

3 Things U.S. Schools Can Learn from Finland

Over the weekend, Fulbright Scholar William Doyle [once again wrote](#) about his experiences as a U.S. transplant in the Finnish education system.

According to Doyle, Finland – a nation whose high scores on the international PISA exam have amazed many – has a number of practices from which the U.S. education system might benefit. A few of these are summarized below:

1. Place education in the hands of local teachers, not distant bureaucrats.

Today's schools are mammoth institutions controlled by distant school boards and the federal department of education. In fact, the last century has seen school districts consolidated by almost [90 percent](#). By handing education decisions over to those who have the most interaction with children, namely parents and teachers, would American schools see more student success?

2. Beware of reliance on technology.

As Doyle implies, schools often treat technology as a panacea for their performance woes. But [in reality](#), “overexposure to computers and the Internet causes educational outcomes to drop.” And as [others have noted](#), children actually like reading real books more than those on electronic devices.

3. Encourage play time.

While Finnish kids get 75 minutes of daily [recess](#), American kids only get 27.8 minutes. Although it's natural to worry that play time will diminish valuable learning time, research shows that devoting more time to recess might actually help children focus and behave better, thus maximizing the time spent learning.

To be sure, becoming more like Finland isn't likely to cure all of our educational woes. But given their student success rate, is it possible that they've discovered a paradigm from which American schools could benefit?

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