

Everybody
Goes to
School!

KAIKKI
KAY
KOULUA

Helsinki

Ministry of Education and Culture

Päivi Anunti
Planner Officer of Youth Affairs
City of Helsinki
Culture and Leisure Sector
paivi.anunti@hel.fi
+358505591725
www.kaikkikaykoulua.fi

EVERYBODY GOES TO SCHOOL

‘Everybody Goes to School’ (EGS) is as a working model developed by Helsinki city youth department where:

1. Young people are receiving help for themselves,
2. learning social skills and helping others
3. by participating in peer-support groups during school time
4. under the supervision of a multi-professional leader team consisting of youth work, education and school welfare workers.

ABOUT GETTING TO KNOW YOURSELF AND ALL THE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO YOU

In EGS groups, young people are helped to recognise their resources and strengths, but also the problems in the school or in their lives in general.

It is about finding alternative ways to make progress together.

“So we were all in like a kind of similar starting situation, that we didn’t care much about going to school... And we were showing up late for class and all kinds of stuff... and then maybe when one of us started to succeed or like get interested in going to school... then others kind a started doing the same.”

(Participant, interviewed by a researcher)

THE POINT IS TO HAVE PEER-SUPPORT GROUPS DURING SCHOOL TIME

- The groups are part of the official school schedule (which is an innovative form of cooperation between youth work and school): **an elective subject offered in 8th and 9th grade**
- A young person is advised to participate for two years → as a means for long-lasting way of support
- There are separate groups for girls and boys, free choice which one you want belong to – differences are respected
- About ten people in each, all from the same school, coming together once a week for 1½ hours.

POSITIVE RECOGNITION: FEELING EMPOWERED IN ONE'S OWN COMMUNITY (I)

- EGS has its basis in the philosophy of **positive recognition***: young people are offered a possibility to make a change in their personal lives, but what is also significant: to support others.
- In positive recognition the support is offered where the young people already are: ESG offers mobilisation as a part of everyday routine in the schools instead of inviting young people to some separate supportive environment.

POSITIVE RECOGNITION: FEELING EMPOWERED IN OWN COMMUNITY (II)

Positive recognition includes the following aspects:

- 1) Getting to know** young people as individuals who have different kinds of affections, life situations, interests and about the communalities they prefer.
- 2) Acknowledging** the everyday practices through which it is possible to actively and also tactfully show a young person appreciation for matters that are important to her/him.

POSITIVE RECOGNITION: FEELING EMPOWERED IN ONE'S OWN COMMUNITY (III)

3) Supporting young people...

- a) In taking a role in the groups and communities they consider to be important,
- b) In handling problems, when they arise, in a positive way, and so that the connections they have to youth life are maintained,
- c) In trying to always find the elements in which positive recognition can be built on, even in the most challenging situations and
- d) At the same time, help them to not reject the responsibilities and the moral consideration the adult is obliged to make.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE RECEIVING HELP, LEARNING SOCIAL SKILLS AND HELPING OTHERS (I)

- Often a person is asked to join a group for some known reason, who is in need of support in school or in life in general.
- There may also be some hidden matters causing indisposition, which are talked out gradually after quite a long time.
- Based on interviews made during an evaluation study by a researcher, participants reported the following problems: Concentration- or learning disorders, heckling, how they are being bullied or bully, family problems, problems with falling asleep, game addiction, losing close ones, having differences with teachers, and having bad social standing among peers.
 - In addition to group activities, the possibilities to talk privately with the group leaders are important.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE RECEIVING HELP, LEARNING SOCIAL SKILLS AND HELPING OTHERS (II)

- The acceptance of young people into the groups are kept at as low a threshold as possible due to the fact that the school community cannot recognise all of those who would be in need of benefit from participating in the group.
- Based on **the evaluation study*** the young people have received plenty of different kind of benefits from EGS:
 1. The ability to cope
 2. An expansion of networks and roles in communities
 3. Building trust in themselves and others
 4. Gaining concrete help in solving a variety of problems
 5. Recognising different kinds of opportunities
 6. And even if not everything can be healed, then at least they get help with the pain.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE RECEIVING HELP, LEARNING SOCIAL SKILLS AND HELPING OTHERS (III)


However, in EGS, change or growth is not only sought for young people: adults and the school community too need to become more skilled in, for example, facing young people as significant others.

PROMOTING TRUST AND DISCUSSIVE CULTURE (I)

- During the group meetings, methods supporting a discussive culture and trust development are used
- It is discussed around a common breakfast or snack, during the study visits, while making art, or while simply hanging out...

PROMOTING TRUST AND DISCUSSIVE CULTURE (II)

- These groups are a challenging environment for discussion - because of the all kinds of difficulties these young people have had with others.
- The achievement has been, based on the evaluation study, that participants have found these groups a more trusting environment than other environments the school offers (e.g. classes): In other words, the ideology of EGS could give a lot to schools in general when mainstreamed.



"It's been really important for me to be in this group, because I can talk about stuff and I know that it's not going to spread outside the group. So I can just relax and feel that I am not being judged."

(Participant, interviewed by a researcher)

MULTIPROFESSIONAL LEADER TEAM (I)

- The instructors of the groups consist of a teacher and a youth worker, and, in some cases, a social care worker, school welfare officer or a psychologist may join the group as a third instructor.
- The costs are shared by different sectors.
- Learning from other professionals is conscious.
- The level of **educational partnership*** has been reached: all the parties share the responsibility of the planning and implementation of the work and its success.
 - peer group meetings are offered with vivid and versatile adult support.

MULTIPROFESSIONAL LEADER TEAM (II)

The multiprofessionalism is also reflected in the kinds of solutions young people are offered:

1. Teachers are involved, so the matters that relate to school work can progress more easily,
2. School welfare personnel can coordinate different kinds of support,
3. A youth worker is in general a person who is easy to talk with, and also outside of the school – and their professionalism provides them with the skills to interact dialogically with young people and to build meaningful activity.

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE (I)

- *'Everybody goes to School'* was launched in Helsinki in 2009 – an motion developed because of the problems of young people recognised in one school.
- The model has already adopted in several other schools – and also in other cities.
 - An established operational model brings notable added value: time does not have to be spent on experiments.

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE (II)

- Many young people in schools could benefit if the model would be mainstreamed - based on the School Health Promotion Study (2017) there are in general 20 % of students in every school whose well-being is not at a satisfactory level.
- The big question: how can the resources for the support structures of multidisciplinary working group be secured in the future?
- EGS operations have made the life situations of young people more visible, and forced people to also wonder why it is so difficult to pay attention to others. Why do we need EGS – why couldn't every environment for young people work like this?

For more information, please contact the following participants of 'Everybody goes to School' -Development Group:

Planner Officer of Youth Affairs Mrs Päivi Anunti

City of Helsinki, Culture and Leisure Sector

E-mail: paivi.anunti@hel.fi

Tel. + 35850 5591725

Headmaster Mrs Katriina Aaltio

Pitäjänmäki Comprehensive School

Email: katriina.aaltio@hel.fi

Tel. +35840 3348657 /

WWW-pages: <http://kaikkikaykoulu.fi/>

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