



SCHOOL MEALS – MORE THAN JUST FOOD

The world's leading educational company Pearson plc ranked Finland as the global #1 in educational attainment.¹ One of the factors that made this remarkable achievement possible is the attention paid to the overall well-being of pupils. In this, the Finnish school meal system plays an important role. The FinnWayLearning educational consortium has the multi-level expertise to help anyone interested in developing a school meal system that goes beyond mere sustenance.

¹ *The Learning Curve: Lessons in Country Performance in Education, 2012 Report.* Pearson, London





The Educational Value of School Meals

A tasty, balanced school meal helps pupils maintain their energy throughout the school day, thus ensuring their well-being and keeping them focused on school work. They also provide educators with an opportunity to educate children about nutrition, encourage healthy eating and teach good table manners and other social skills.

History of School Meals in Finland

In 1948, Finland became the first country in the world to serve all pupils a free school meal. At first, the meal was usually a light one; soups, porridges or gruel were common, and children frequently brought bread or other supplements from home. In the 1960s, school meals slowly turned into a more substantial lunch and eventually emerged as a way to educate children



about nutrition and new food products. Rice, spaghetti, grated root vegetables, and various fruits are among the current staples that entered Finnish dinner tables partly through their introduction at school.

School Meals Today

Today, the Finnish Basic Education Act of 1998 states unequivocally that every pupil must be provided with a balanced, appropriately organized and supervised meal every school day, free of charge. In addition to this, about one third of Finnish schools serve a healthy afternoon snack (usually bread or milk products, fruits or berries).

Municipalities are tasked with ensuring that school meals are of high quality, provide enough variety, and meet national health and nutrition standards. They also monitor that special diets are appropriately observed.

Catering for Schools

School meals are generally served in a self-service canteen, where a sample plate is on display to show pupils how to put their own meal together. Adults – both teachers and catering staff – are always present to provide help and supervision when needed.

School meals may be prepared in an on-site school kitchen for local consumption or at a central facility for delivery. In either case, qualified professionals ensure food quality. School menus are planned according to the guidelines for healthy eating; special attention is paid to providing nutritional variety both within a single meal and from day to day.

What FinnWayLearning can offer

- study visits covering any aspect of the Finnish school meal system (prices start at €1000/day for a group of 10 or less)
- training for institutional/school catering professionals, nutritional specialists and educational planners
- expert consultation

Please contact us to find out more!



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