

Authentic Materials lesson – Education in Finland

This lesson was written with upper-intermediate teenagers in mind but with extra support could be done with a good intermediate class. The lesson would be suitable for adults, especially those with an interest in other cultures or education. The link below is to the video used for the listening. The lesson could be done without a visual element.

Article: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8601207.stm>

Video (which is no longer working in the original article: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daasAXJxcZM>)

Listening Lesson

"Finland's schools score consistently at the top of world rankings, yet the pupils have the fewest number of class hours in the developed world."

Students are asked to answer the questions in pairs:

What did/do you like most about school?

What do you know about Finland?

Why do you think schools in Finland get the best results?

Listening for gist

Students are asked to read the two questions before the listening begins. You are only watching the first half of the video. **Stop the video at the 3.27 mark.**

1. What happens in the Finnish school to make children feel comfortable?

Possible answers: They call their teacher by their first name. They take their shoes off. There is a relaxed atmosphere. No school uniform. They have the same teacher from year to year.

2. What makes schools in Finland different to schools in your country?

Possible answers: Students with different levels of ability are in the same class. Primary and secondary school in one. Extra help for weaker students. Three teachers. Two to three languages at an early age. Teachers have a masters degree. Students are in class for the fewest hours of any developed country. No uniforms.

Students compare answers in pairs, then feedback with the class.

Listening for detail

Before students watch the video again ask them to work in pairs and predict the answers. **As before stop the video at the 3.27 mark.**

1. Three of this hungry bunch are all educated at their local state school.
2. The first lesson about school in Finland, is relax, take your shoes off when you arrive and when you get into the classroom call your teachers by their first name.
3. Now, after five years, I still know and I still see what has happened in their youth.
4. Learning foreign languages here is seen as key. For these eleven year olds French is not their second, but their third language.
5. Learning is more like a team game; the best and worst pupils in any subject are taught together.
6. Giving students extra help is standard practice. In this class there are three teachers.
7. Trust is important here; in PE the students head off unaccompanied for a long cross country ski.
8. Children here do the least number of class hours per week in the developed world and get the best results.

During feedback discuss any new language: key, standard practice, head off

As a final task students discuss the meaning of the following words in pairs. Then feedback as a class.

Torpparimäki comprehensive is a secondary and a primary school **rolled into one**.

She has been their teacher for five years. "I'm **growing up** with my students."

It's important to have everyone in the same class, but of course that creates a problem **now and then**.

One teacher just works with those that **struggle**.

The teachers here would make any education minister go **green with envy**.

Their effortless ease in achieving quality education is **shown off** by one statistic.

Additional activities

Optional Reading

Before starting the listening lesson students are given a print out of the article that accompanies the video. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8601207.stm>

In pairs they are encouraged to quickly look for information related to the following statements and whether they are true or false.


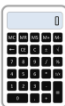

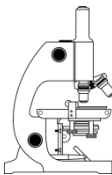


True or False

1. In the OECD exams for 15 year olds Finland scored the highest in the developed world for reading and science – **True**
2. Children who are very talented are ignored because they will succeed on their own – **False**
3. Children in Finland spend more time in the classroom than in other countries – **False**
4. Children in Finland start school when they are seven years old – **True**
5. Teaching isn't a very important job in Finland – **False**

Optional warmer - Subjects vocabulary

(all images are copyright free from www.pixabay.com)

Students match the pictures to the subjects.

PE (physical education)		Mathematics (math/maths)		History	
Science		Geography		Foreign languages	

Once they finish, students discuss other subjects they like/liked at school.

Follow up tasks:

Speaking

Ask students to discuss the following questions in groups of three.

What do you think about schools in Finland?

Why are their exam results so high when they spend less time in class than in other countries?

Could these same strategies be used in your country?

Feedback as a class.

Writing

Either choose one of these questions for the class or allow students to pick a question themselves.

They should write their answer in less than 150 words. Students should discuss their answer in pairs and write notes. The task can then be completed in class or as homework.

1. What problems are there in the education system in your country? Do you think your country would benefit from using the system in Finland?
2. What are the positives and negatives of working in a competitive atmosphere? Is it better to work as a team or compete with your classmates/colleagues for rewards?
3. What do/did you like most about school? How would you improve schools for students in the future?