



Finland's Education Miracle: What Can We Learn from Its Rise and Decline?

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For years, Finland was considered a model of educational excellence. While many traditional Western school systems emphasized standardized testing, competition, homework, and academic rankings, Finland chose a different path. Its schools focused on student well-being, equal educational opportunities, shorter school days, less homework, and greater trust in teachers. Rather than teaching primarily for examinations, Finnish educators encouraged creativity, independent thinking, and meaningful learning. The results were remarkable. In the OECD's 2006 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Finland scored 547 in reading, 548 in mathematics, and 563 in science, placing it among the world's highest-performing education systems. Its success attracted international attention. Finland seemed to demonstrate that academic excellence could coexist with less pressure and greater student freedom. But something has changed.

According to PISA 2022, Finland's mathematics score had fallen from 548 in 2006 to 484 in 2022. Reading declined from 547 to 490, while science dropped from 563 to 511. Although Finnish students continued to perform above OECD averages, the country had lost its position among the world's leading education systems. Other European countries that embraced elements of student-centered education have also faced disappointing academic trends. Yet their experiences differ, making it difficult to attribute their results to one educational philosophy. What happened? Researchers point to several possible explanations, including declining reading habits, changing classroom environments, and growing digital distractions. One particularly troubling factor is the increasing presence of smartphones in children's lives. The research deserves our attention.

In PISA 2022, 41% of Finnish students reported being distracted by digital devices during most or all mathematics lessons, compared with the OECD average of 30%. Across OECD countries, students who frequently experienced digital distractions scored approximately 15 points lower in mathematics, even after accounting for socioeconomic differences. Finland's National Agency for Education has also warned that social media and gaming are replacing recreational reading and affecting students' concentration and motivation. In 2024, the agency recommended stronger restrictions on mobile phone use in schools. These findings establish a serious concern, although they do not prove that smartphones alone caused Finland's academic decline. Educational outcomes depend on many factors, including families, teachers, curriculum, and student behavior. So, what should we learn?

Finland's experience reminds us that educational freedom must be accompanied by personal responsibility. Creativity matters, but so do discipline, reading, perseverance, and strong academic foundations. Technology can enrich education, but it should serve learning rather than compete for children's attention.

At Saipan SDA School, we believe education involves more than academic achievement. It is the development of the mind, character, and spiritual life. Our responsibility, shared by teachers and parents, is to help children develop both intellectual curiosity and self-control. Perhaps the greatest lesson from Finland is this: The best education is neither the one that demands the most nor the one that gives the most freedom. It is the one that teaches children how to use their freedom wisely. And in an age when screens constantly compete for our children's attention, helping them learn to focus may be one of the greatest gifts we can give them.



Yeon Ho Song
Principal

you can do
ANYTHING
you just have to be
DETERMINED

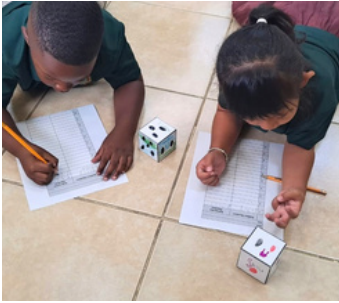


ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

ACTIVITIES



Kindergarten - Left to Right: Exploring various animals from around the globe, learning to write the letter M, engaging in reading activities, and practicing Math skills.



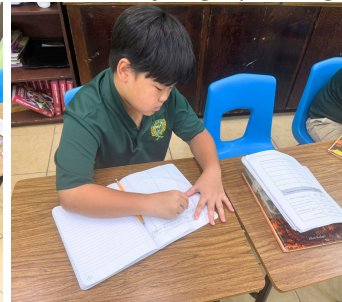
1st Grade - Left to Right: Creating paper dice to write addition and subtraction equations, completing fill-in-the-blank exercises with Bible verses, designing a good citizen poster for Social Studies, and participating in a Bible activity on listening to God's voice.



2nd Grade - Left to Right: Taking their Bible test, practicing songs for the Christmas Program, and engaging in a brain break activity.

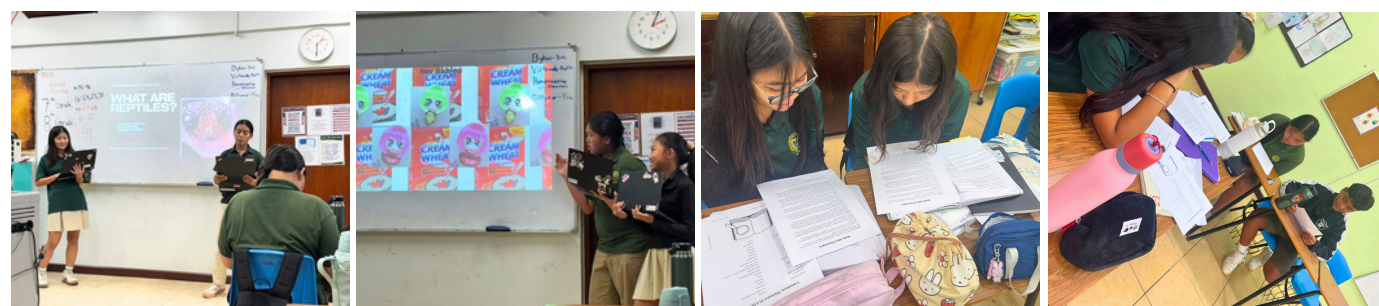


3rd & 4th Grade - Left to Right: Practicing Christmas program songs, presenting regions of America, collaborating on a Science worksheet, and studying spelling/vocabulary as a group.



5th & 6th Grade - Left to Right: Practicing arranging words in alphabetical order, using non-fiction text to identify the main idea and supporting details, grouping words based on their sounds, and collaborating to review their fictional narratives.





7th & 8th Grade - Left to Right: Presenting on various groups of vertebrate animals while identifying the main ideas in each passage.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION



FRIDAY CHAPEL

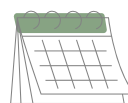


MONTHLY BULLETIN



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Calianalyn Crisostomo	1
Rhea Lei Raymond	6
Jebon Jinna	10
Rowan Sakisat	12
SaRai Cabrera-Hill	13
Deighton Muña	22
Owen Li	26
Alan Yu	27
Judileih Babauta	28



UPCOMING EVENTS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12
Commonwealth Cultural Day
No School

TUESDAY, October 13
Start of 2nd Quarter

WEDNESDAY, October 14
Picture Make Up Day

OCTOBER 19-23
Cultural Week



CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER



TODDLERS



Left to Right: Listening to a Bible story featuring Jesus the Happy Helper, and orange paint stamping to help build fine motor skills, color recognition, and hand strength.



PRESCHOOL



Left to Right: Engaging in tracing zigzag lines to enhance fine motor skills and pencil control, while also sorting objects by shape to cultivate visual discrimination skills. This practice aids in recognizing similarities and differences among various shapes.



PRE-KINDERGARTEN



Left to Right: Observing how various containers hold different volumes of liquid, exploring the short and long vowel sounds of "e", and practicing writing the letter "e" on the whiteboard.

AFTER SCHOOL



Cooking Class



Art Class



Games



Gardening

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Saipan Seventh-day Adventist School
CULTURAL WEEK
Presentation Time: 8:30am - 10:00am

OCTOBER

	19 Monday	Country Stories/Skits
	20 Tuesday	Songs/Dances
	21 Wednesday	Arts & Crafts
	22 Thursday	Games and Cultural Sports
	23 Friday	Fashion Show & Food Festival

Featured Continents / Countries Per Class

CDC - CNMI	3rd & 4th Grade - Africa
Kindergarten - Europe	5th & 6th Grade - North America
1st Grade - Asia	7th & 8th Grade - Oceania
2nd Grade - South America	



Saipan Seventh-day
Adventist School



Saipan SDA School



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