

National Core Curriculum for
Instruction Preparing for
Basic Education 2009

Finnish National Board of Education

National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing for Basic Education 2009



FINNISH NATIONAL BOARD
OF EDUCATION

Reg. No. 14/011/2009

Providers of basic education

REGULATION

Binding

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Basic Education
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2/011/2004

National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing Immigrants for Basic Education 2009

The Finnish National Board of Education has today adopted the National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing Immigrants for Basic Education 2009.

Providers of instruction preparing for basic education shall draw up and approve a curriculum in compliance with the provisions of this National Core Curriculum.

Curricula conforming to this National Core Curriculum may be adopted as from 1st August 2009 and shall be adopted no later than 1st January 2010.

Director General Timo Lankinen

Director Jorma Kauppinen

CC The Ministry of Education
State Provincial Offices

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1 Premises of instruction preparing for basic education

The Basic Education Act (628/ 1998; *perusopetuslaki*) lays down provisions on instruction preparing for basic education to be provided for immigrants. Instruction preparing for basic education is intended for those pupils of immigrant backgrounds whose Finnish or Swedish language skills and/ or other abilities are not sufficient to study in a pre-primary or basic education group. The amount of instruction provided is at least 900 hours for pupils aged 6–10 and at least 1,000 hours for older pupils. Pupils participating in instruction are entitled to transfer to basic education even prior to fulfilling the required hours mentioned above, provided that they are able to keep up in basic education. No national lesson-hour distribution or syllabus has been defined for the instruction. According to the Basic Education Act, pupils are entitled to curricular teaching and guidance on school days.

The composition of teaching groups will be decided by each provider of instruction preparing for basic education. Preparatory instruction may also be provided for a single pupil. Teaching groups are to be formed according to pupils' age and capabilities and so as to promote their healthy growth and development and to ensure achievement of the curricular objectives and those set out in pupils' personal study programmes.

During preparatory instruction, pupils will be integrated into Finnish- or Swedish-language teaching groups in pre-primary or basic education corresponding with their own age, in the manner determined in each pupil's personal study programme. Educational integration will promote integration into society, development of Finnish or Swedish proficiency and acquisition of the contents of different subjects.

2 Curriculum for instruction preparing for basic education

Each education provider is responsible for drawing up its local curriculum for instruction preparing for basic education. In addition to the National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing for Basic Education, the basis for drawing up the curriculum consists of the general objectives and the national objectives concerning instruction preparing for basic education as determined in Government Decree 1435/ 2001 and, as applicable, the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education.

The curriculum for instruction preparing for basic education must include:

- the objectives of instruction and teaching arrangements;
- the principles for drawing up pupils' personal study programmes;
- organisation of pupil welfare services and related co-operation;
- guidance and counselling activities in support of studies and various learning environments in support of learning;
- instruction for pupils in need of special support;
- co-operation with basic education;
- co-operation between home and school;
- co-operation with other parties;
- pupil assessment and certificates.

3 Objectives and core contents of instruction preparing for basic education

3.1 General objectives and co-operation with basic education

The objectives of preparatory instruction are to promote pupils' Finnish/ Swedish language skills, balanced development and integration into Finnish society and to provide them with the capabilities required to move on to basic education. As part of preparatory instruction, pupils are provided with instruction in subjects included in basic education and, where possible, in their own native language, as further specified in each pupil's personal study programme. Instruction in different subjects will be provided in compliance with the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, as applicable, which means that co-operation between the preparatory instruction teacher and basic education teachers is important.

In their pedagogical arrangements, schools should take into account the fact that learners are different in terms of age, learning abilities and background and that individual pupils' teaching arrangements should be planned and instruction should be differentiated according to their age and developmental phase. Instruction provided with support in pupils' native languages will promote absorption of different subject contents.

3.2 Illiterate pupils

For those children and young people with poor reading and writing skills, instruction preparing for basic education will focus on these skills. The objectives of pupils' personal study programmes should be set in such a way that pupils receive instruction appropriate for their own age and skills level. The contents should be selected so as to support their ability to cope with everyday situations and social integration and to facilitate development of their own student identity. Learning one's own native language promotes a pupil's learning skills and consolidates cultural identity.

Sufficient time will be reserved for acquisition and consolidation of reading and writing skills. Where a pupil's skills are not sufficient to participate in basic education, due consideration should be given to the schedule for moving on to basic education in the pupil's own study programme. Where necessary, the pupil may either continue in preparatory instruction or transfer to study in accordance with a study programme not tied to year classes or in some other way with appropriate support measures. Provision of sufficient support for illiterate pupils transferring to basic education will be ensured.

3.3 Objectives and core contents of language instruction

Finnish or Swedish as a second language

The objective of studies in the Finnish or Swedish language is equivalent to skills levels A 1.3–A 2.1 of the language proficiency scale (see Appendix), which describes the average proficiency of pupils at the end of preparatory instruction.

The main focus of instruction preparing for basic education is on studies in Finnish or Swedish as a second language. Instruction is provided in compliance with the Finnish or Swedish as a second language syllabus set out in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, as applicable. Studies in Finnish or Swedish as a second language form the basis for all other studies. In preparatory instruction, the objective of studies in Finnish or Swedish as a second language is to provide pupils with the capabilities required for them to transfer to basic education. Each pupils' schooling and learning background and any possible existing Finnish or Swedish language skills will be taken into account in instruction. The objectives and contents will be determined in accordance with the pupil's own age and skills level in the personal study programme drawn up for each pupil.

Pupil's own native language

The objective of native language instruction is to support and promote pupils' command of their own native language, knowledge of their own cultural background and development of cultural identity. Good command of one's own native language will also create conditions for learning Finnish/ Swedish and other learning in that language. Pupils will be provided with instruction whenever possible.

Instruction will comply, as applicable, with the Recommendation of the National Board of Education for the Core Curriculum for Instruction in the Native Languages of Immigrant Students (1/ 011/ 2001, Appendix 5). Each pupil's command of the native language and its preservation will also be supported in different ways in co-operation with the pupil's family.

Other languages

The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education includes the objectives of foreign language instruction provided for pupils. Instruction preparing for basic education will comply with this National Core Curriculum as applicable. Pupils' foreign language studies will be organised in accordance with the municipal language programme. Each pupil's linguistic abilities will decide the extent to which it is possible to include foreign language studies in his or her personal study programme during preparatory instruction.

3.4 Objectives and core contents of instruction in other subjects

Preparatory instruction is based on each pupil's prior studies and cultural background. Instruction makes use of pupils' knowledge of nature, ways of life, history and society, languages and cultures in their own linguistic and cultural areas.

During preparatory instruction, the objectives and core contents of instruction in other subjects will conform to those set out in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, as applicable. Contents will be planned with due consideration for the key terminology, working approaches and tools of each subject.

Instruction and support provided in pupils' native languages will promote their studies and social integration. Additional information about pupils' skills levels obtained through native language instruction and support will help set objectives for other subjects. This makes it possible for pupils to make progress in their subject studies, even if their Finnish/ Swedish skills develop more slowly than their other skills. Native language instruction and support should be provided according to pupils' individual needs and whenever possible.

Preparatory instruction makes use of experiential and activity-based learning environments and diverse teaching methods and working approaches. Diverse learning environments provide pupils with meaningful and varied situations to use language in different communication environments. Different situations develop pupils' ability to act both as independent individuals and as members of their community, while also providing them with capabilities for lifelong learning.

Learning environments familiarise pupils with Finnish culture and promote their integration into the local environment and into the broader Finnish society.

4 Drawing up personal study programmes

No national lesson-hour distribution or syllabus has been issued for instruction preparing for basic education and, therefore, a personal study programme will be drawn up for each pupil. A pupil's personal study programme will include:

- the pupil's baseline level, such as schooling history, language skills and personal strengths;
- the pupil's personal learning objectives, which will be reviewed regularly;
- the subjects to be studied, the numbers of lessons in each subject and the content of instruction;
- the pupil's studies in the preparatory instruction group and integration into basic education;
- provision of guidance and counselling and any support measures that may be required.

The personal study programme may form part of the pupil's integration plan in accordance with the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers (493/ 1999; *laki maahanmuuttajien kotouttamisesta ja turvapaikanhakijoiden vastaanotosta*). It is also possible to draw up a learning plan for a pupil in preparatory instruction.

5 Educational and welfare support

Where a pupil's needs for educational support are discovered during instruction preparing for basic education, support will be provided in the most appropriate way. During preparatory instruction, pupils will be provided with remedial teaching, pupil welfare support measures and part-time special needs education whenever necessary. In the event that the support provided is not sufficient, it is necessary to assess the special support needs of the pupil concerned.

5.1 Co-operation between home and school

Education providers will create conditions for co-operation between home and school. The starting point for co-operation is mutual and equal respect and treatment between different parties. The aim is to bring about dialogue to support pupils' growth and learning.

The linguistic and cultural backgrounds of families are to be taken into account in home/ school co-operation. Parents or other guardians should be provided with information about Finnish schools and the education system, curricula, pupil assessment, teaching methods and the personal study programmes used in instruction preparing for basic education. Families should also be informed of the transition to basic education and further study opportunities available after basic education.

5.2 Pupil welfare services

Pupils participating in instruction preparing for basic education are entitled to receive pupil welfare services. Pupil welfare refers to promotion and maintenance of each pupil's good learning, good psychological and physical health and social well-being as well as activities geared towards improving the prerequisites for these.

During preparatory instruction, special attention should be given to early identification of pupils' support needs and support measures should be initiated as soon as the need for support becomes apparent. In addition, parents should be provided with adequate information about the availability, methods and practices of support measures within the Finnish school, health care and social services systems. Support should be planned in co-operation with the pupil's family and any individuals involved in preparing an integration plan that may be drawn up for the family. Whenever necessary, interpreting services must be arranged.

Each pupil's support needs will be assessed during preparatory instruction in co-operation with the school's pupil welfare staff.

5.3 Guidance counselling

The curriculum determines how guidance counselling is to be implemented in preparatory instruction. Guidance counselling should be carried out in keeping with the objectives set out for guidance and counselling activities in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education.

The purpose of guidance counselling is to develop pupils' learning abilities, support their social growth and prevent learning difficulties. During preparatory instruction, pupils' studies are supported through guidance counselling so as to develop their learning skills and the knowledge and skills that they need to plan their lives.

When planning a pupil's transition to basic education, it is imperative to ensure that information about the pupil's capabilities and progress in preparatory instruction is transferred to the new school. The pupil and his or her parents should be given an opportunity to get to know the new school in good time. Guidance counselling in preparatory instruction must also pay attention to ensuring that each pupil has an understanding of his or her own opportunities in further studies and employment.

6 Pupil assessment

The curriculum determines the assessment of pupils participating in preparatory instruction and the certificate awarded to them. Assessment must be formative, encouraging and diverse. Pupils' capabilities for self-assessment will be developed. Assessment also provides pupils in preparatory instruction with an overview of the requirements of basic education.

Pupils' Finnish or Swedish language skills are assessed on the basis of the language proficiency scale (see Appendix). Grading is not used in instruction preparing for basic education.

Assessment is carried out in co-operation by all teachers involved in teaching a pupil. Assessment is based on continuous and diverse observation and evidence.

7 Certificates

At the end of instruction preparing for basic education, each pupil receives a certificate of participation. The certificate indicates the subjects studied, their scopes and the content of instruction. The certificate describes the pupil's progress during preparatory instruction.

8 Taking studies included in the basic education syllabus during preparatory instruction

Pupils in instruction preparing for basic education may include studies in different subjects according to the basic education syllabus in their personal study programmes. Pupils may receive a certificate for completion of the above-mentioned studies by participating in a separate examination referred to in the Basic Education Act (section 38).

This separate examination determines in different ways whether a pupil's knowledge and skills correspond to the basic education syllabus in the subject concerned. The knowledge and skills of pupils participating in a separate examination are assessed against the objectives of different subjects as determined in the 2004 National Core Curriculum for Basic Education and further specified in the local curriculum. Pupils' level of competence is determined with the aid of the descriptions of good performance and criteria for final assessment included in the 2004 National Core Curriculum for Basic Education. Pupils taking the separate examination may complete an entire subject syllabus or part of one, such as the syllabus for a specific year class.

Provisions on the certificates to be used for separate examinations are included in the 2004 National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, Chapter 8.3 *Certificates and reports*, section *Other certificates*.