

Schools in Finland and Sweden, 2012
IKZ's View

A group of 30 MA Educational Leaders, most Superintendents, spent a week visiting Finland and Sweden to view schools, speak with higher education representatives and meet policy makers. Led by Primary Source and supported by Education First, this was a fast paced exposure to three schools (two in Finland and one in Sweden). The schools we visited are not what I would call typical. Nonetheless, I found the following contrasts...Sweden is much more like the US in culture and attitude toward education.

EXPECTATIONS

REALITY

Transformational teaching/schooling

Traditional teaching, schooling...some poor examples and some good examples of teaching and learning

Even elementary students speak English well

Little diversity

Little diversity, little poverty
Shared history, culture of trust and "value of children as the embodiment of future success"
"Finland does not give up on any child"

Teachers are professionals

Trust through and because of preparation and selection, many more candidates than positions. Candidates with high academic achievement, great freedom to develop instruction

State Controlled Curriculum

State framework; Local authorities plan local curriculum

More centralized decision-making

Municipality control, teacher salaries set by state (elementary teacher earn less than secondary teachers)

Both Finland and Sweden are socialist countries but have embraced choice based on competition.

National assessment

Assessment done at local level except for matriculation exams. Scores reported by region, city, not by school (only school can get its own data)

More time in school	Less time in school daily Both countries start school earlier than US. with full day K.
Insularity	Multilanguage, global focus, competitive, outward looking Parental involvement/stake holding Positive media coverage
Reform on national level	Reform on national level, policy driven Taking the time needed (40 years), having patience Highly selective teacher prep Education K-16 is free Unions operate at national level
Strong supervision & evaluation	None formalized, parents have input Mentoring providing; few people removed (progressive discipline used)
Much attention to operations	Very little attention to organizational issues
Grades	Encourage student self-assessment

How can what we have learned influence what we do here in MA?

We can control how we work with teachers in the first three years.

We can “develop rather than measure” teachers

Patience is required. Coherence...