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ENG# 100

Formal Assignment# 2: Research Paper

Should American Education System Follow Finland's Educational System?

In the documentary 'Where to Invade Next', Michael Moore, visited the Western countries to take the things the Americans need from them and bring them to United States of America and convince fellow Americans. Among the facts he mentioned, the kids from Finland are ahead the rest of the world, including United States of America due to their shortest school day and no standardized tests. (Moore) Thus, America should adopt the things it need from Finland's educational system in order to become a better country? Then, the questions come to our mind, 'What make Finland to become top and what should America take?'. There are two factors that make Finland's education outstand and America should follow: recess time, which children can play instead of studying and no mandated testing system that students don't spend more time being tested, but they can focus on learning.

American Academy of Pediatrics' Council on School declared in a 2013 statement that recess serves as a necessary break from the rigors of concentrated, academic challenges in the classroom. But equally important is the fact that safe and well-supervised recess offers cognitive, social, emotional, and physical benefits that may not be fully appreciated when a decision is made to diminish it. The American Academy of Pediatrics believes that recess is a crucial and necessary component of a child's development and, as such, it should not be withheld for punitive or academic reasons (Pediatrics). However, according to a 2007 survey by the Center on Education Policy, when "No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law started using in 2001, 44 percent of

school districts added time for English/ language arts and math and reduced time from other subjects and recess. While 20percent of districts had cut recess time and 9 percent of physical education, social studies and science was reduced time in 36 percent and 28 percent of districts respectively. Due to shortened recess time, the average daily loss was 8 minutes per day. Despite this cut, the average NCLB recess time still falls within the national average 24-30 minutes per day for all elementary school. (Recess Reduced, Outsourced • MRSA Update • Wellness by State • Department Editor Sought • Exercise Energizes). The average total school hour a day is 7 hours in America. Meanwhile in Finland, the recess time is an hour a day and the total school hour including recess is only 4 and half hour. Global rankings of Finnish in Reading, Math, Science are 5, 12, and 6 respectively while America get global rankings of 21, 31, and 24. (The Liink Project) This is because kids from Finland get more hours to play during recess and after school. By playing, children can learn social skills that testing can't give. For example, if a child stacks the measuring cups by putting small cups into the larger one, it will help him learn to identify small, medium and large sizes. He will be exercising his brain power that having fun at the same time. "One of the great hidden secrets of play is that it turns on genes in the brain. It fosters the maturation of the various centers of the brain that allow us to exert control over attention and to regulate our emotions and to control our behavior.", said Hara Estroff Marano, editor at large of Psychology Today. (Chmelynski).

According to 'No Child Left Behind' (NCLB), there are mandated annual testing in reading and math and science in grades 3 to 8 and 10. (Bourque).NCLB also required that 100% of proficient students on reading and math tests by 2014, which is impossible for many testing opponents. (Hess) Due to the 100% proficiency test, 'Low-performing students are encouraged to stay home on test days or counseled to quit or be suspended before tests are administered.

State education boards are lowering the bar: manipulating exam content or scoring so that tests are easier for students to pass.’, said Amrein Beardsley Audrey. (Amrein). Then, the student may think that their goal is to get ‘A’ on the standardized tests. This may block the curiosity of a child. Moreover, the student will get stressed when they worry about their grade on the test, which interfere the process of brain development and learning. For young children, the effect of stress will get worse as cortisol (a stress hormone that is released to help our bodies deal with threats) is produced during stress response (the heightened state of arousal that our body goes through when it perceives a threat). It can damage the developing brain and negatively affect the immune system. (Better Brains for Babies). It is doubtful if students need a lot of tests to improve their knowledge. On the other hand, in Finland, there are no national tests for students. Instead, teachers are responsible for the assessment in their respective subjects based on the objectives written into the curriculum. Also, the grades in the basic education certificate, the final certificate given at the end of year 9, are given by teachers. The first national examination is the matriculation examination after general upper education, which comprises four compulsory tests: mother tongue and, according to each candidate’s choice, three of the following: the second national language, a foreign language, mathematics or one subject in general studies, such as humanities and natural sciences. Optional test can include by student’s choice. (Finish National Agency for Education). The purpose of the assessment in Finland is to improve learning; it is “encouraging and supportive by nature” (“Encouraging Assessment and Evaluation). Even though Finish student do not have much experience in tests, the survey that compares 15-year-olds in different countries in reading, math and science, PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) showed that Finnish student has ranked at or near the top since 2000. Throughout the same period, the PISA performance of the United States has been middling, at best. (National

Center for Education Statistics). Finland encourages self-learning and student growth. Since students doesn't have to take many tests, they can focus on learning other than preparing for the tests.

To sum up, America, one of the top countries among the world, is respected in many fields like technology, army, but not in education. However, it will be perfect if America adopt the Finland's educational system as it has what America need. Indeed, recess time and standardized tests of America keep dragging the students down from the success. Thus, it is never too late to rethink about 'No Child Left Behind' policy and change what is wrong. I believe the reason why American students left behind from Finnish is not because of the students but because of the American education, which limits the student dreams.

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