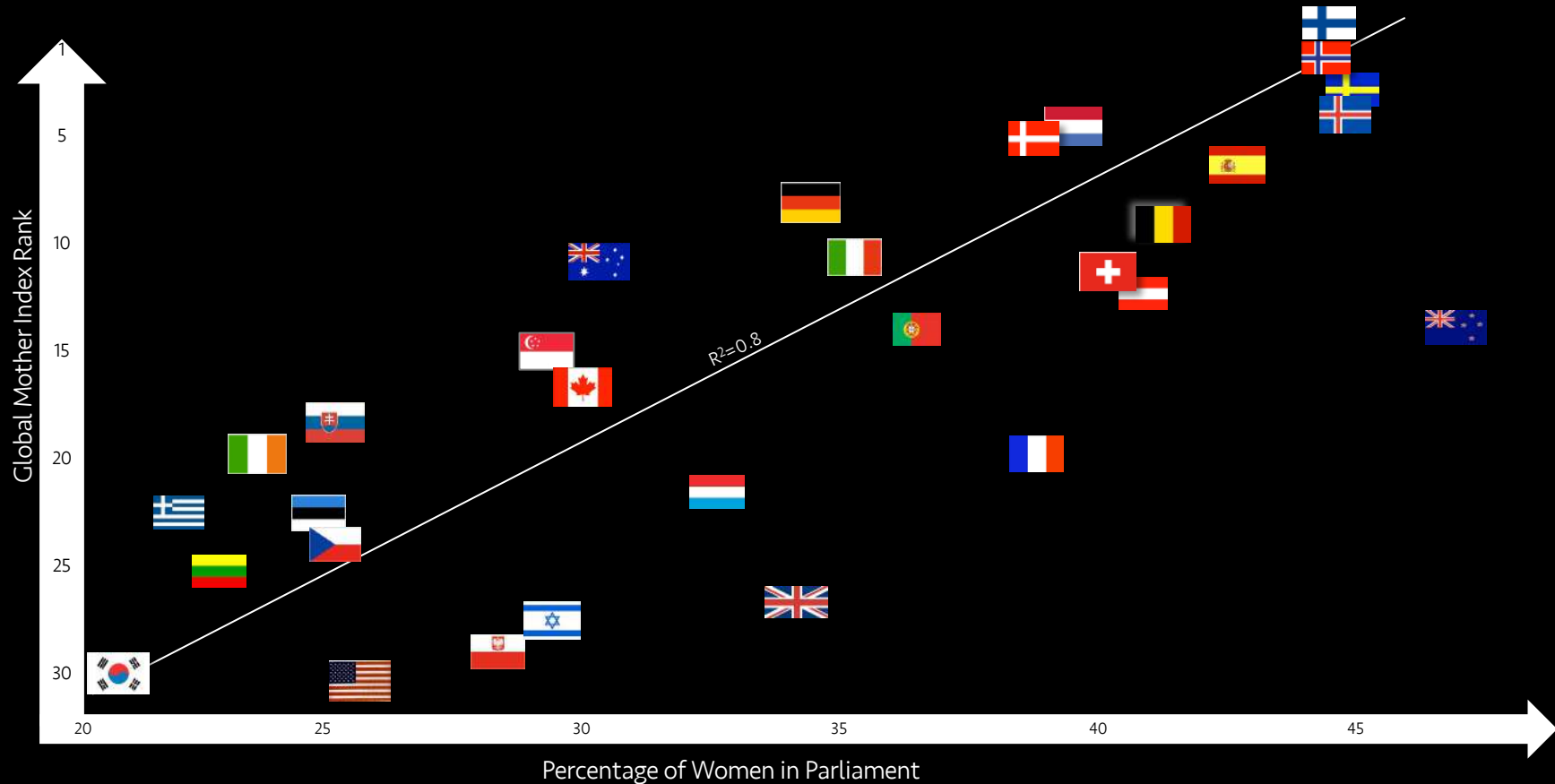
SCHOOL READINESS

"Ask not if your child is ready for school, ask if the school is ready for your child."

ECEC in Finland: <https://www.oph.fi/en/education-system/early-childhood-education-and-care-finland>



Political empowerment of women and the quality of life of mothers



Finnish magic trick: **PLAY**

80%

of Australian parents believe
that children are under
pressure to grow up too
quickly.

85%

of Australian parents say
kids today spend less time
PLAYing than they did
when they were their
children's age.

1 of 5 children say that they are
too busy to **PLAY**.

DOCTOR'S ORDER: Children Must **PLAY**

*“**PLAY** is integral to a child's education. The importance of playtime for children cannot be overemphasized to parents, schools, and community organizations.”*

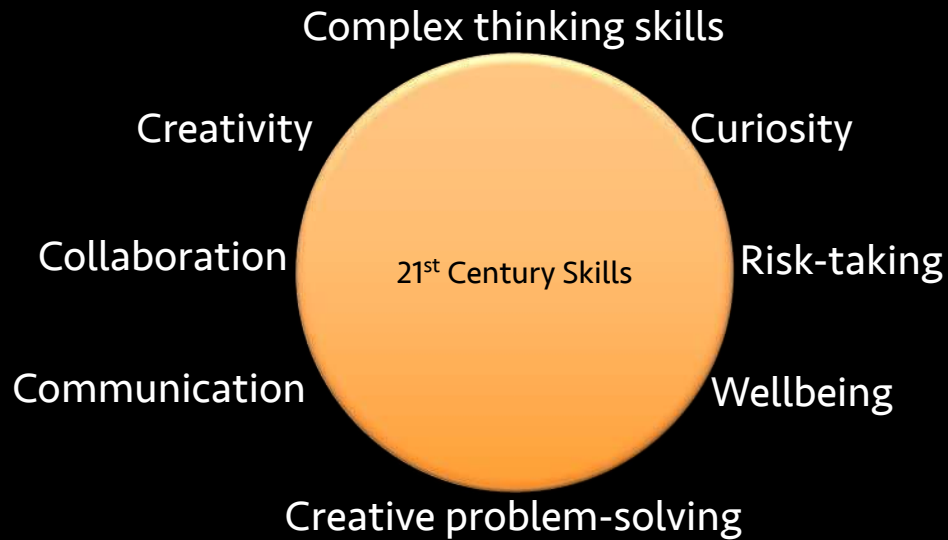


DOCTOR'S ORDER:
Children Must **PLAY**

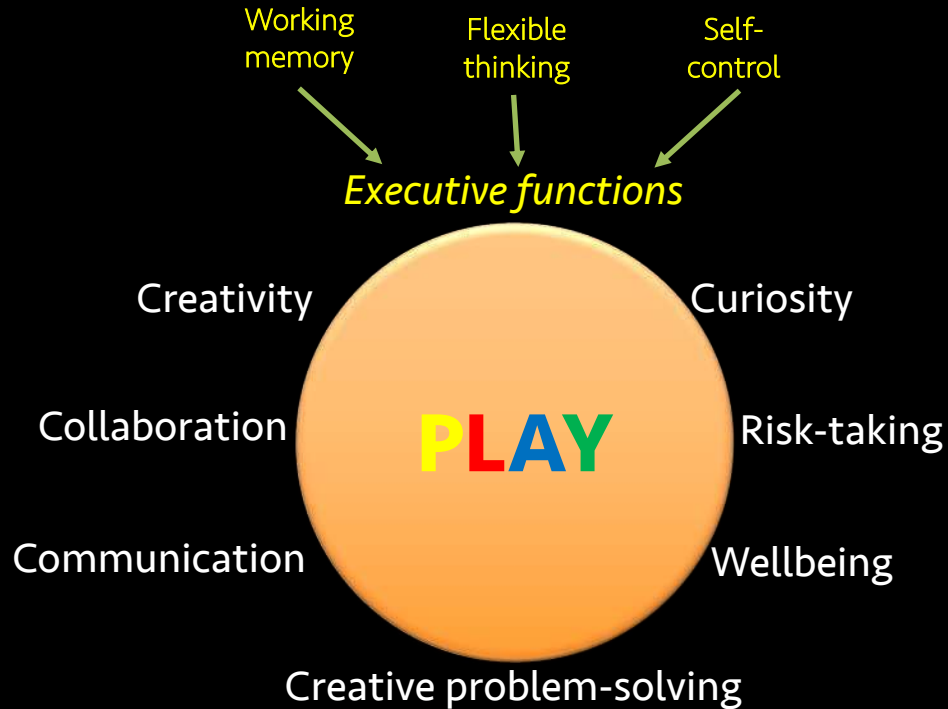
*"The lifelong success of children is based on their ability to be creative and to apply the lessons learned from **PLAY**ing."*



21st Century Education



Multiple benefits of **PLAY**



What do the Finns do?

Protect **PLAY** as a basic right of every child

Give all kids time to **PLAY** in school and at home

Study the benefits of **PLAY** in initial teacher education

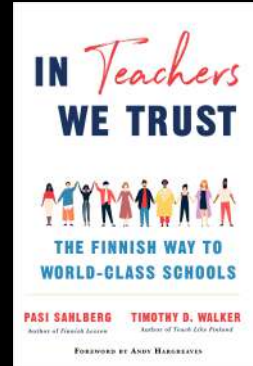
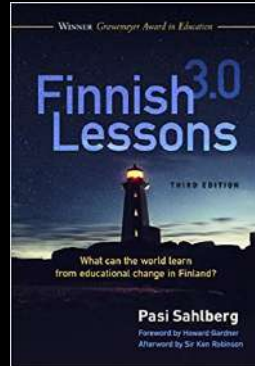
Value free outdoor **PLAY** all year round

Part 3: Lessons for you and others

The Power of the Pause

1. Protect early childhood as a precious phase of life
2. Take whole child development and learning to heart
3. Give all children access to free outdoor play as often as possible
4. Help children to grow up as responsible individuals

THANK YOU!



Download this presentation from www.pasisahlberg.com