

Inclusive steps and students' well-being in Finnish education

Ritva Mickelsson

My pedagogical roles

Teacher

- class teacher
- special class teacher
- special teacher

- Principal
- Area coordinator
- Head of the special education unit in Espoo

Specialist and professional

- trainer
- mentor
- researcher
- local curriculum "writer"



Mother



Learner




HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO
HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI



*The purpose of the steering of basic education is to ensure the equality and high quality of education and to create favorable conditions for the pupils' **growth, development, and learning.***

*National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014, p. 9
Finnish National Agency for Education*

The image shows the cover of a document titled "NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM FOR BASIC EDUCATION 2014". The cover is primarily blue with a white curved border on the left side. The text is printed in white, uppercase letters, slanted diagonally across the blue background.

NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM FOR
BASIC EDUCATION
2014

The emphasis of the Finnish curriculum is on the holistic mission of guiding the educational thinking of schools and municipalities.

The core curriculum can be understood as an extensive ecosystem where different areas are linked together, as a teaching-studying-learning environment with several dimensions.

Vahtivuori et al. (2014)

Aims and goals

- to develop “what works” and what was good in the Finnish system
- to be prepared for changing and multifaceted world
- to enhance meaningfulness of learning
- to improve educational equality, engagement and well-being
- to promote life-long and life-wide learning
- to develop wide-ranging well-being for all
- to improve skills for a sustainable living

Collaborative reform process

- high level commitment

students

teachers

principals

parents

local education authorities

teacher educators and researchers labor unions

representatives from various ministries

the municipal workers

teacher unions

industry groups

associations of parents

textbook publishers

ethnic groups

instead *'implementation of the curriculum'*
teachers construct own professional guidelines
based on the local curriculum
to educate students who are able to...

encounter pressures for
change

knowledge-based
considerations

make decisions based on ethical
reflection

assess changes critically

be responsible for choices that
build our future

provide and feel empathy
towards others

reflect what is valuable in life



... to develop education with respect to the goals of **equity, equality and high quality** and **students' engagement** and **well-being** at school.

Halinen et al. (2013)

School culture

“Schools teach best by their own example”

The heart of the culture is a school as a learning community

All elements of school culture were examined from the viewpoint of students' development, well-being and learning



The school's task is to inspire hope for a good future

Halinen 2018

the Curriculum Road Map

Support

30 working groups produced drafts, expert hearings

Discussions

to recognize strengths, weaknesses and needs

Extensive knowledge sharing

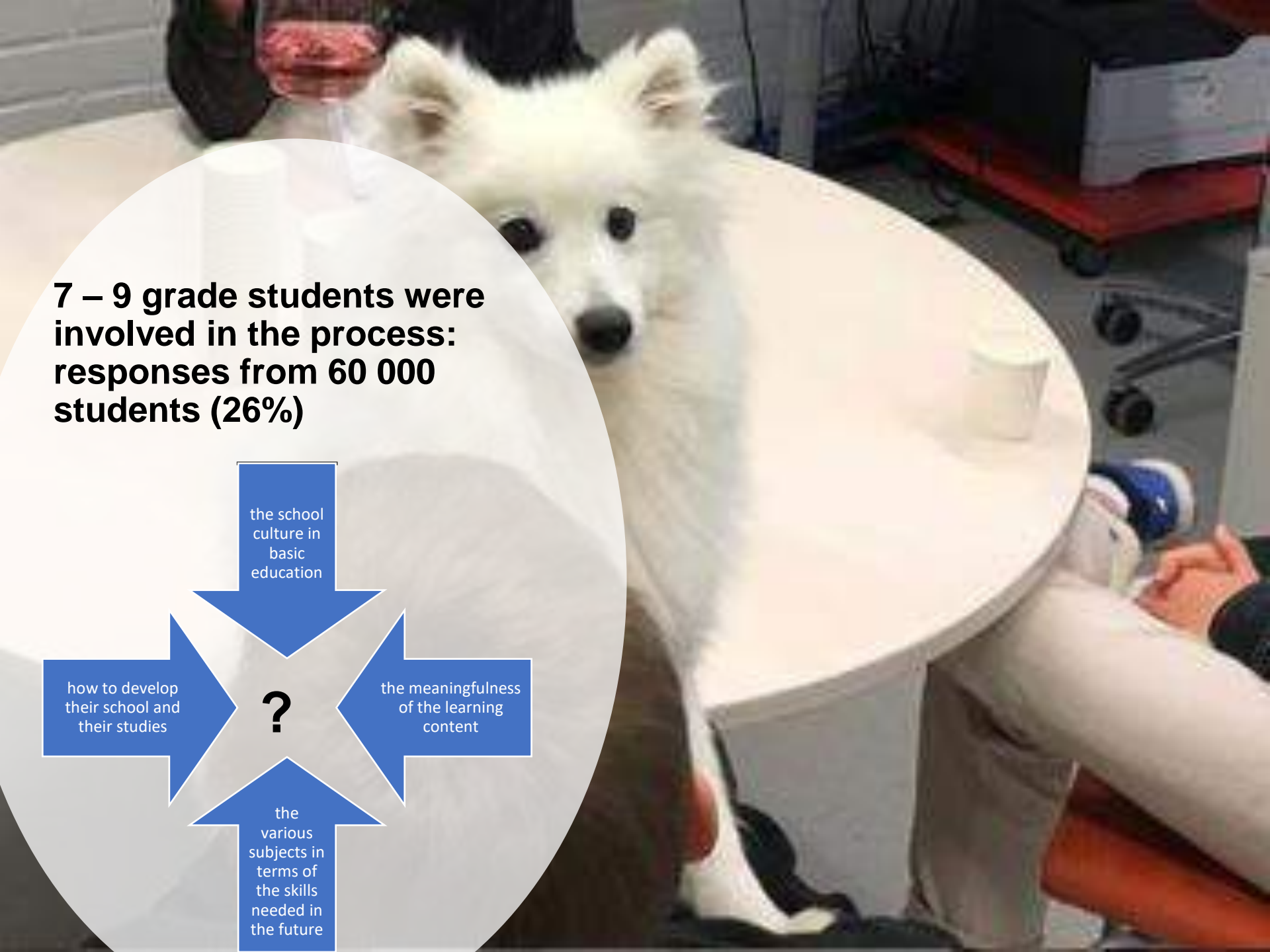
the Learning Barometer 2030
predicting and anticipating the future

Top-down-bottom-up approach

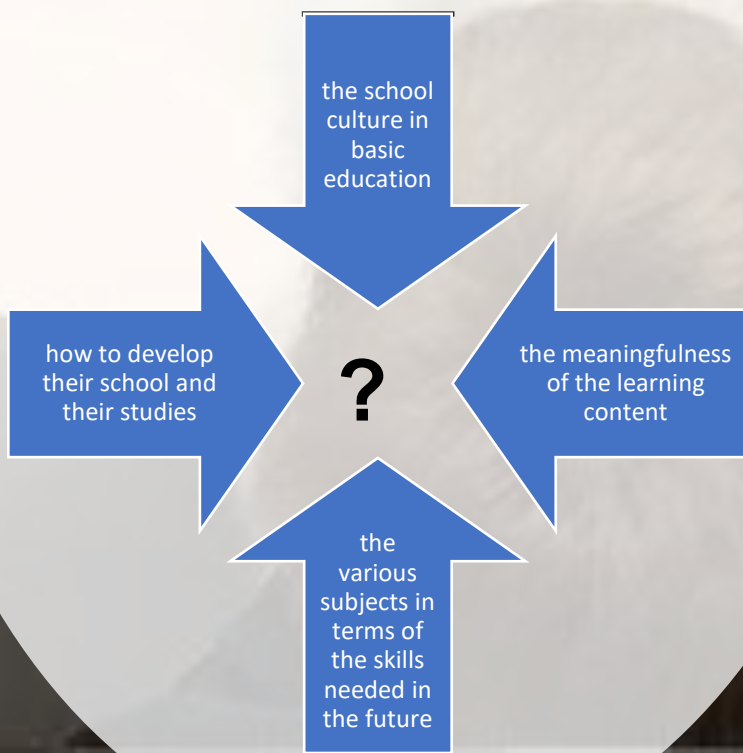
Strong steering element => change management

‘Evidence-informed wisdom’





7 – 9 grade students were involved in the process: responses from 60 000 students (26%)





Collaborative reform process

- high level of commitment

students

teachers

principals

parents

local education authorities

teacher educators and researchers

labor unions

representatives from various ministries

the municipal workers

teacher unions

industry groups

associations of parents

textbook publishers

different ethnic groups

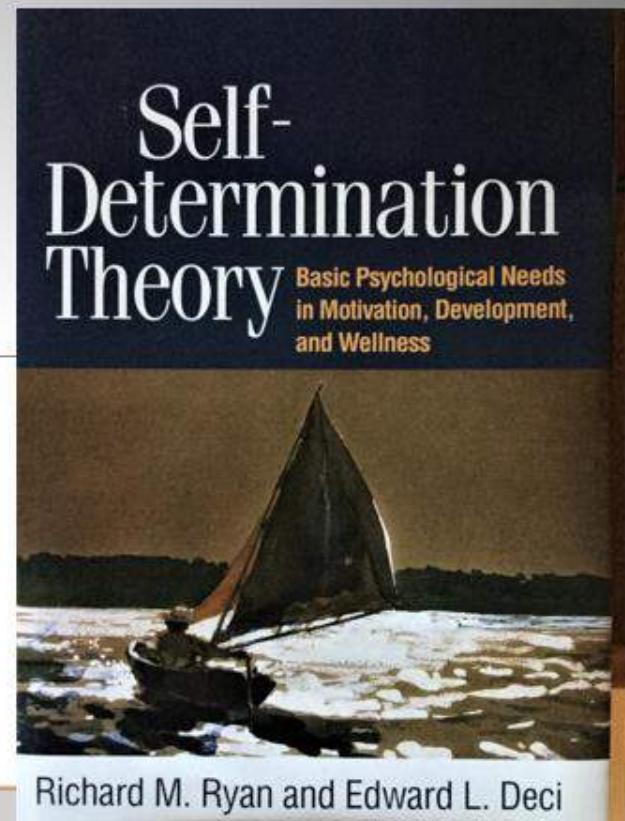


Finnish national curriculum 2014

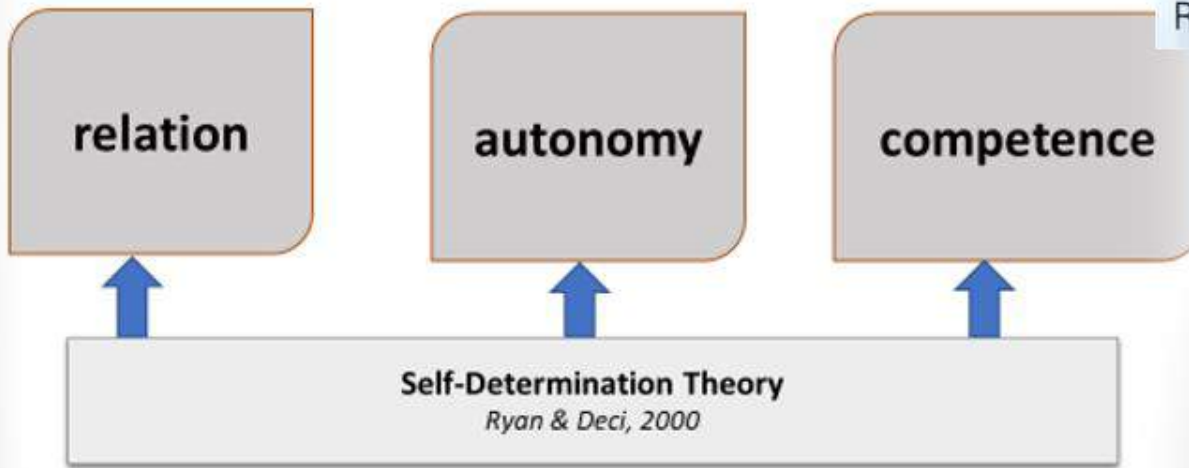
safety

a need to belong

to be accepted

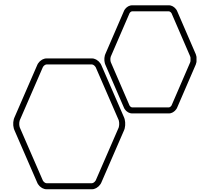


Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci



Relatedness

- **sense of belonging**
- **caring**



Autonomy

- **Provide choices**
- **...get out of the way” when learning is progressing” (Hattie 2010)**

Competence

**Differentiating is the basis
of all pedagogical
activities and teaching.**

Frames of Mind (Gardner, 1983)



an effective teacher "builds and bonds"

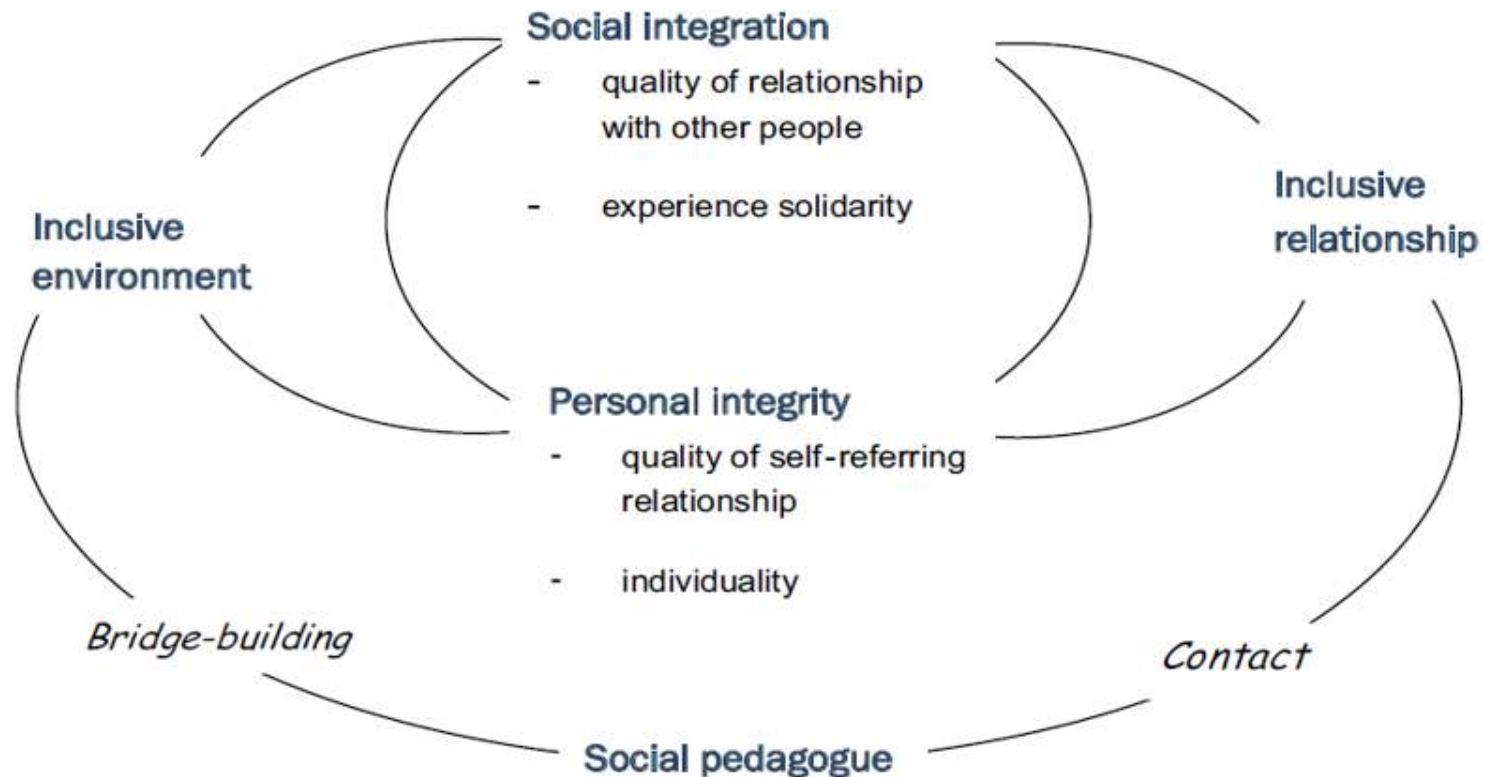


Figure 1 The task of pedagogue: turning the negative cycle by means of contact and bridge-building

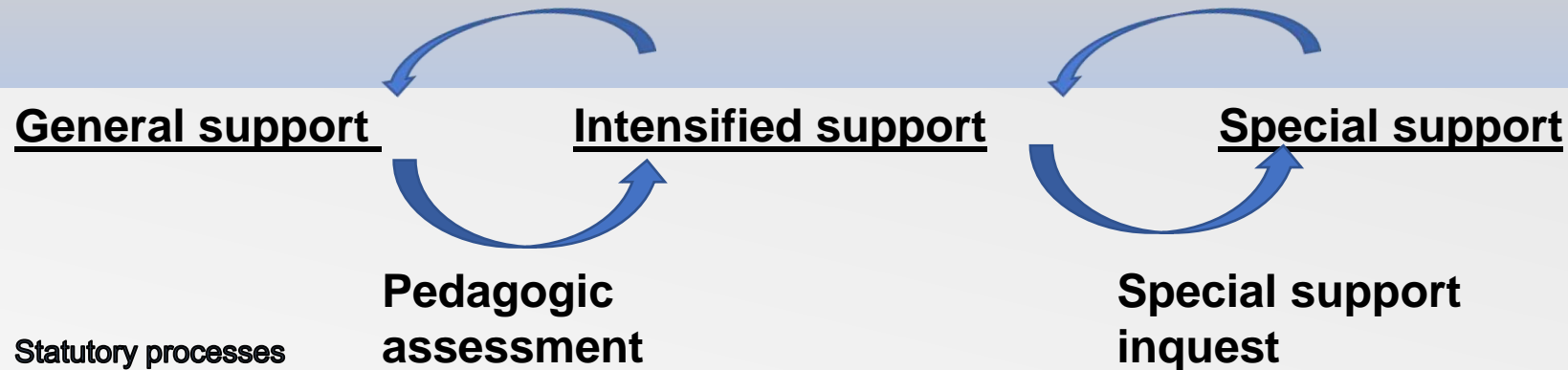
Handle with Care

If your family is experiencing difficulties at home, I would like to provide additional support at school. I understand that you are not always able to share details and that's okay. If your child is coming to school after a difficult night, morning or weekend, please text me "Handle with Care". Nothing else will be said or asked. This will let me know that your child may need extra time, patience, or help during the day.



The elements of the successful school day

good quality in teaching and learning, standards of activities that support growth and development, sense of community and belonging, home-school co-operation and safety

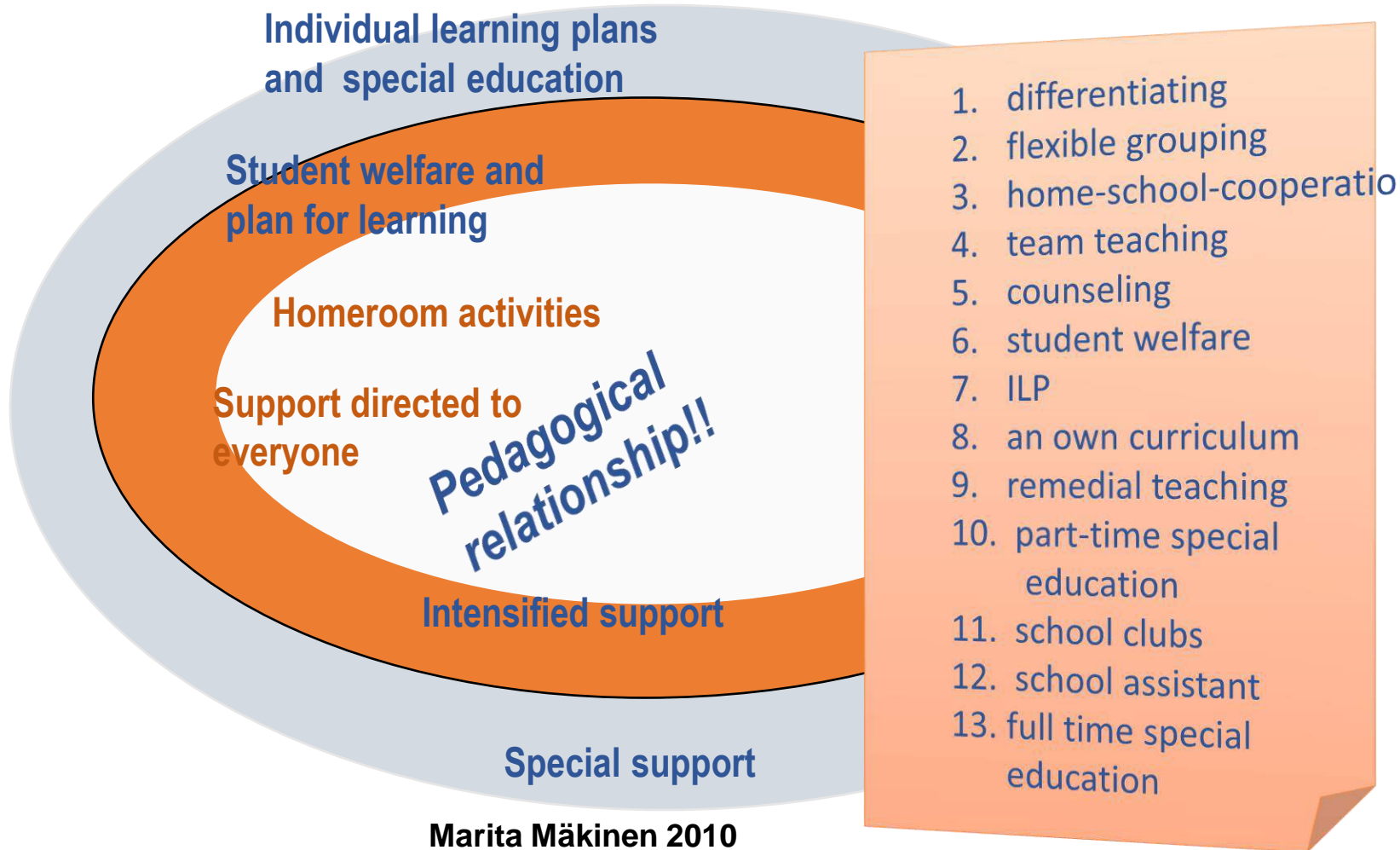


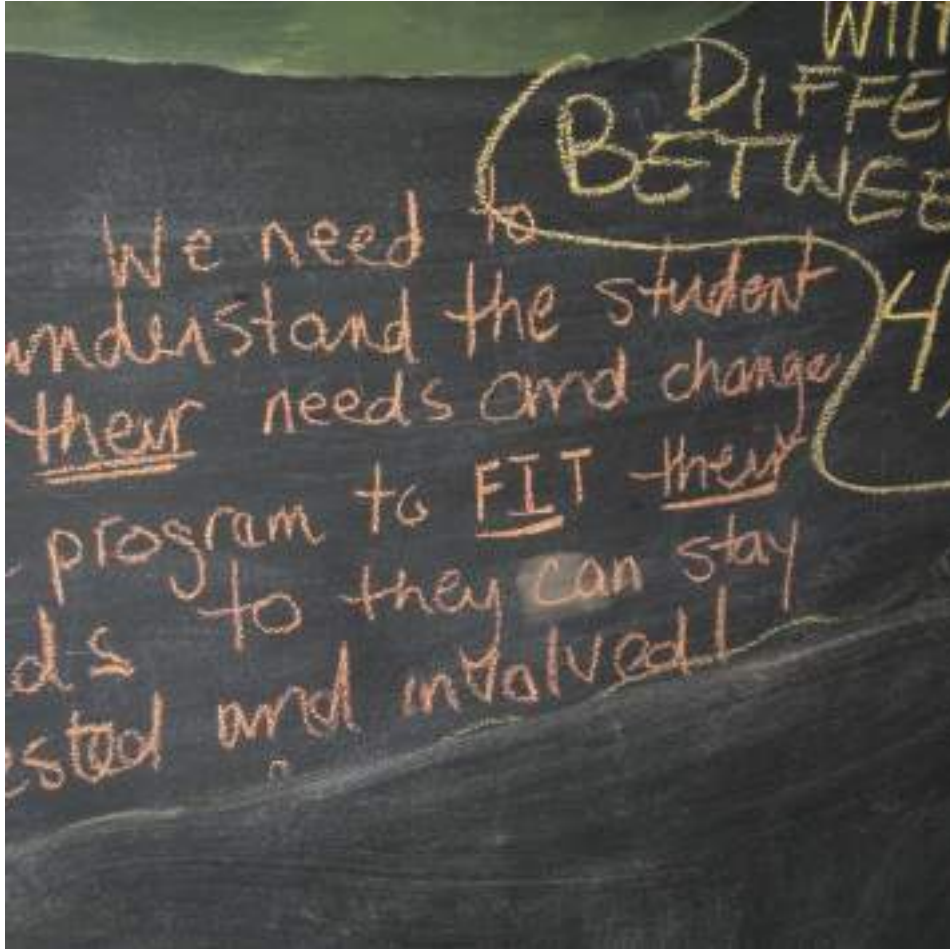
differentiating counseling student welfare remedial instruction part-time special education implements and aids school assistant guidance and other support	differentiating counseling student welfare remedial instruction part-time special education implements and aids school assistant guidance and other support	differentiating counseling student welfare remedial instruction part-time special education full-time special education implements and aids school assistant guidance and other support
--	--	--

Support: flexible grouping, group size, co-operative and team teaching school clubs, an own curriculum , individualizing...

Inclusive strategies

National level	Municipality level	School level	Teacher level
----------------	--------------------	--------------	---------------





Maximizing Student Success with Differentiated Learning (Morgan 2014)

*We need to understand
the students and their
need and change
program to fit their needs-*

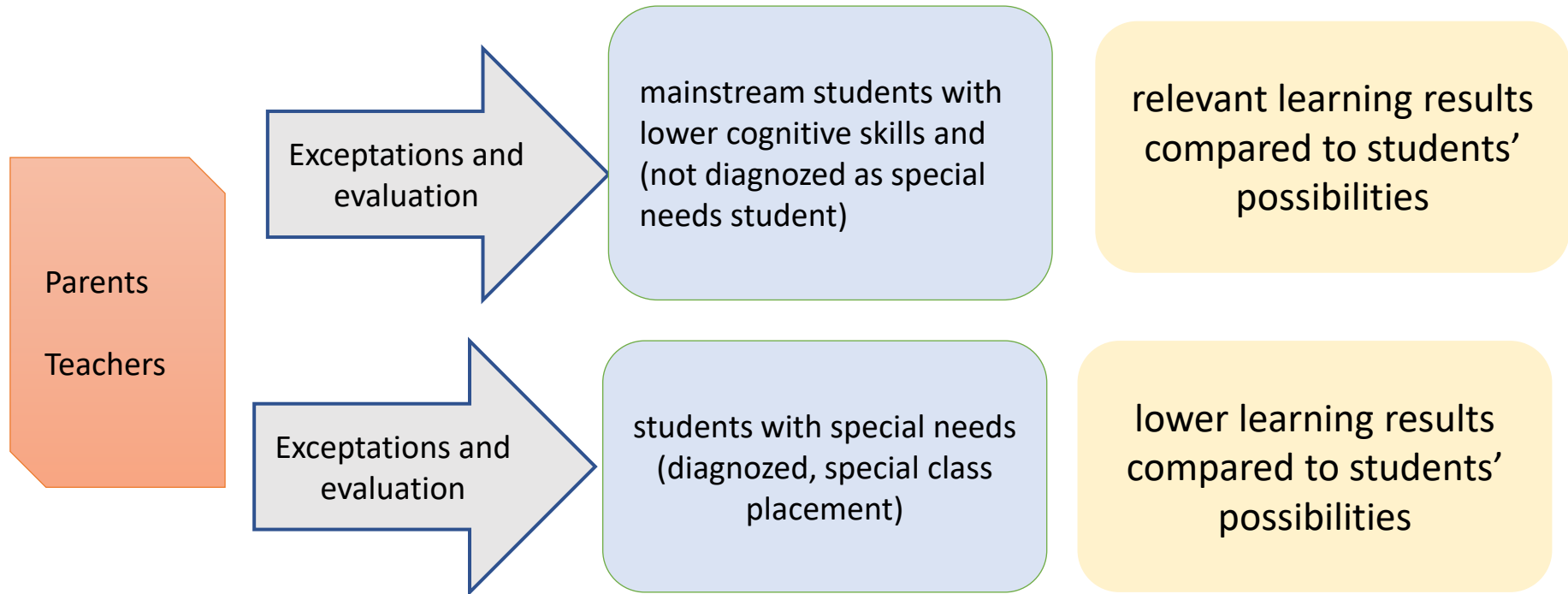
--

*So that they can stay
interested and involved*

Stigma of a Label:

Educational Expectations for High School Students Labeled with Learning Disabilities

(Shifrer, 2013)



The elements of the successful school day

- good quality in teaching and learning
- standards of activities that support growth and development
- sense of community and belonging
- home-school co-operation
- safety



How adults could support the whole school community, and students' learning and well-being?

Fall & Roberts, 2012 (Journal of Adolescence)

Teachers:

- be interested,
- give notice and award for students who try
- keep up sense of community by different activities to let students get to know each

Parents:

- have a regular discussion about school with your child

Provide support in every encounter!



Jukka Mäkelä, child psychiatrist: how to support students' mental well-being

DAILY CARE

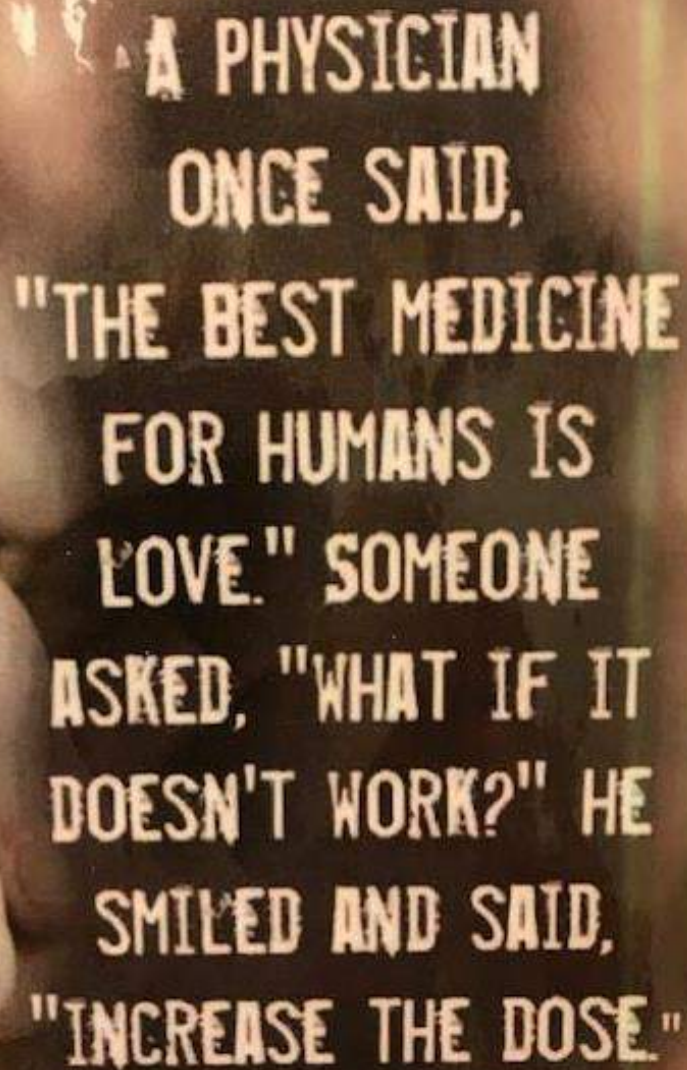
- warm interaction
- listening, open and curious attitude toward students and their thoughts
- caring environment, students' involvement, sense of community
- quick steps with daily problems

INFORMATION AND SKILLS

- social skills
- knowledge of vital information and skills for own healthy

STRUCTURE

- staff
- student welfare group
- committed leaders
- collaborative approach

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a dark sign with white text. The text is a quote from a physician about love being the best medicine.

A PHYSICIAN
ONCE SAID,
"THE BEST MEDICINE
FOR HUMANS IS
LOVE." SOMEONE
ASKED, "WHAT IF IT
DOESN'T WORK?" HE
SMILED AND SAID,
"INCREASE THE DOSE."

*Every morning
gives you
a new chance.*



A learning organization is an organization that has a strong ability to learn, adjust and change in response to new realities.

Gephart, Marsick, Van Buren, Spiro & Senge (1996)



Shared responsibility of students is accepted:
"all students can learn"
(and we all here just for that)

Open and constructive interaction and communication

Shared goals and values, development of shared aims

Taking risks and new ideas

Understanding that development and progress need feedback

Sense of belonging and relatedness

*Not just the principal:
we do this together*

Divided leadership

Adults are models:

- *courage to do things differently*
- *failing is OK!*
- *Communication*
- *collaboration*
- *respect*
- *motivation*

7/26/2022

- delegation and shared responsibilities
- prediction
- self-determination



*Teach them to be kind to animals.
They will grow up also kind to people.*



Kaitaan koulu



- 300 students
 - one group for preparatory class for basic education
 - two groups for voluntary additional basic education
 - two groups for special class education (behavioral and social-emotional issues)
- 35 teachers and three school assistants
- student welfare group (psychology, social worker, counselor, and a nurse)
- one principal and two vice-principals
- teams:
 1. environmental issues,
 2. assessment,
 3. community spirit and anti-bullying
 4. co-workers
 5. school events
- specialities: animal-assisted well-being, learning and activities



The building is over 50 years old, but was renovated in 2010.



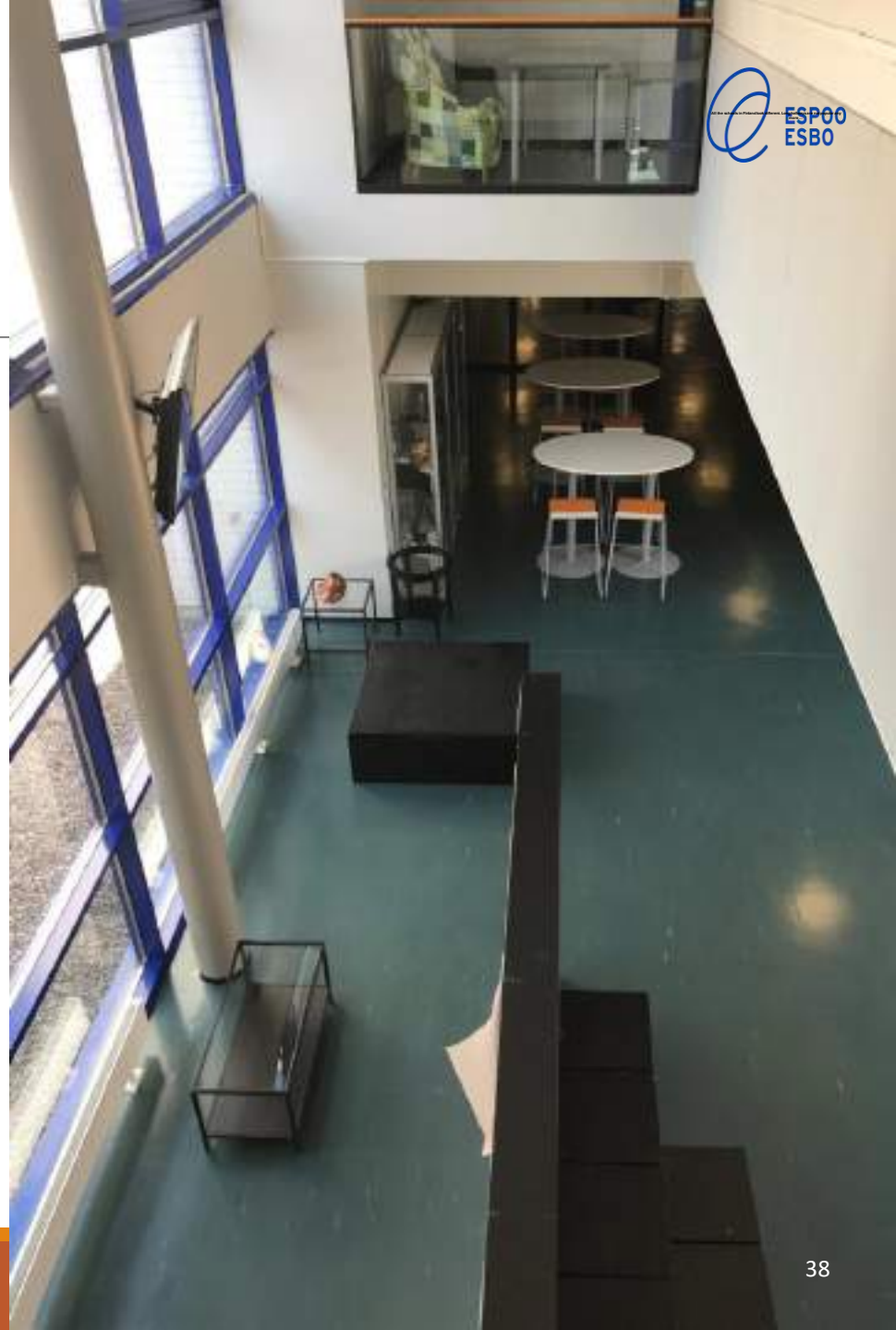
“Open-doors school” with opportunities to study outside classrooms

environments:
classrooms,
halls, yard etc.



Home economics





Library is used as a classroom







student with
poor eye-
sight coped
in school
days



Everyone has own cup for coffee.

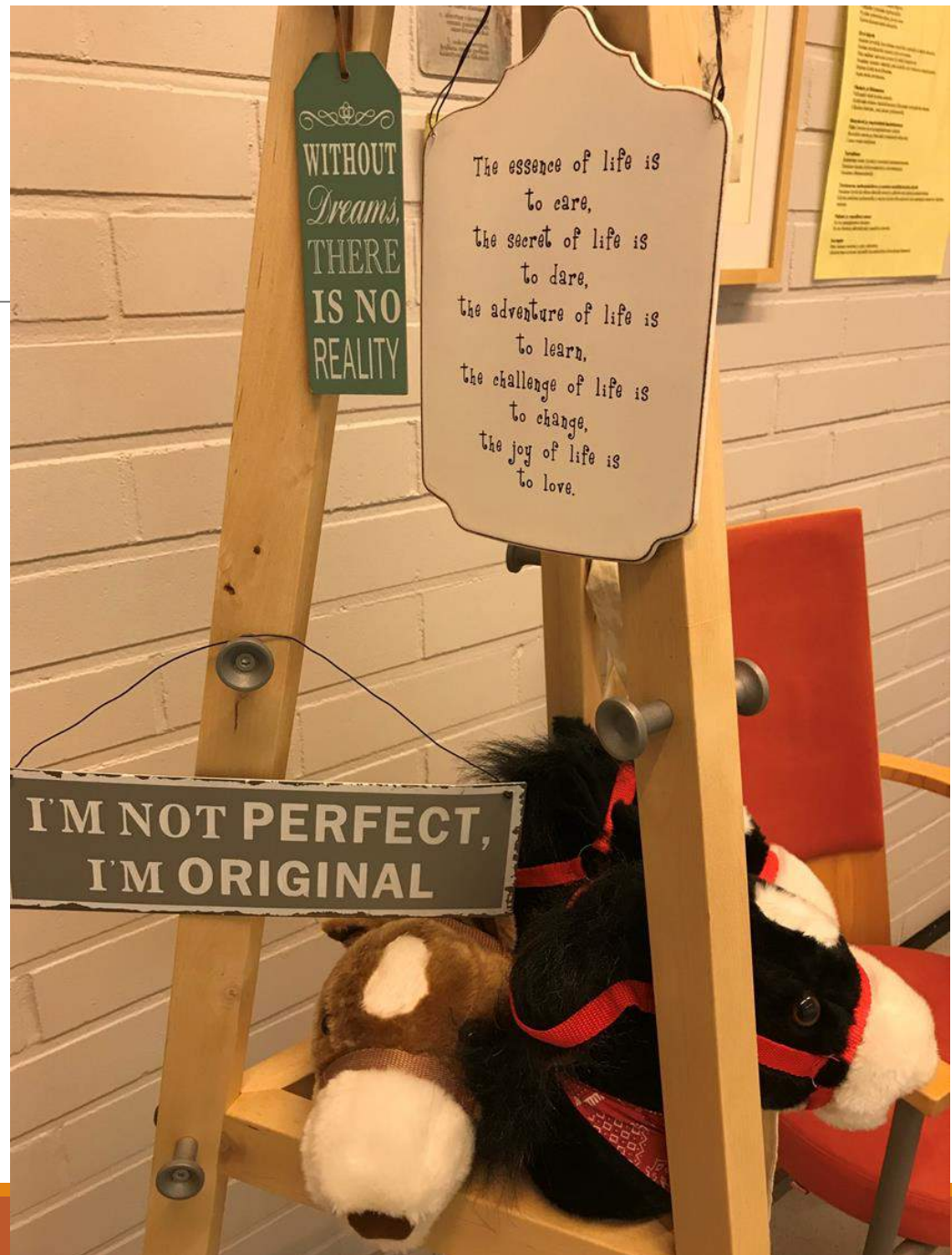
The main staff-room” with lockers and some place for work.





Students have free school lunch.

You are warmly
welcome to
principal's office





The round table and school dogs are essential in family meetings to build bridges.





Students with special needs made these dog paintings for principal's office

A. Who is responsible for the school system (that it “works”)?

- **Education providers** (municipalities/only few private schools) with guidelines set by Finnish National Agency for Education (FNAE)

B. Is it evaluated (how and by who)?

- **Education providers**
 - self-assessment data of each school assessed by students, parents and staff (every other year or once in three years)
 - annual plans of each school
- **KARVI** ([Finnish Education Evaluation Centre](#)) organizes voluntary national subject tests for 9th grade (Finnish, English, mathematics)

A. How many regulations direct school system (laws, regulations) – few/many?

- Basic Education Act
- Basic Education Degree
- Government Degrees
- National Core Curriculum
- Salamanca Statement
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Local guidelines provided by municipal board of education
- Own rules of the school

A. How is school funding organized?

- government provides funding for each municipality for those services that are compulsory to be organized
 - September 20th
 - schools provide information how many students, special needs students, students with Finnish as second language, preparatory education students
- municipalities are funded by that information for education, but that money is not “tagged”
 - local decision (municipalities)

A. Who introduces improvements to the school system?

- “Bottom-up”
 - schools are learning communities improving culture and activities (innovations and ideas shared locally and nationally)
- “Top-down”
 - FNAE and municipalities provide themes and guidelines (annual etc.)

B. How often are improvements done?

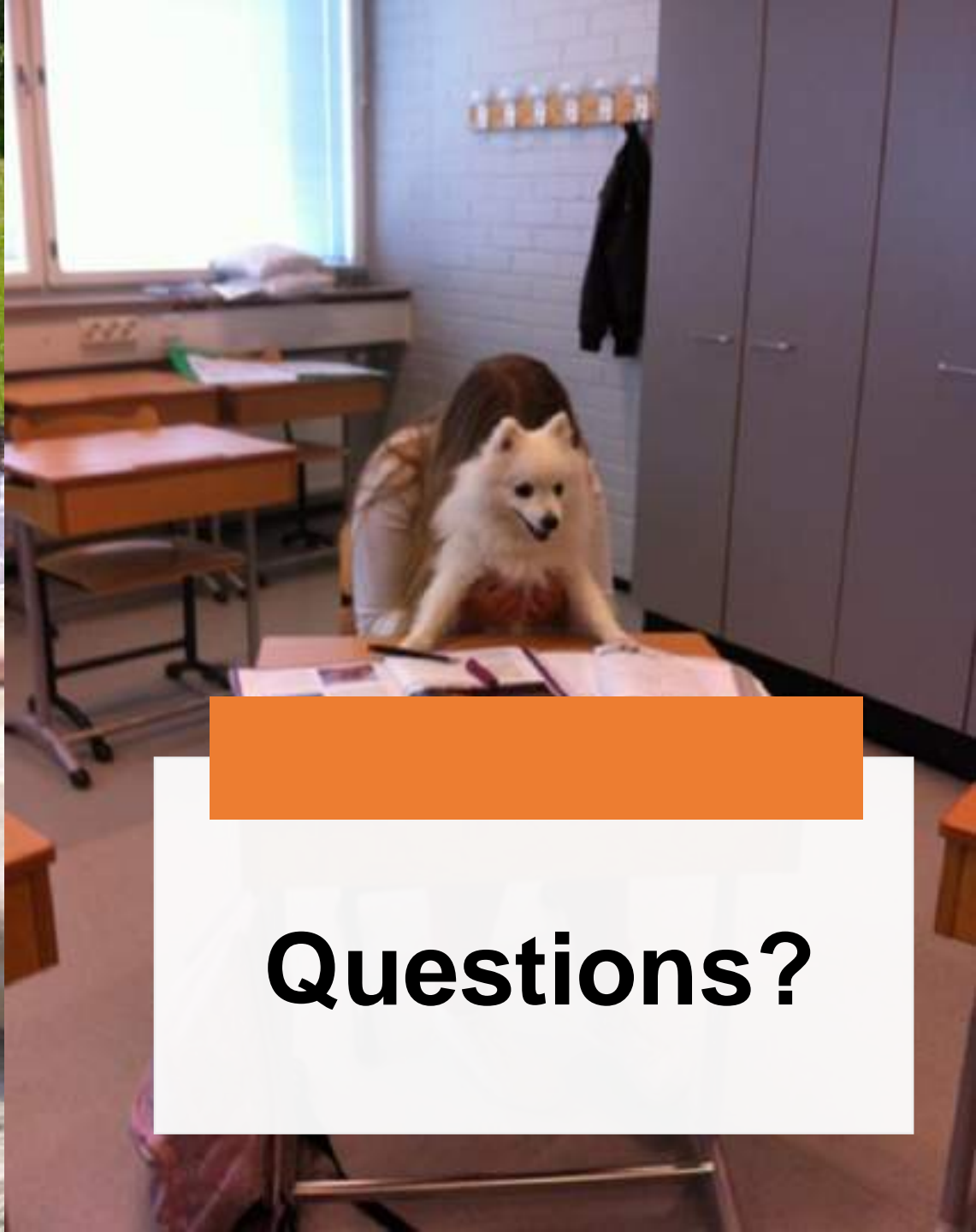
- schools
 - with student council, shared leadership and collaborative teams for teachers) develop activities continuously
- curricula
 - ...1985, 1994, 2004, 2010, 2014... (FNAE)
- school plans
 - annually (at least three improvements in focus)

Who provides professional development for teachers at the national level (professional institution, a public institute responsible ...)?

- universities, “open universities”, summer universities
 - Finnish National Agency of Education
 - municipalities
 - schools (collaboration, individual schools)..
-
- teachers also have an active role in organizing additional training for themselves

"Every child deserves a champion
-- an adult who will never give
up on them, who understands
the power of connection, and
insists that they become the
best that they can possibly be."

- - Rita Pierson



Questions?

References

- **Airaksinen, T., Halinen, I. & Linturi, H.** (2017). Futuribles of Learning 2030 – Delphi supports the reform of the core curricula in Finland. *Eur J Futures Res* (2017) 5:2. doi:10.1007/s40309-016-0096-y.
- **Halinen, I. & Holappa, A-S.** (2013). Curricular balance based on dialogue, cooperation and trust – The case of Finland. In Kuiper, W. & Berkvens, J. (Eds.) *Balancing Curriculum Regulation and Freedom across Europe. CIDREE yearbook 2013*, 39 - 62. SLO, Enschede, the Netherlands.
- **National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014.** The Finnish National Agency of Education.
- **Pietarinen, J., Pyhältö, K. & Soini, T.** 2016. Large-scale curriculum reform in Finland – exploring the interrelation between. *Shared Sense-Making in Curriculum Reform: Orchestrating the Local Curriculum Work. Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 1-15.
- **Rothuizen, J.J. & Harbo, L.J.** (2017). The Social Pedagogy: An Approach Without Fixed Recipes. *International Journal of Social Pedagogy* (1), 6-28, doi:10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2017.v6.1.002
- **Ryan, R.M. & Deci, E.L.** (2017). *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, And Wellness.* New York: The Guilford Press.
- **Vahtivuori-Hänninen, S., Halinen, I. Niemi, H. Lavonen, J. & Lipponen, L.** (2014). A New Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education and Technology as an Integrated Tool for Learning. In Niemi, H. et. al (Eds.) *Finnish Innovations and Technologies in Schools.* 21 - 32. The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Ritva Mickelsson

ritva.mickelsson@espoo.fi

Equine-Assisted Social Education as a Co-Intervention to Prevent Dropout by Improving Social Skills and Engagement in Learning

Harnessing horses in social pedagogy: Equine-assisted social education in a school context

Lessons from a Finnish classroom