



Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö

Undervisnings- och kulturministeriet

Ministry of Education and Culture

# New comprehensive school action plan

**Learner-centred education, competent teachers and collaborative school culture**



Comprehensive schools in Finland are changing. There are challenges that are currently topical, such as growing disparities in education and dropping standards in competence. And action has already been taken. The new national core curriculum for comprehensive school education (basic education) entered into force in autumn 2016. It both facilitates and enables reforms in comprehensive school education and helps create a spirit of community.

An action plan to revamp comprehensive schools will be launched this autumn. It falls under key project 1 (New learning environments and digital materials to comprehensive schools) under the Government's strategic priority of 'Knowledge and Education'. It serves to put the new curricula into practice and responds effectively to existing and imminent challenges in comprehensive school education.

As outlined in the Government Programme, EUR 90 million will be used over the next three years to execute the plan. Of these resources, around EUR 8 million will be made available in autumn 2016 through the Finnish National Board of Education for activities relating to experimenting, development and innovation, and roughly EUR 7.5 million will be disbursed for training and activities for tutor teachers.

*"Experimental schemes and workshops on new pedagogies, digital learning and new learning environments will be instituted. In the course of the trials and workshops, due consideration will be given to the diversity of learning environments. Full use will be made of the existing networks and peer learning.*

*Reforming teachers' core and continuing professional education. A forum for teacher education will prepare and formulate a development programme for core and continuing professional education for teachers and will initiate its execution."*

*Source: Action plan for the implementation of the key projects and reforms of the Strategic Government Programme Update 2016*

# Goals in the new comprehensive school action plan

- The new comprehensive schools are learner-centred. They reinforce every student's learning and educational parity. Students become engaged in studying, are interested, learn eagerly and discover their own strengths. Students have a certain degree of control over what they learn. Learning outcomes are better than before.
- The world's most competent teachers teach in the new comprehensive schools. Tomorrow's teaching builds on wide pedagogical competence, innovative knowledge, doing things together, self-improvement and the desire to enhance the working environment. The honing of professional skills takes place in learning teacher communities and networks. Teachers are willing and equipped to develop their professional skills and their schools throughout their careers.
- The open atmosphere in the new comprehensive schools cultivates a sense of community. This stems from interactive leadership together with clear goals that have been set together and thanks to highly competent teachers who work together to achieve these goals. Collaboration between schools and homes is close. Operating practices are regenerated by means of curricula and learning environments that have been created locally and by networking within and between schools and by participating in international cooperation. Schools evolve into more interactive environments from the bottom up and the operating culture makes it possible to disseminate and adopt best practices and effective models everywhere.

## 1 A vision for Finnish comprehensive schools from a comprehensive school forum

A vision for the future of Finnish education, created as a joint effort, will be completed in autumn 2017.

- A wide range of experts including teaching staff and students
- A round of workshops in different parts of the country

### **Action:**

- A comprehensive school forum will be established in autumn 2016, headed by the National Board of Education. As a broad cooperative effort, an expert group will crystallise a vision for the future of Finnish education.
- The vision will be introduced at the start of the school year in early August 2017, the jubilee year celebrating Finland's century of independence.

## 2 Promoting teachers' professionalism throughout their careers

Finland boasts the world's most competent teachers. Working collectively and drawing on research, teachers hone their skills and enhance procedures in their educational institutions by networking. Teachers in comprehensive schools have a Master's degree from university. The professionalism of teachers is the driving force for change in comprehensive schools in Finland.

- A teacher education forum will publish a programme for revamping teacher education on 13 October 2016.
- Teachers' competencies in student admissions, core training, induction and professionalism will be advocated.
- Knowhow will be systematically promoted using a needs-based approach.
- Community-based continuing professional education models and peer support will be introduced. The honing of professional competencies will take place in learning communities.

### **Action:**

- A systematic structure will be adopted in teacher education, encompassing core education, induction and continuing professional education.
- There will be competent tutor teachers in all schools.
- Strong leadership skills and robust management of pedagogical activities among education providers, educational institutions and educational services.
- Support for individual schools to accelerate improvements in schools run by small education providers.



- The skills of teachers will be honed based on their needs, accommodating to different career paths. Educational institutions and managers and teachers will work together to draw up their own plans for developing competencies.
- Access to massive open online courses for all teachers in continuing professional education will be secured. Teacher education units, teachers and business operators will work together to create an online continuing professional education model and will produce digital material.
- Teaching will cater to the needs of learners. Teachers will bring in a wider range of properly researched and learner-based workshops into their teaching and make use of versatile learning environments.
- Collaboration will serve to make teacher education robust. Networking in teacher education will be fostered and activities across different subjects, programmes and disciplines will be encouraged. New continuing professional education models will be created by combining study modules from undergraduate and continuing professional studies.

### 3 New activities in experimenting, development and innovation

Pilots and trials in comprehensive school education that increase students' potential for learning and cater to different ways of learning will be launched. The best and evidence-based innovations that can easily be proliferated will be widely disseminated and instituted.

- Impact of experimenting through the centre for innovations of the National Board of Education
- Financial grants totalling EUR 8 million in autumn 2016
- Grant application process open in September 2016

#### **Action:**

- Financial resources will be channelled into best practices and procedures that are based on research and which involve various partnerships.
- The National Board of Education will establish a centre for innovations that will coordinate the experimenting, development and innovation activities of the educational institutions. The centre will support pilots and trials in collaboration with different parties, and new solutions and technologies for learning will be piloted.
- The operation of the centre for innovations serves to revamp the structures and effectiveness of experimenting, development and innovation activities. A research-based approach will be assumed in the development of schools.
- A working group headed by the National Board of Education will accumulate knowhow in learning environments for education providers to use.

## 4 Tutor teachers in every school

Operating procedures in schools will be reorganised by means of tutor teachers and networks. A tutor teacher is a teacher who shows other teachers the best way to harness digitalisation in their work as teachers. Tutor teachers embrace new pedagogical approaches and promote the digitalisation of teaching.

- 2,500 tutor teachers in comprehensive schools
- EUR 7.5 million in financial assistance this autumn to train tutor teachers and promote their activities
- Grant application process open in September 2016

### **Action:**

- With the assistance of tutor teachers, the National Board of Education helps disseminate competencies and deepen cooperation between teachers. This model makes it possible to adopt and institute new pedagogies and best practices.
- The tutor teachers will become networked with those who do similar work, and students will be involved too.
- Those who provide instruction will help develop operating practices in schools. Tutor teachers are an integral part of everyday activities in schools. Teaching staff will collect the professional development plans of the school or school organisation to which the dissemination of competencies is related. The implementation of the development plans will be monitored.

## 5 More internationalised education

To develop Finnish education, students, teachers and schools need to participate actively in international cooperation. New ideas for teaching will be devised actively in different networks in collaboration with international partners.

- Schools will take part in programmes and projects that promote internationalisation
- Clear and inspiring overall image of comprehensive schools projected to our international partners
- International education forum in Finland in 2017

### **Action:**

- Teachers and students will be assisted in their endeavours to participate in programmes and projects that promote internationalisation. The Ministry of Education and Culture together with the National Board of Education and comprehensive schools will ensure that there are equal opportunities across the country to become more international.

- The National Board of Education together with other parties will collect Finnish ideas and innovations and disseminate to those in other countries who work to develop education and will also introduce good international practices and procedures into Finnish comprehensive schools.
- We will chart all the international networks and actors that are currently salient for restructuring Finnish comprehensive schools and ensure cooperation with these parties. We will produce high-quality material of the Finnish the comprehensive school system and its key remodelling principles and practices for international use. The purpose is to give a clear and inspiring overview of the Finnish comprehensive school to our international partners.
- In collaboration with other ministries and partners, the Ministry of Education and Culture will formulate a plan for establishing the world's most interesting annual (or biannual) education forum in Finland. This will help expedite the reaching of the goals listed above and promote education exports. The first education forum occasion will be organised in autumn 2017.

### **Steering group for reforming comprehensive schools**

The steering group is chaired by Minister of Education and Culture Sanni Grahn-Laasonen and by State Secretary Olli-Pekka Heinonen. Members: Aulis Pitkälä, National Board of Education, Olli Luukkainen, Trade Union of Education, Jari Lavonen, University of Helsinki, Tiina Silander, University of Jyväskylä, Elina Lehto-Häggroth, City of Vantaa, Anu Urpalainen, City of Lappeenranta, Saku Tuominen HundrEd, Pasi Sahlberg, Harvard University, Terhi Päivärinta, Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, Tuomo Puumala, Eeva-Riitta Pirhonen and Tapio Kosunen, Ministry of Education and Culture.

Ministry of Education and Culture, National Board of Education  
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