

38 stories about remote learning

Helsinki





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38 stories about remote learning

Due to the coronavirus epidemic, the education sector switched almost entirely to remote learning for 38 working days in spring 2020. Workers in the sector developed new, creative ways of learning during this period. We collected 38 stories from the Helsinki area, one for each day of remote learning.

Our thanks for this go out to the learners, guardians and all employees in the city's education sector!



1

Kati Immeli-Vänskä

Teacher, Pitäjänmäki Comprehensive School

Due to the coronavirus, we cannot invite guests to our home or attend the end-of-term spring celebration. Everyday life can feel hard at times. As an assignment on the home economics course on parties and celebration, students were asked to brighten up their families' and friends' everyday life: nothing large-scale, just cheering up the family members, or a friend, relative, or other acquaintance.

The students planned a small everyday act that might cheer someone up. The assignment was as follows: 'This could mean making a surprise breakfast or dinner for family members, coming up with a game session, cleaning the house, or helping smaller brothers and sisters with their homework over a snack. Or you could call a friend to tell them how important they are, play them a song that means a lot to you two, or go grocery shopping for an elderly neighbour. Why not add a festive touch: set the table beautifully, say something nice to someone you care about, or pamper them? I'm sure this will make you feel better as well!' The students engaged enthusiastically with this task, arranging home movie nights, making breakfast, cleaning, cheering up parents returning from work, preparing lunch, or delighting the whole family with freshly squeezed juice.

2

Outi Rättö

Teacher, Malmi Comprehensive School

As a music teacher, I was frantically wondering how to get students to play music, when live music was impossible due to the connection delays and poor quality of video in meetings. I gave my students creative assignments, instructing them to perform any music-related activity: playing, singing, dancing, composing on various apps, inventing their own instruments, or whatever. I received amazing videos, from which I created a fun video compilation on YouTube.

We are also making a joint music video, featuring all of my students and even some teachers, which will be combined into a single film — I hope that we succeed in this!





3

Father of a stepfamily Roihuvuori

Last week, I asked both lads about which element of remote learning they like better than normal school. They gave a similar answer. Both said – in different words – that it's great to have a say, YOURSELF, in how things are done. E.g., 'because it's such a great morning, I'm having my gym class now and go scootering, and then do my French assignments and maths.' In other words, even these small kids appreciate a certain amount of freedom as long as it's within limits – in this case, between 9am and 3pm, because we usually take it easy afterwards.

4

Jukka-Pekka Anttinen

Teacher, Käpylä Comprehensive School

Remote learning gems Vol 1: Having returned to school for the first time, a third-grade student heard my personal phone ringing. The ringtone happened to be by the student's favourite artist. The student shyly asked whether I could tell how to set the ringtone on the student's phone. I promised that if we work hard, the last assignment of the day would be learning how to set a song by a favourite artist as a ringtone. You should have seen the joy at the end of the day, when the work was done and a song had been set on the student's phone. When the new ringtone was played, a smile appeared that was wider than the Cheshire Cat's!

#oppiminen #ilo #into #tutkivaoppiminen





5

Peppi Tervo-Hiltula

Teacher

Helsinki Vocational College and Adult Institute

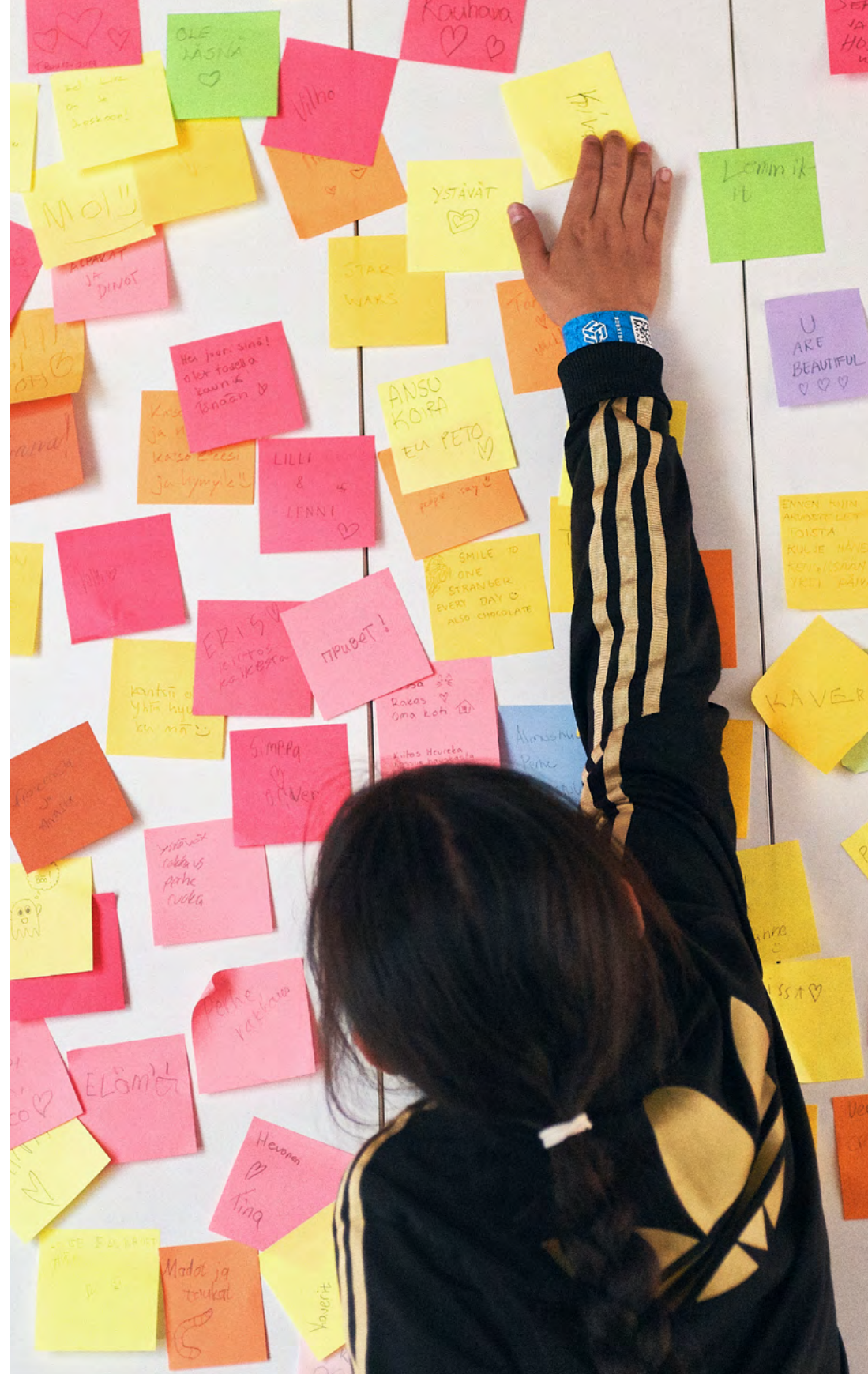
One of the best ways to reach students has been by asking them which channel they would like to use. As a result, I've moved some of my teaching to channels chosen by the students. In addition, night owls have found schoolwork easier when lessons only begin at ten in the morning. Empathy, and asking how the students are doing are key. This ensures that they are open about problems and difficulties, and proactively seek help.

6

Ville Leppänen
Teacher, Vallila Primary School

When remote learning began, we fifth-grade teachers made a very quick decision: to expand and deepen the co-teaching approach taken throughout the academic year. Co-teaching has enabled us to divide our tasks into responsibility areas that are based on each teacher's personal strengths. This way we've also been able to take care of our own wellbeing. The quickly built website by the joint five-graders gave the students and guardians an easy access to the day's teaching and assignments.

In addition to us class teachers, other teachers instructing the fifth grade have been indispensable to the success of remote learning. The best example of collaboration between fifth-grade classes involved the joint participation of all 62 students in a virtual guest visit by writer Paula Noronen. Questions presented via chat and video, and Paula's amazing performance delighted everyone and inspired the students to delve further into the world of reading and writing.



bus-sá
stuol-lu
Áp-pes
ris-sit

ap-pe
gus-s
ris-s
gu-so

S s



7

Jussi Jokelainen
Guardian, Helsinki

I am pleased to see that the teachers have understood what is essential: learning new things. Some of the fantastic assignments given (which I appreciate) included beating carpets, sewing on buttons, separating egg whites from yolks, spring maintenance of bicycles, writing a letter, and building a hut or finding one in nature. I doubt that any of these important issues would have been taught without the coronavirus. Personally speaking, I've taken a common-sense approach and sometimes told the boys that 'to be honest, the key issue about ancient column styles (Ionian, Corinthian,...) is that they are probably taught in almost all education systems, but no one will ever be asked about them.'

In other words, perhaps we've been studying slightly more important things (resuscitation, how pasta machines work, what poop is, and how a child is born...) than certain core subjects on the curriculum.

8

Jari Ahvenus

Teacher, Vesala Comprehensive School

For three years now, I and class teacher Panu Keskinen have been working as the co-teachers of a class of 43 students, using digital learning environments from the start. Laptops and Google Classroom have worked well as tools for phenomenon and game-based teaching, where students have completed assignments with the help of roleplay and teamwork.

Moving to remote learning was not a big step for our class. Over the years, the students had already become familiar with most of the applications and working methods used. Panu's wide experience in both teaching and the related digital tools enabled us to create a versatile virtual school built around Classroom. Students have been attending the virtual school almost normally for several weeks.

A typical school day begins by getting together via Google Meet. We first go through the daily routines and then move on to teaching and learning something new, for

example, in mathematics. The students move on to digital or book-based assignments and can ask help from either class teachers or the special teachers present, who cover the multidisciplinary of subjects. Either teachers or students can share their videoconferencing view, in which case the discussion closely resembles a face-to-face teaching situation.

Then we might have a Kahoot or Seppo assignment, watching a nature documentary, taking an exercise break, doing a video-guided sports task, or walking in the woods taking photos. Language teachers give their own assignments and participate in video calls on the agreed dates.

If we return to school this spring, we will not be concerned if some parents want their children to stay at home. We'll continue teaching via Classroom. Some of our children still attend school, and are reachable through face-to-face as well as remote teaching methods.

9

Oscar Escartin & Aleksi Carlson **Student, Arabia Comprehensive School 9C**

On 16 March, when the closure of schools was announced, we came up with an effective solution for all students at the Arabia Comprehensive School. Among a group of friends, we had the idea of creating the class's own Discord server, which was soon extended to all 9th graders. We told the teachers about the server, and they got excited by the idea. Our school's 8th and 7th graders soon had their own servers.

At the Arabia Comprehensive School, the focus is on design education and student involvement in teaching. Teaching could be moved to Discord, because students at the school can borrow laptops for assignments. The introduction of Discord required seamless collaboration between students familiar with the app and teachers who were new to it. Our cooperation worked like a well-oiled machine.

Every secondary school student in Arabia has a laptop borrowed from the school. The initial concept involved moving to remote learning, with assignments appearing on Google Classroom at the beginning of each lesson and returned when the lesson ended. The Discord

servers have provided huge support for teaching, since teachers can help students via Discord's text and speech channels during lessons. Discussions are more relaxed because the environment feels less formal than Google Classroom. In addition, teachers can stream learning materials from their computer screen to students, and students can give presentations to the rest of the class.

Almost all connection and audio problems were solved very quickly thanks to our Discord 'monsters' (i.e., students who are highly familiar with Discord). A shared text and speech channel has been created for some of the students and teachers developing the server, for discussions on improving the server's features or asking about server-related issues, etc. Being able to hold lessons via Discord has been an absolute boon, because one or several teachers can help students with any problems in a matter of seconds.

It's been great to see how readily people have accepted and adjusted to the platform, and how well Arabia's Discord server supports teaching and learning.

10

Marita Vainio **Teacher, Käpylä Comprehensive School**

The switch to remote teaching came at such short notice that it was impossible to prepare for it. Luckily, we had made extensive use of computers. Two digital badges had been required of all teachers and the school received a large batch of additional computers in January. From the fifth grade onwards, all students had their own computer and some families without a computer could borrow one. I thought it was best to start the remote learning from topics which the students were familiar with. This would ensure that everyone kept up. I had never been a member of the class's WhatsApp group or used it as a teaching tool, but I knew it existed. I asked the students to invite me to the group. I didn't even know its name. It was Viis – aat. The class's ID is 5A. This would be the 'umbilical cord' linking me to the class.

I gave some thought to principles. I wanted the remote school to share as many features with normal school as possible, and pointed this out to the parents at the outset. School days start at 9am, and I set the day's instructions to appear to the students in Wilma at 8.30am each morning. The children, waiting at the other end of the WA umbilical cord, wished everyone 'good morning' as they do at school.

At first, the students sent me many completed tasks through WA, i.e., took a picture and sent me a private message. I tried to give different and varied assignments to keep them motivated. In addition, I immediately gave each student as positive feedback as possible. The idea behind positivity was to keep everyone engaged and make them feel that they could succeed by themselves. Examples

of feedback on assignments included: 'These figures are so neat that they are a pleasure to look at. But how about using a ruler for the margins?' In some cases, the result was neater written work than in normal school.

I also gave instant feedback to everybody immediately after the school day. Students receive a yellow mark for a lesson if the day's assignment is completed. A grey 'homework not done' mark was used to notify students and their parents of missed tasks. In some cases, the assignment had simply been forgotten. A yellow page brightened up my day and 'good' marks told the parents that the day's tasks had been done. There was no need to return to them in the evening.

I've never been the kind of teacher who thinks that children learn when the teacher 'teaches'. 'Learning by doing' is much closer to my heart. Many teachers based remote learning on Meet and Teams meetings, and I admit to feeling that I should do likewise... But after mulling it over, it didn't feel right.

The students had already become familiar with the ItsLearning platform during a trial period. The Ville platform was also familiar, as we have been using it since the third grade. Kahoot was the students' favourite at school: the Kahoot challenge feature genuinely motivated them to learn. We also learned to use the Seppo platform for playing during remote school. Everything could be linked to the electronic platform, or easily instructed.

As time went by, the students needed fewer instructions. I learned how to build an entire lesson on an electronic platform. I created short videos and various assignments and linked sites and videos in addition to using existing ones. We have managed to do everything we planned. The internet is bursting with ideas, and electronic assignments can be created from the students' material. Within our WA group, the students introduced an additional method which they had chosen as the third period goal. When finishing remote learning for the day, they signed out of the group with the following message: 'Thank you for the day!' That feels incredibly good.

Päivi Hytönen

Teacher

Adult Education Centre of the City of Helsinki

Creative writing teachers at the Adult Education Centre began remote teaching as soon as the state of emergency began, when Mayor Jan Vapaavuori announced the suspension of classroom teaching on 13 March 2020. My 'consultant teacher' phone and email began pinging on Saturday 14 March, as teachers signalled their intention to teach remotely, despite the lack of information on how long and under what conditions working would continue.

The teachers used a range of electronic tools to continue teaching: if an email group, Padlet or Google application had been used for a creative writing course, this was continued as if the state of emergency had never begun. The teachers agreed that it was important that the students received continuous feedback on their work, and were able to continue writing uninterrupted. They also emphasised how important maintaining routines and hobbies was to mental health. In addition, the emergency situation provoked so many thoughts among our adult students, that we decided to deal with the topic in the remote writing courses. All courses in creative and biographical writing were completed through remote learning.

We were also able to teach the courses, which were already planned for April-May, by video on a range of platforms, after adapting to the new situation and gaining experience of various electronic video features. Solutions of all kinds were created by combining different tools: texts and written comments, and peer feedback are distributed via Padlet; discussions are held on Teams or Zoom; and teachers create their own video tutorials for various writing assignments.

The emergency situation unleashed the creativity of the creative writing teachers, and spurred dedicated efforts to promote the use of creative writing tools. As a teacher of creative writing, I found the situation interesting and supportive of my own teaching. I had a rare opportunity to share teaching experiences with other teachers from my own and other fields. Teachers usually act in their own, solitary spaces, but we are now sharing best practices and teaching experiences with each other. After all, no single individual could have adapted so quickly from face-to-face to remote interaction, and build physically distant but socially close interaction within the groups of adult students.

Eve Mäkelä

Teacher, Arabia Comprehensive School

On Wednesday 18 March, the Arabia Comprehensive School, like all other Finnish schools, faced a completely new kind of challenge: how to teach when the school is closed. Before the coronavirus epidemic, no one had imagined that such a situation could even be possible. We accepted the challenge with a surprised but confident mindset. We'll get through this – physically separated, but together nevertheless!

The switch to remote schooling has meant learning a vast amount of new things. Fortunately, our secondary school students have had their own laptops for several years, so many were already used to working in e-learning environments. We've also quickly taken to new electronic platforms, such as Teams, Google Meet, and Discord. We aim to make teaching interactive despite the social distancing. Remote learning has required patience and, of course, a sense of humour, as well as perseverance and creativity.

I teach Finnish in secondary school, and planning and holding remote lessons has been an interesting experience. But I can't say that I don't miss regular school. I miss seeing my students and colleagues, ready-made coffee in the teacher's room, working in a standing position, and seeing how students react to my bad jokes. I also find myself longing for the sounds of school, such as chatter, laughter, screams and even the bell signalling breaks.

Fortunately, remote learning also enables amazing new things. We may not be able to travel far at the moment, but I would bet that our digital skills are soaring skywards. Perhaps we will also better appreciate many of the things we have taken for granted, such as seeing each other without pixels, and freely moving from one place to another during the day. Perhaps, after this, we will no longer want to immerse ourselves in our electronic devices when we can be physically present for each other.

13

Teacher

Ressu Upper Secondary School

The move to remote learning was not difficult for me, as I have been digitalising my teaching material for some years now, which I'm extremely thankful for, given the pressure and stress of the new situation. Feedback shows that my students have particularly appreciated the fact that I use Quizizz or Socrative to test newly taught topics such as grammar. I receive instant feedback on whether the students have understood what I've taught them, and they can immediately see the topics they may not have grasped. I also create listening exercises on Forms. Assignments that occasionally come up in matriculation examinations, in which the student listens to a song and completes the missing words, have been easy to practice in Forms. This has also acquainted the students with Swedish music.

In particular, I noted that the students really threw themselves into the video assignment. Students have traditionally studied a Swedish novel for the sixth A-Swedish* course. This year, however, they prepared a 35-minute video introduction on the book. Many had added attractive background music and worked through several takes before being satisfied with their work. I will continue with this type of assignment next year, because it makes the students consider not only what they say, but also how they say it and present it to others. The quietest students did particularly well. They felt that they could perform in peace, without feeling nervous, and demonstrate their true potential.

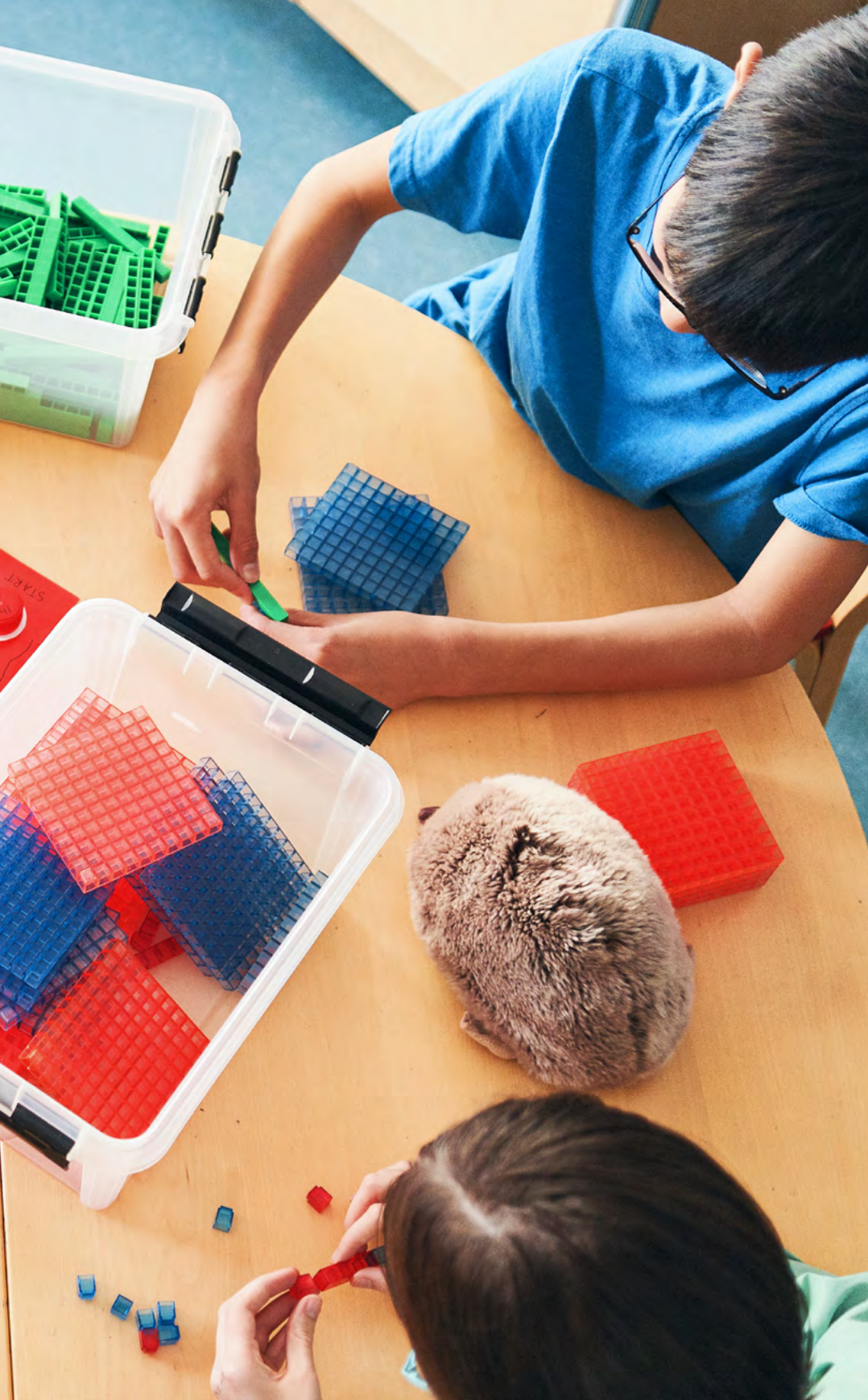
**A-Swedish involves studying Swedish as the first foreign language, which students begin in the first grade of comprehensive school.*

14

Teemu Einola **Teacher, Pakila Primary School**

Tools and factors that supported teaching and cooperation under normal circumstances, have also served us well in the current situation: caring for students and colleagues, helping others, asking for help, good IT solutions, curiosity, interaction, humour, proactiveness, working hard, and compassion and flexibility. Another wonderful aspect has been the sense of community I have experienced with students, their guardians, colleagues, and the city as a whole. Everyone has wanted and aimed not only to get through this, but to do it well!





15

Mother Kontula

I have been positively surprised by how quickly my sixth-grader son's teacher adapted to the new teaching tools, i.e., teaching opportunities available online. A wonderful practice was established very quickly, whereby the class had an 'own class Meet' via the internet every morning. During this session, the teacher explained what was supposed to be accomplished during the day and why. Of course, assignments were also given via Wilma and the class's virtual noticeboard.

The class also showcases their so-called 'masterpiece' web presentations together. Everyone can then give feedback on the masterpieces and presentations. A 'masterpiece' is a presentation on a relatively broad topic chosen by the student. Someone discussed their pet rabbit, another the WTC attacks, and another their Lego hobby. This thing really works. They've also had private video calls, where a student and the teacher go through topics and things together. Both of my children borrowed laptops from school, which they are now adept at using. The boys are between 9 and 12 years old, and neither had used a computer at home before.

16

Hanna Lehtimäki
Anna Vuorjoki
Kallio Primary School

The school psychologist and school social worker held a remote parents' meeting on Teams on 'Parenting during the coronavirus crisis'. They gave brief presentations on the corona epidemic as a psychological crisis, arranging everyday life at home, supporting children's social relations, children's feelings, and family relationships. Parents were allowed to participate in the conversation at all times through a chat function, and were given the chance to speak. More than 40 parents attended the meeting. The parents were able to exchange experiences and ideas about challenges and successes during the coronavirus epidemic, and could ask student welfare experts questions.





17

Antto Wirman

Teacher, Puistopolku Comprehensive School

Our 6th-grade class has succeeded extremely well in project-based learning for our Maailma (World) project. During the project, students learned how to use Minecraft EE, Google Sites, and Whatsapp WEB, how to hold their own Meets, and about many other digital platforms and tools. We have become skilled at sending pictures, text, and messages.

18

Laura Paloheimo

Teacher

Adult Education Centre of the City of Helsinki

‘This panic is our finest hour’. This is how a writer colleague recently described the challenges we have faced where, as a ‘yep, a flipchart and marker pen is all I need’ course instructor, I’ve had to solve some new problems. My Adult Education Centre courses moved online due to the emergency measures. I was devastated by having to give up on my original workshop approach. How could I convey even a sprinkling of positive and carefree attitude via Padlet, the elixir necessary to making writing flow? I prepared short videos of my course introductions and began gathering material of all sorts on Padlet: the more I ‘cut and pasted’, the more excited I became. Anything is possible in an online environment! I created a ‘Writers’ room’ on the course’s Padlet. It’s a place where writers can publish their texts and give and receive feedback. It is also a place where students can meet classmates over the summer. As material for summer exercises, I immediately posted a book tip, about an interesting guide to writing, on the ‘Writers’ room’ noticeboard, and received several ideas on creating new and inspiring Padlet environments. The emergency situation gave me a reason to study new things, and attend training and courses.



19

Satu Airomies (previously Vahtera) **Teacher, Vuosaari Upper Secondary School**

Teaching upper-secondary mathematics remotely is challenging, and arranging home examinations as a reliable assessment measure is almost impossible. I've taught an advanced level maths course via Google Classroom. The students familiarise themselves with the new topic (a section of the book) in advance and complete, with the aid of an example, an easy assignment from the book before the lesson. This gives the teacher an idea of how well they have absorbed the day's topic, i.e., at what level the issue should be dealt with. The lesson is held on Google Meet, with the teacher sharing the screen and explaining the topic. The students then spend the rest of the lesson working on topic assignments and can ask the teacher for additional help via the open Meet tab.

Lessons include tests, with a strict time limit, on previous topics. Assessment is based on assignment returns (one student copy in Docs, to which all course assignments are returned as screenshots), lesson activity, self-assessments, and exams. The self-assessment form is a preformed table on the textbook assignments that are handed in during the course. The student enters a colour-coded mark after returning each assignment (I understood/some things remained unclear/I didn't understand at all).

All assignments, teacher's materials, and contact with the teacher are available via the same Google Classroom. Exams are notified in advance via Wilma.

20

Kati Immeli-Vänskä

Teacher, Pitäjänmäki Comprehensive School

My eighth-grade students created a 'One-way ticket to Europe' mobile game, which can be played in the vicinity of the school. The game is built on the Seppo platform and combines the subjects of geography, English, and home economics. All students at the school can play the game once it's launched. The eighth graders will also be instructors for other players.

The object of the game is to tour Europe, getting to know different countries and their cultures. The students are content creators, and content is also inspired by their own interests. All introductory texts will be translated into English.

The game design and content production steps were implemented using Google Meet and files in Classroom. Some of the students instructed others in playing the game. Their task was also to transfer content into the physical game. The game will be played at school during the last two weeks of the spring term and, of course, in the years to come!





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Student Welfare Services Taivallahti Comprehensive School

The transition to remote learning created confusion among student welfare workers, as well. How would the cornerstones of our work, such as genuine interaction, being present, and meeting students succeed when face-to-face teaching is suspended?

At Taivallahti Comprehensive School, we began to experiment with new, effective forms of interaction. In student welfare services, we have met students at school, on walks, and in home visits, for example. Connections have been maintained face-to-face and via telephone, video calls, messaging, and chatting. The new situation has enabled us to provide time with an adult in a different way. We've also had a chance to play football and even eat together while chatting. New, more individual ways of meeting and interacting have brought the joy of success to everyday life. We look forward to being able to meet face-to-face once more, and will keep using some of the newly adopted working methods!

Jenna & Veli-Matti
School social worker and psychologist,
Jätkäsaari Comprehensive School

At Jätkäsaari Comprehensive School, we (Jenna, the school social worker, and Veli-Matti, the psychologist) drew up a survey for students when the remote learning began. We asked them how they were doing, about feelings arising in everyday life, the skills acquired in remote learning, and where they would like to improve. We have been guests in morning sessions, lessons, and small group work, and have held 'children's meetings', throughout the remote learning period.

At the children's meetings, we have a round of catching up, after which we do the survey and listen to any thoughts it inspires. We've held general discussions on the ideas raised in the survey and asked students to share their tips via chat on how to fight boredom or how to concentrate better, for example. We complemented the students' tips. Students participated in the chat dis-

cussions even more than they did in person, and for us it's been great to become part of their daily lives remotely as well! In addition, our faces have become even more familiar to students, when, instead of standing in front of the class, we have popped up on their screens.

The children's meetings have also been a wonderful opportunity to inform students about student welfare services and, through the survey, to highlight themes about which they can contact us. In sum, remote connections have enabled us to participate even more actively in the pupils' everyday education. An important part of this has been the open minded attitudes of teachers to the school social worker and psychologist participating in lessons as part of the new everyday world of distance learning. We would like to thank the teachers for their cooperation!

Heidi Kaukonen
Teacher, Naulakallio School

Naulakallio School is one the City of Helsinki's special schools. During the emergency measures, teaching has been arranged as both classroom and remote learning. We have also provided face-to-face guidance and remedial teaching for the completion of remote assignments, by agreement. Close communication with students, guardians, and networks has been highlighted during the epidemic.

In general, studying has been done in line with the curriculum, using a range of techniques and digital platforms. Huge strides have been taken in the use of online platforms for differentiated teaching, the creation of individual learning paths, and displaying the goal-process-assessment continuum. Studies have included phenomenon-based work on our shared theme: media literacy.

Community and being part of it are one of the key principles of our school. We have nurtured the sense of community through various shared activities and remote meetings. Students receiving face-to-face education have met each other on a daily basis. Joy, hope, and the sense of community have also been maintained through events such as a joint May Day celebration: students could attend a fancy dress competition and May Day Challenge both at school and remotely. We engaged in school-leaver activities and looked towards the future with our ninth graders. Cultural services were also involved through video connections.

See our blog on everyday life and celebrations at Naulakallio School:

<https://naulakallionkoulu.wordpress.com/>

24

Tanja Patronen

Teacher

Adult Education Centre of the City of Helsinki

We continued our course on body conditioning and stretching remotely, through Zoom. Even more students attended the first remote lesson than a regular face-to-face lesson. A recording of the lesson was available so that those unable to attend the Zoom class could view it when convenient. In addition, participants could use the recording to repeat the exercises several times during the week. The body conditioning and stretching class succeeded very well remotely, since it focused strongly on the student's own activity and required little space. It was great to see participants of all ages in the remote lessons.



25

Ilmo Massa, Student **Adult Education Centre of the City of Helsinki**

I began my course at the Adult Education Centre in autumn 2019, with the aim of writing a book. I had more or less completed the body text of the book around January-February 2020. I've created a raw layout and photo edition of my book during the coronavirus crisis. The idea is to create the layout myself and with the help of my network. In the photo edition, I chose about 30 images for the book, from previously scanned family photos. I then made a list of the pictures, with each picture numbered, miniaturised, and given a caption. After this, I synchronised the pictures with the body text to ease the layout work. This phase is still underway. I intend to read the work through before finalising the layout. Then comes the final layout and printing of the book. In addition to my wife's support, I've been backed up by two Teams meetings, in which I received encouraging feedback from the teacher and other students. My photo edition received praise and was posted on Padlet as an example for other students. In the first Teams meeting, the sound quality was somewhat disappointing, but improved in the second. The technologies still have room for improvement, but they have a great future. The group has been good: the coronavirus crisis may even have brought us closer together. 'Leave no one behind' has been our motto.



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Jenny Arnkil
Guardian, Käpylä

For me, the highlight of my eldest child's remote schooling has been the teacher reading out a book for half an hour each day, amid all the remote communication, hub-bub and amazing assignments. This seems to have glued the group members to their seats once a day.



Kirsti Rimon**Adult Education Centre of the City of Helsinki**

In March, my course at the Adult Education Centre, 'Writing biographies and family histories', went online. There are eleven writers in our group. We gather for three and a half hours at a time, every other week, to discuss our writing, which we post on Padlet for our teacher and classmates to read.

We had been on the same course, instructed by the same teacher, for almost a year and became fairly well acquainted before our meetings moved to Teams. The virtual meetings have gone amazingly well — we know each other so well that we can even recognise each other's voices now.

Due to my weak hearing, I find virtual meetings more pleasant than classroom sessions. I hear everyone's voice clearly through the device, whereas in the classroom I sometimes have to guess what's being said. It is easy to participate in meetings, over a cup of coffee, from home. It would, however, be important to be able to attend our last meeting face-to-face.



28

Teacher

Ressu Upper Secondary School

I've used Google's Jamboard app for tasks that require students to respond quickly during classroom lessons. Students can use a code to access the Jamboard I've opened. They can write, send pictures, and draw there. The application has worked well for the whole class and in smaller group activities. For small group work, I've opened a separate page for each group in the same Jamboard file. Everyone gets to see other groups' outputs. Fast and easy!





29

Guardian **Arabia Comprehensive School**

The best thing about this period has been you, Arabia's teachers. Fantastic, varied, and inspiring assignments, creative Google Classroom activities, and a system built at short notice to ensure that you can monitor the pupils' learning progression and how the children are doing at home. Good thinking!

Jarno Juurmaa

Student

Adult Education Centre of the City of Helsinki

I was studying English at the Adult Education Centre when on-site teaching ended and the teacher began sending us weekly assignments by email, and the correct answers in the following week. We also had the opportunity to do Finn Lectura's online exercises. All these assignments and exercises complemented our studies extremely well, making us feel that we older learners were also being looked after, with teaching arranged in a variety of interesting ways. A course on using Skype, held on 27 April, probably inspired me to try online learning — the course was excellent and useful, since I had never used Skype before. Thank you for the opportunities to learn and engage in useful activity as a 'crisis group' member.





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Student

Adult Education Centre of the City of Helsinki

Our French teacher, Pirkko Niemi, arranged an outstanding remote learning period. She sent us weekly assignments through which we could review much of the practical knowledge and skills gathered over the past few weeks. We could check our performance from the correct answers sent by Pirkko each week.

She also sent a varied list of links on the French language, enabling us to study French in a number of ways. I enjoyed listening to French on Youtube, TV5Monde, Yle oppiminen, or radio.fr while doing boring housework or sewing clothes. Both mind and brain were stimulated at once, and repetition is the essence of learning, as they say. My warm thanks to Pirkko for putting so much effort.

Riikka Ylimaz

**Haltia and Tammi Early childhood
education units**

We hold a weekly live Teams session for children under three who are at home, to maintain their contact with adults and friends at the daycare centre during the emergency measures. In the sessions, we run through familiar lunch group routines such as checking who is present and singing songs we all know. At the same time, the children get to see friends and adults in the group, and share their news. Things were slightly tense at first, but the children relaxed after presenting their own toys and were still buzzing about the session in the evening. Both children and teachers have begun to look forward to them!





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Pia Pykälämäki

**School social worker,
Pihlajamäki Primary School**

I'm a school social worker and have met some students outdoors. We've had discussions and sought objects that symbolise emotions and feelings. The children have been happy to meet me in the schoolyard, where we can swing or play catch together. Counselling works best when you do something together at the same time. Another uplifting highlight has been finding and listening to a song we both like. The swings in the yard have really been put to use while building a connection between the student and the school social worker. The movement has been both physical and mental. We have built future goals out of stones and found positive energy in the colours of flowers. On one rainy day we got our wellies out and built a dam for a muddy little brook. This was a great source of wonderment and creative joy for all of us. Amongst this joy, we have been able to share sorrows and connect, while genuinely observing and listening.

Last, but not least, comes a meeting with a young student via TEAMS; the student said that '.. I can almost touch your nose... can you feel it...?' To which I replied, 'I can'. This moment almost made my heart burst.

Student Welfare Services

It's been great to note the positive experiences and feedback on remote meetings with secondary school students. Feedback from the youngsters indicates that video meetings with the school social worker seem natural and easy. There are also positive experiences of so-called 'remote network meetings', where several people meet to discuss issues concerning youngsters. Young people have given positive feedback on these meetings (compared to traditional network meetings) using terms such as 'easier', 'more relaxed', and 'less tense'.





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Maria Alén **Teacher, Pakila Secondary School**

We had started to prepare and give presentations at the school, but were unable to finish this due to the lockdown. We got, however, a new system up and running quickly with Teams video connection. The students continued giving presentations and gain invaluable experience and skills for the modern working life. Students who are usually nervous were confident about performing via remote connections. Escape rooms also worked smoothly through the Seppo.io platform. I was finally able to have evaluation discussions in peace and quiet, without my noisy class in the background. There was time to ask how students were doing and explore issues profoundly, without keeping an eye on a restless class at the same time.

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Konsta Klemetti
Guardian, West Pasila

The teacher of my first-grader child had a great idea when snow finally fell in Helsinki some weeks ago. In addition to the regular tasks, the kids were given a 'real-time' activity: go outside, use your shoes to stamp a pattern or picture of something you like, take a photo of it with your mobile phone, and send it to the teacher on WhatsApp. Topicality, the digital leap, and outdoor fun all in the same package!



Pirkko Holmström**Adult Education Centre of the City of Helsinki**

When the Centre was closed in the evening, I gazed disappointedly into my calendar. There was still spring term left: a prose workshop, plot hooks, book layout, open mic, a writer's visit and... On the next day, the Centre announced the move to remote learning, and teachers began advising each other on how to go forward. I was already familiar with Padlet, but an invitation to a video meeting made me nervous. Could I manage this? I received good instructions and succeeded. It's been fun to see courses succeeding remotely. I somewhat miss my face-to-face discussions with my student friends, but have made a little 'digital leap'. I'm already bragging about my new digital skills to my friends. Thank you Päivi Hytönen, consultant teacher at the Adult Education Centre of the City of Helsinki!



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Elina Kirkinen-Kivelä
Guidance Counsellor, Helsinki Vocational
College and Adult Institute

If we had been told two months ago that we would be taking new students directly into remote learning, I would have said that we need more time to plan and prepare. On this occasion, there was no alternative, which proved to be an educational opportunity. Necessity is the mother of invention. Plenty of effort is required in the early stages of remote learning, so that all students can fully participate. Clarity and simplicity work well, there's no need to reach for the stars.



The Helsinki logo consists of the word "Helsinki" in a white, sans-serif font, enclosed within a white speech bubble shape with a small tail pointing downwards.

Helsinki

My thanks to the staff,
learners, and guardians
involved in Helsinki's education sector,
for being so flexible.

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