

SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION IN COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

In Finland, a comprehensive school takes 9 years. A child starts a comprehensive school in the age of seven years old. Before that a child goes to Pre-school in the age of six years old – and this pre-school is a volunteer one. Almost every parent in Finland wants their child to go to Pre-school.

If a child has something in his development and it has been noticed before Comprehensive school (for example at the doctor's, or nurse's appointment or at Pre-school) a child is allowed to study 11 years in comprehensive school if the problems are so difficult. If not, a child studies a normal 9 years and his/hers special educational needs are noticed. A child is tested if possible and a child can have a diagnose even before Comprehensive school or on his/hers first years at schools. But there are no possibility in every city or county to have money enough to hire a schoolpsychologist to make tests and there are not enough doctors or psychologists who are specialized in neurological problems in our country.

Pupils are given various formes of help, the nature of which is determined according to the special needs which become evident during the course of the pupil's studies.

Disabilities, illnesses or handicaps can cause obstacles to learning, as they affect on child's growth, development and ability to learn. Social and emotional problems can also result in the need for special needs education.

If a pupil cannot participate in normal education due to a disability, illness, developmental retardation an emotional disorders or some other similar reasons decision to provide special needs education must be made. Special needs education must be provided at a pupil's own school as often as it's possible.

The primary goal in to support pupils in their studies so that they can achive the goals of the general sullabys.

- *remedial teaching*: for example a pupil does not understand some thing about mathematics course on is away a long time from school because of an illness. A teacher can give remedial teaching to a pupil so that she/he can "catch the idea" of the subject of the course. *This is not a special education*. Remedial teaching is given by an ordinary teacher who teaches most of the subject in his/hers own class (this is elementary school lower levels 1-6) and in levels 7-9 junior high school every subject has it's own teachers.
- special needs education alongside normal education: *a part- time special needs education* given by a teacher of special education – for example a child has big problems to learn to say letters "R" or "S". A pupil goes to see a teacher of special education in teacher's small classroom and teacher makes a pupil to do some exercices. This happens at a lower lever (classes 1-2)
- Or a pupil in junior high school has problems with mathematics or in foreign languages (english, swedish, germany etc) because of diagnosed area in dyslexia. A pupil can go to a teacher of special education to study in teacher's small classroom. The other classmates are studying a same subject in a "normal class" at the same time.

There can be few pupils at the same time in a classroom and everyone is studying their own subject. They come from different classes.

- A teacher of special education can also come to the classroom with a teacher of mathematics. A math teacher teaches a topic of the lesson and a special teacher can start to help those pupils who have problems in math when pupils start to do some exercises. They work together in a same classroom.
- special education can be provided also in a small class (a small group). There can be pupils from 3-7 for example. The pupils are transferred into special need education. A teacher of a special education teaches them. Reasons for this transfer can be for example social or emotional problems, ADHD, dyslexia.

When a pupil has been enrolled in or transferred into special need education, an individual education plan (IEP) must be prepared to him/her. Co-operation with parents has a very important role when a school supports a pupil to learn.

If despites support measures, pupils cannot achieve the goals of general syllabys, the syllabus is individualized to fit their personal requirements. Pupils study according to based on their own abilities, which are defined in the IEP.

IEP includes a history of a pupil – when a need for special education was noticed, what has been done, what kind support this pupil needs, how this support is arranged, are there any diagnoses etc.