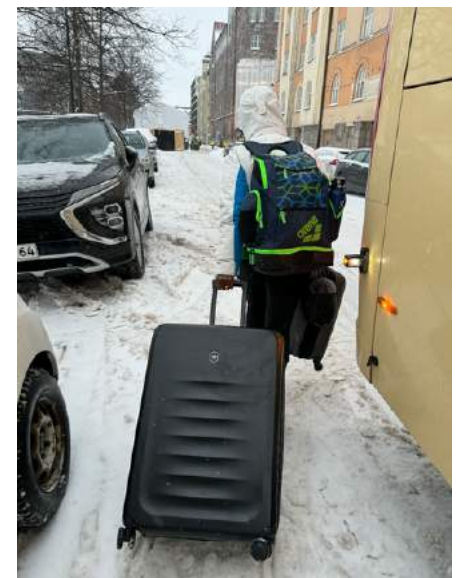




Leaving snowy Lexington to head to snowy Helsinki.

Sunday January 21-Monday, January 22: Travel to Finland

Met our cohort in NYC and prepared to head to Helsinki. Once we arrived in Finland, it was easy to be inspired by the beauty, as well as the sheer amount of snow and ice. Life does not slow down in Finland because of the weather! People are out riding bikes and walking in a snowstorm - just continuing on with daily tasks or just being out in nature.



Monday, January 22 cont.

More pictures from the day's excursions: getting to the hotel, trudging through the snow with suitcases because the piles of snow were too big and the bus couldn't get to the hotel, walking around Hakaniemi, exploring a local grocery store to stock up on snacks, and dinner with our guides from Fulbright Finland, Mirka McIntire, Tarja Mykrä and Heidi Tiainen, as well as Emily Dudley, Deputy Project Director from IREX.



Tuesday, January 23:

First full day of learning after a quick breakfast at the hotel. The food is all wonderful! We've enjoyed the local dish of Finnish Karelian Pie (Karjalanpiirakka) and a varied and nutritious menu. There is also the option to recycle and compost everywhere!



Headed out on a dark(ish) morning and so excited to begin learning about Finnish education. The sun doesn't fully rise until much later than it does in the US. Because of the icy roads and sidewalks, we are all sporting our new ice spikes that our guides provided. Unfortunately, I haven't quite figured out how to keep them from falling off, but they do help!

The first stop was a visit to the Vikki Teacher Training School to learn about Finland's teacher prep programs and processes.

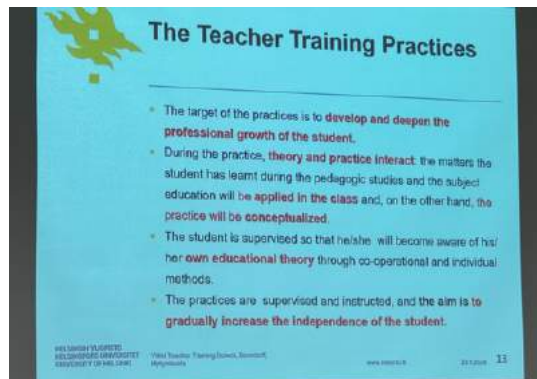
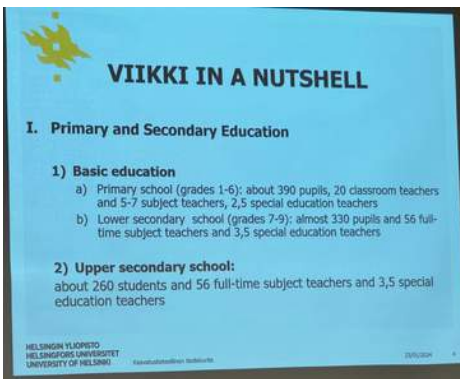


Unpacking all of the snow gear in these lovely coat rooms for teachers.

Tuesday, January 23 cont.



Our hosts, Ilkka Laasonen and Maija Heikkilä, treated us to a thorough presentation of the teacher training programs in Finland, as well as specifics about Vikki. We were then able to tour the school (which has close to 1000 students) to see the program in action.



Student teachers planning lessons

Play outside in all weather, and with the right gear

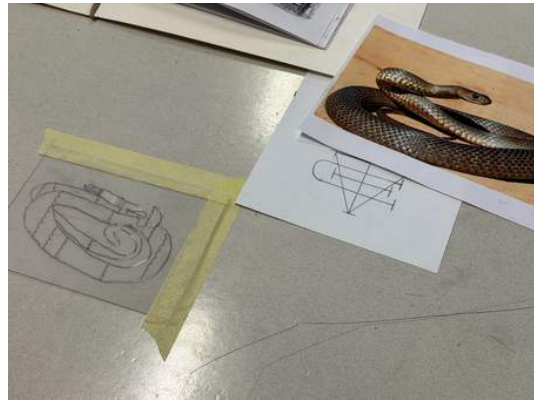


Tuesday, January 23 cont.

Touring classrooms, including an elementary classroom, art, home economics, and fabric crafts rooms.



Compost collection bins at every station!



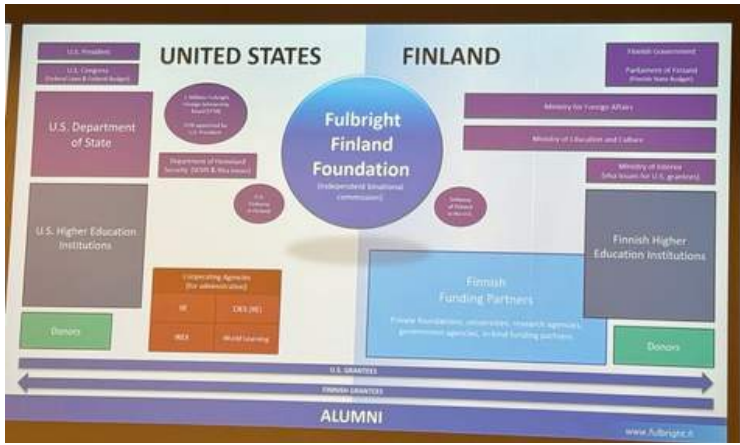
A little snow doesn't stop anyone from riding bikes to school. It may impact the ability to play basketball, though.



Redwood gifts for our host



Visiting the Fulbright Finland offices; we saw the places where the magic of Fulbright Finland is supported and met the excellent representatives who work hard to make these opportunities possible for school leaders. CEO, Terhi Mölsä, gave an inspiring presentation about the partnership between Finland and the United States and the endless possibilities of creating better education spaces for our students.



"The Fulbright Finland Foundation vision is to empower the minds that will find global solutions to tomorrow's challenges by fostering academic and professional expertise and excellence in leadership."

"Fulbright Suomi -säätiön erityisenä tehtävänä on tukea suomalaisten korkeakoulujen kansainvälistymistä ja suomalais-amerikkalaista koulutus- ja tutkimusyhteistyötä."

"Every day now, we are faced with news that show how unpredictable life can be. There are natural disasters that may impact a whole nation. Or inconceivable individual acts that deeply shake the surrounding community.

All of this silences us to consider and emphasize the value of life. And to seek things that make us and those around us feel good. Even quite mundane matters may suffice, such as bearing one's responsibilities, lending a helping hand to someone, or just encountering one's fellow people with respect."

Excerpt from President of the Republic Sauli Niinistö's New Year's Speech on 1 January 2023

Seeking Solutions for Global Challenges

- Shared Environments**
 - Sustainability
 - Climate Change
 - Arctic Cooperation
 - Circular Economy
 - Energy and Resources
- Managing Migration & Humanitarian Crises**
 - Displaced Persons, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers
 - Irregular Migration
 - Economic Migrants
- Emerging Technologies & Hybrid Threats**
 - Artificial Intelligence
 - Cybersecurity
 - Media Literacy, Disinformation, and Societal Resilience
- Governance, Peace & Wellbeing**
 - Equitable Societies
 - Human rights and Inclusive Societies
 - Women in Society
 - Preventing Radicalization
 - Peace Mediation
 - Multilateralism
 - Education and Innovation
 - Global Health



Our cohort together in the Finland Foundation offices

Tuesday, January 23 cont

Next, we navigated this snowy road by bus to get to the Hotel Korpilampi for breakout sessions to learn about specific schools in Finland. Thanks to Fulbright Alumni Anne-Marie Rapo and Marianna Sydänmaanlakka we were able to learn about an international school and an upper secondary school. Our presentation was followed by a dip in the icy pond to test our resilience and flexibility! The sauna was a really nice experience after ice swimming.



Wednesday, January 24:

We headed back out this morning to learn about one of Finland's vocational college, Stadin Ammattiopisto.



At the post-secondary level, students choose between academia or a vocational school where they become skilled in a trade. Thanks to Ami Toikka and Cecilia Therman, we learned about the vocational school model and how it reduces the impact of unemployment in Finland, training and pairing citizens with the appropriate vocational interest.



A Lapland hut on campus where students can work.

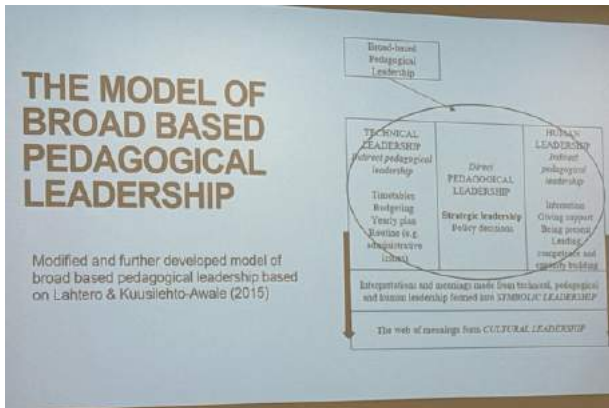


After the school visit, we were treated to a tour of Helsinki.



Wednesday, January 24 cont.

We headed to the University of Helsinki for a presentation and panel discussion about the Finnish education system at the National, Municipal, and school level. Panelists included Teijo Koljonen, Senior Advisor for Education, the Finnish National Agency for Education, Harri Rinta-Aho, Deputy Mayor for Growth and Learning, City of Espoo, and Ilkka Laasonen, Principal, Viikki Teacher Training School at the University of Helsinki. Our cohort members were able to ask questions about student voice, equity and inclusion, recent assessment results, leadership practices, and much more.



We attended a special networking reception at the University of Helsinki hosted by Kaarle Hämeri, Chancellor, University of Helsinki, and member of the Fulbright Finland Foundation Board of Directors.



Brisk walk and dinner with colleagues. What a full day!



Thursday, January 25:

We are all feeling the jet lag this morning.



But we are excited to head out on small group tours of general Upper Secondary Schools in Espoo, in our super fancy taxi.

Our group went to Etelä-Tapiola High School



Offering

- internationally-orientated upper secondary programme
- active citizenship through raising economic and social awareness

General upper secondary education in Finland

- languages, mathematics, humanities and natural sciences as well as art and physical education

Our final examination, the matriculation examination, entitles students to continue their studies at the university level.

Since 2016 the matriculation examination has been digital in all subjects.

Principles for a safer space in Etis

By adhering to the principles for safer spaces, we aim to create a safer and more comfortable atmosphere in our school. These principles apply not only to regular school days but also to school-organised trips and events. You can refer to your class tutor or the school counsellor for example, to ask more about the principles for a safer space, as well as initiate conversation about your personal experiences.

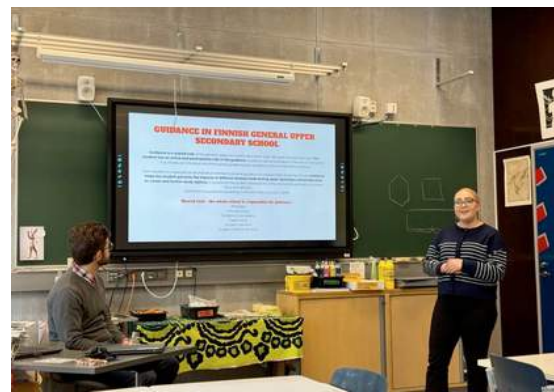
- Equality:** Everyone has a responsibility to treat each other with respect and equality, regardless of their sexuality, gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion, values, socioeconomic status, health or disability.
- Zero Tolerance for Discrimination and Offence:** Discrimination, offences, bullying or harassment are not accepted. Such actions are addressed seriously and appropriately.
- Open Communication:** Encourage open and honest conversations where individuals can convey their thoughts and feelings without fear of rejection or judgement.
- One Space:** Space is scarce that everyone has the opportunity to participate in discussions. Do not override others' opinions, and give others the opportunity to speak. Respect others' privacy and handle sensitive topics respectfully.
- Respect individual autonomy:** Do not take pictures of another person without their permission. Request personal space for yourself when needed.
- Copyright:** Remember to ask for permission if you plan to take pictures of the teaching material made by the teacher (e.g. slide presentations).
- Listening:** Emphasise active listening and try to understand others' opinions.
- Apologise** if you have intentionally or unintentionally hurt others.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Lauseita suomeksi: / Some phrases in Finn

Moi!	Hi!
Tervetuloa!	Welcome!
Mitä kuuluu?	How are you?
Kitos!	Thank you!
Ole hyvä!	You're welcome.
Hauska tutustua.	Nice to meet you.
Mikä sin nimi on? / Mikä sinun nimesi on?	What's your name?
Nähdään pian!	See you soon!
Hyvää päivänjatkoa!	Have a nice day!
Moi moi!	Bye bye!

We were treated to a Finnish language lesson by Etis students.



The daily schedule

klo	MA	TI	KE	TO	PE
1. 8.15 - 9.30	2	7	4	7	1
2. 9.45 - 11.00		5	2	5	4
3. 11.00 - 13.00		4	3	1	6
4. 13.00 - 15.00	6	1	6	2	5
5. 15.00 - 16.00	8	9	8	3	8



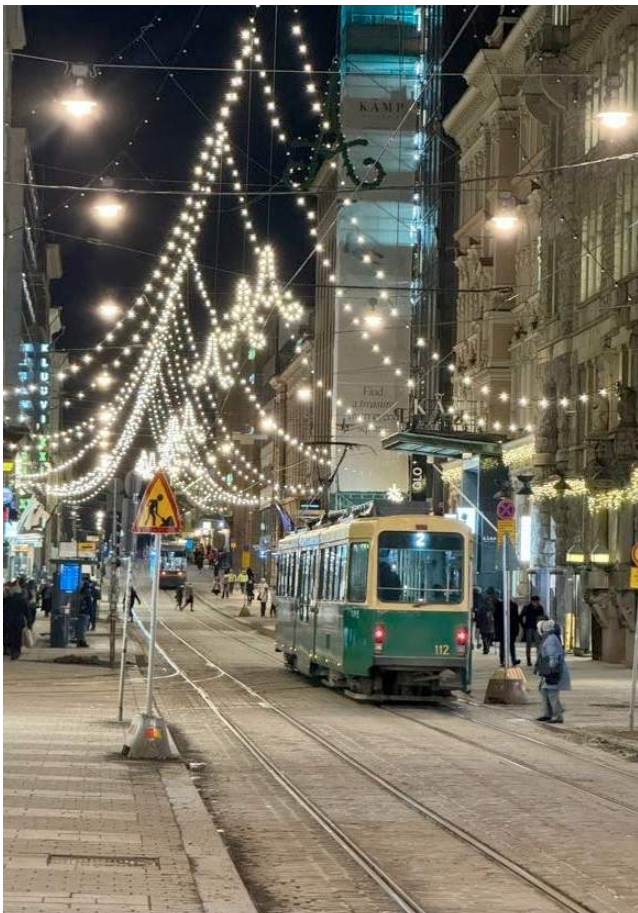
It was nice to be able to discuss current topics in education with local school leaders including our hosts Anni Virnes, Principal and Elina Oja, Vice Principal.

Thursday, January 25 cont.

A visit to the Espoo City Education Services Unit and our facilitated reflection time had us pushing our thinking about school leadership and our key reasons for doing what we each do in our leadership roles. Thank you to our facilitator Tapio Erma for leading such rich discussion, and for the shared ideals among Finnish and American School Leaders.



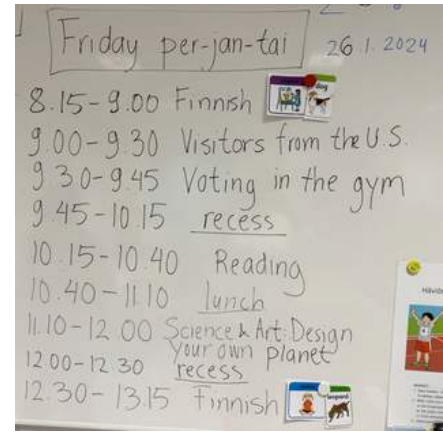
Helsinki at night and a trip to what we all thought was Target. Followed by a delicious dinner with colleagues at Casa Largo in Helsinki.



More school visits!
Our group was able to visit Kuitinmäen Koulu Comprehensive School with our host Anu Aarnio, teacher and Fulbright awardee.



All students were able to participate in a student vote for the Finnish presidential election.



Student playing a Kantele, a traditional Finnish instrument.



After a full day of visiting school children in Helsinki, I was able to Zoom with my Redwood Students!

Friday, January 26 cont.

After the morning school visit, we were able to travel to the countrywide EDUCA Fair at the Helsinki Expo and Convention Center. We heard sessions about rethinking the role of education for the future, AI in education, and holistic climate change education, to name a few. We were inspired by education leaders across the globe and toured many education booths.



We were even able to see the presidential candidates at the Finnish EDUCA Fair.

Saturday, January 27 : Another Full Day at the EDUCA Fair

It was a pleasure watching three members of our cohort speak during the conference.



Special highlights for me were visiting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals booth and the Finnish Forum for Mediation booth that focused on restorative practices in schools.

Networking dinner with our guides and Fulbright Leaders for Global Schools program alumni.



Our wonderful hosts- Mirka, Tarja and Heidi

Sunday, January 28:

One of the best days of the entire trip! A visit to Nuuksio National Park, a nature school concept in practice and a deep dive into sustainability education in Finland.



Private tour of the Haltia Nature Center added fresh insights into the Finnish nature and its natural phenomena.



More evening explorations on our last night in Helsinki!



Monday, January 29: We are off to Turku!

Finally able to catch up on some sleep on the long bus ride to Turku. To say this trip has been fully packed is an understatement!



We went to Turku City Hall to hear about education services in the city of Turku from our host, Helena Mikkola, Manager of International Affairs for the city of Turku.



Finnish early childhood education in brief

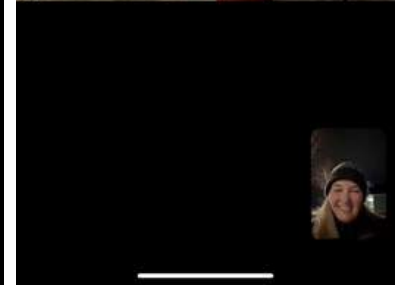
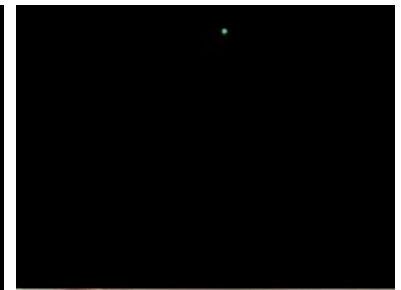
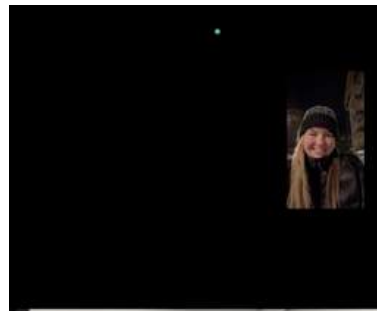
- a special characteristic of the Finnish early childhood education is the so-called *educare*, where day care includes care and education
- group sizes of child day care have not been set, but the number of children is in proportion to the number of staff (7 children over 3 years/adult, 4 children under 3 years/adult)
- a family childminder may care for up to four children
- qualification requirement for a kindergarten teacher: Bachelor of Education (kindergarten teacher) or a Polytechnic Bachelor's Degree in Social and Health Care

Finnish basic education in Turku



Monday, January 29 cont.

After we learned about education in the city in Turku we had dinner at Restaurant Blanko.

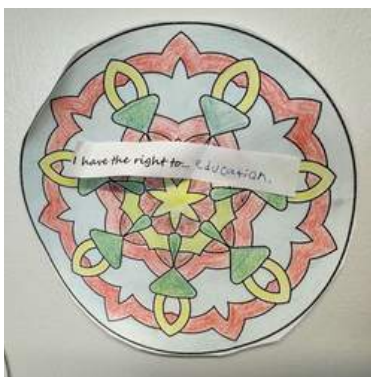
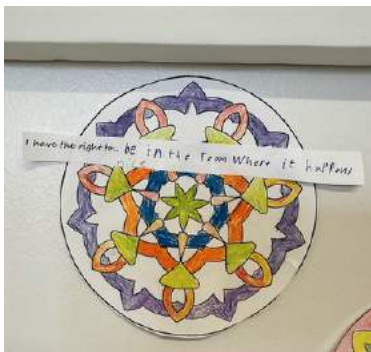


Staying up to date with everything going on at Redwood while I was gone!



Tuesday, January 30

Heading to Nummenpakka School, Aurajoki Unit, to spend the morning with our host, Jukka Laine, Principal, to exchange good practices, discuss challenges, and explore current themes in school leadership.



Tuesday, January 30 cont.

Next, we headed to the University of Turku to spend time reflecting on current educational leadership practices and themes in Finland and the US. Discussion leaders included Vesa Valkila, Administrative Principal of the Teacher Training School, Faculty of Education, University of Turku and Anu Warinowski, Head of Faculty Department, Faculty of Education, University of Turku.



Leadership team in Turku Teacher Training School

*** Shared leadership**

- 600 students
- 300 students
- 250 students

	Administrative principal	Vesa Valkila vesa.valkila@utu.fi
	Principal of basic education (grades 1-9)	Satu Kekki satu.kekki@utu.fi
	Principal of upper secondary school	Katrina Vartiainen katrina.vartiainen@utu.fi
	Principal of Turku International school	Mirjam Raunio mirjam.raunio@utu.fi

About new school leadership culture

- The idea is to promote individual and organizational learning: to facilitate teacher's learning, professional development.
- An open learning community in which problem-solving skills, teamwork, creativity, reorganizing, rethinking and open dialog is motivating daily activities.
- Leadership is about building trust and commitment among teachers and other staff.
- We talk about capacity building, empowered educational staff.

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

Shared leadership and sustainable school culture

- Principal is not the only leader in the school.
- Leadership is shared to vice principals, to working groups, to "year level" teams, to coordinators. It is based partly on direct delegation, but it should be based also on open dialog, constructive interaction.
- Empowered teachers feel that their opinion has been heard, they can participate, contribute to the development of the school.
- This will motivate teachers' commitment to develop the school, to collaborate with colleagues and learn from each other.

→ More sustainable organisation culture where everyone's wellbeing is on a new level.

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

Participated in a reflection on the impact of the Fulbright Leaders for Global Schools Travel Grant Program experience led by Tuija Niemi, Vice Principal/Basic Education; Turku Teacher Training School and Turku International School; 2023 Fulbright Leaders for Global Schools Travel Grantee.



Fulbright Leaders for Global Schools Award Ceremony



Wednesday January 31: Turku Castle

Today, we toured Turku Castle, learning about the history of the Castle, including everyday life, celebrations, war, and love within the Castle walls.



Exploring the city of Turku and Farewell Dinner



We finally made it to McDonalds to try the McVegan!



Thursday February 1: Travel Back to the US

Traveling home with the addition of our overnight adventure on the Viking Grace. Although we had this additional leg to our journey in order to be able to fly home, we were so thankful to everyone at Fulbright and IREX for working hard to make sure we got back!



Friday February 2: And I'm Back!

It was so good to see my Redwood kiddos again!



Upon receiving the Fulbright for Global Leaders Award, my goal was to broaden my understanding of global issues facing education today and how global communication and partnerships can increase our capacity for addressing them. I also hoped to learn strategies to meet the diverse needs of my students to help them become capable and compassionate citizens and take action for positive change. The ten days of the program included some of the best professional learning experiences I have had as an educator or school leader, and I left with a heightened understanding of the ways in which global literacy and communication can positively impact my own practices, as well as education in the United States and abroad.

Before leaving for the trip, I was tasked with narrowing my focus and developing a guiding question for my own research. This was a complex process as I wanted to learn many things and had many inquiries about the Finnish education system. Ultimately, I chose to focus on student voice as that is a passion of mine. I believe that democracy in education and allowing students to have a voice in their educational journey are keys to impacting change in the education system in the United States. My specific guiding question was, "In what ways do Finnish schools incorporate student voice in key decision-making processes?"

I learned about multi-grade events to start the school year with a sense of community and other opportunities for students to be leaders and have a voice in their education. These included student-led assemblies, student council meetings, and students attending key decision-making meetings. I was fascinated to learn that there are local youth councils in each city, with members voted in by students in the community, and that the youth council attends city council meetings to help make education decisions.

When considering my guiding question at the end of the program, my assumption that we are doing pretty well in our own democratic school was confirmed, and I was able to share a lot of what we do at Redwood with school leaders in Finland. However, I gained several new ideas that I would be happy to implement at Redwood in the future. When discussing autonomy and student voice with students in Finland, I heard things like "You shape your future based on your own choices," and "When students have more freedom, they want to learn more." It is critical to make educational decisions with students, rather than for them, and I gained a lot more insight into this during my school visits.

I was further inspired by a Finnish school leader's message that was delivered to us during one of our facilitated discussions of school leadership: "When you get home, you will begin creating the future for your children. And not only for them, but their children. It's not only about the changes we will make right now. It's the changes you will make in the mindset of the people you work with and serve."

The entire Fulbright Leaders for Global School program and our interactions with the Finnish education system and the leaders who shape the future for their students, and the students to come, was an incredibly inspiring and motivating experience for me as a school leader. I left the country full of ideas to bring back to my own community and a network of people to collaborate with in our shared efforts to improve school systems for children.



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"There is a multiplier effect in international education and it carries the possibility - the only real possibility - of changing our manner of thinking about the world, and therefore of changing the world."

Senator J. William Fulbright