

Finland's world-leading school system examined in free film

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TVN Staff

Why does Finland have the most successful school system in the world?

Find out during a free movie at Pierre's Playhouse in Victor next week.

"The Finland Phenomenon: Inside the World's Most Surprising School System" will be playing at 7 p.m. Feb. 19 and 20 at Pierre's Playhouse in Victor.

Documentary filmmaker Robert Compton, along with Harvard education researcher Tony Wagner, "guide the viewer through an inside look at the world's finest primary/secondary education system...using observations in the classrooms and interviews with students, teachers, parents, administrators and government officials," said a release from Teton Valley Community School, which is sponsoring the program.

"In Finland, schools are hubs for innovation," said Cindy Riegel, administrative director of TVCS, in an email interview.

"Creative problem solving and high-level thinking are encouraged throughout a child's formal education, which doesn't officially start until age 7," she said.

Children do meaningful and creative work in school, and homework and testing are rare in Finland, even in high school, said Riegel.

"Teachers are trained, mentored and revered like doctors are in the U.S.," she said. "But the big-picture take-away for me was that when students are given ownership of the

learning process, they are happier and more successful in school and in life."

How can the best of that be applied in the Teton Valley?

Provide many paths for students to follow their interests and passions, Riegel said.

"This involves community members going into classrooms to help teach," she said, "as well as classes and students going out into the community to learn. Students need as much exposure and involvement with the real world as possible. We also need to support our teachers and give them the freedom to experiment with new ideas and approaches to teaching."

According to Riegel, the Finland approach values imagination and creativity over cramming and testing.

"There is a fear-based educational frenzy in this country that labels schools and teachers 'failures' if they do not cover a ridiculous amount of material and ensure that the students pass the associated test," she said.

Some methods used in Finland can be applied here at no cost, she said, such as treating teachers and their profession with the utmost appreciation and respect. Collaboration between schools and teachers is also important.

"TVCS uses Project Based Learning to help engage students in their studies and connect them to the world around them," said Riegel. "Our teachers have begun to share



Riegel

this approach with other local teachers. It's a great way to get content covered, get students invested, and foster important 21st Century skills – collaboration, communication and critical thinking.

TVCS sponsored free showings of the educational documentary "Race to Nowhere" last year in the valley.

"Education is a hot topic for documentary filmmakers these days, and we want to make sure these films get to Teton Valley," said Riegel. "Free showings help spark conversations about what works in education. Most children spend half of their childhood in school. It is the entire community's responsibility to ensure that this experience is as inspiring and meaningful as possible for each and every student."

TVN en Español

¿Por qué Finlandia tiene el sistema educativo más exitoso en el mundo?

Averigüe durante una película gratis en el Pierre's Playhouse en Victor la próxima semana. "El Fenómeno Finlandia: Dentro del Sistema Escolar Más Sorprendente del Mundo" se mostrará a las 7 pm el 19 y 20 de febrero.

"La solución creativa de problemas y pensamiento de alto nivel se promueve en la educación formal de los niños, que no comienza oficialmente hasta los 7 años," dijo Cindy Riegel of the Teton Valley Community School.

Los niños hacen un trabajo significativo y creativo en la escuela y las tareas y pruebas son poco frecuentes en Finlandia, incluso en la secundaria, dijo Riegel el director administrativo de TVCS.



Courtesy image

"The Finland Phenomenon: Inside the World's Most Surprising School System" will be playing at 7 p.m. Feb. 19 and 20 at Pierre's Playhouse in Victor.

"Exhibiciones libres ayudan a despertar conversaciones acerca de lo que funciona en la educación. La mayoría de los niños pasan la mitad de su niñez en la escuela. Es responsabilidad de toda la comunidad para que esta experiencia sea tan inspiradora y significativa como sea posible para cada estudiante."

Por: Luis F. Ortiz.