Finnish good practice case:
Distance Learning with Digital Learning Tools in a Finnish Primary School

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My background

- Classroom and English teacher since 2009

- ICT tutor teacher, trainer and training coordinator since 2015

- Google certified educator

- My pedagogical principles in brief:

  ◦ Engage the students to take ownership of their learning process

  ◦ Provide meaningful challenges for everyone and every level

  ◦ Acknowledge and embrace the diversity of students and their strengths

  ◦ Create a safe space to try, fail and succeed

Distance learning: steps to success

- Plan the lessons, tasks and weekly schedule carefully

- Make sure you and your students know how to use the digital learning tools

- Time management: have a clear daily and weekly schedule that your students can follow

- Give detailed and clear written and spoken instructions

- Record online lessons for students to watch later

- Less is more: keep the number of assignments reasonable; do not give too much after-school work

- Provide guidance and support to students

- Monitor student progress and learning

- Collect, check and give feedback on assignments regularly

- Collect feedback from students too!

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Distance learning: case Finnish 5th graders

- Distance learning from March to May 2020 (2,5 months)

- Students: Finnish 5th graders (11-12-year-olds) in a primary school in Espoo

- Students had access to at least a mobile phone with internet connection, most had a laptop or a tablet

- Most students were familiar with digital learning tools already; issues did still arise

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Digital learning tools in use

- Screencapturing tool to record teacher's instructions

- Google Workspace for Education tools

  - Quick messaging app (Chat) for instructions, reminders, questions, group chats, teacher-student chats

  - Weekly and daily schedule (Docs) on a class website (Sites)

  - Video conferencing tool (Meet) for online lessons, small study groups and support channel

  - Platform for giving and returning assignments, feedback and assessment (Classroom)

  - Questionnaire and test tool (Forms)

  - Text editor (Docs) and slideshow tool (Slides)

  - Cloud-based storage of student work (Drive)

Typical distance learning day

1. Morning video from teacher (authentic example in Finnish)

- Pasted as a link to class chat and weekly schedule, including instructions and structure of the day explained

2. First video lesson

- Checking for attendance

- Short questionnaire for students to fill (example)

3. Students working on their tasks and attending video lessons (according to the weekly schedule, example)

- Video call/chat for smaller study groups: peer support

- Ongoing video call: teacher feedback and support

4. Last video lesson of the day

- Going through the day's work, instructions for after-school work, reminders for the next day(s)

Daily schedule

- Distance learning days followed the same schedule as school days to give clear structure and help students with time management

- Example of weekly schedule

- Example of video instructions

WEEKLY SCHEDULE FOR 20.4.-24.2020 CLASS 5L

time	Mon / Video instructions	Tue / Video instructions	Wed / Video instructions	Thu / Video instructions	Fri / Video instructions
8.15 - 9	Math group 1: continue until p. 59, come up with own problem solving exercise	PE: assignment in Classroom		Crafts: assignment in Classroom	Arts: assignment in Classroom
9 - 9.45	Finnish: Meet at 9:00! After our Meet watch the documentary (link in Classroom)	PE: cnt'd…	Chinese: assignment in Classroom	Crafts: cnt'd…	Arts: cnt'd…
10 - 10.45	Finnish: watch the documentary, answer questions in Classroom	Finnish: Meet at 10:00! Continue the writing exercise in Classroom	Music: new assignment in Classroom, remember to do last week's assignment too!	Civics: Meet at 10:00! After that meet with your peer study group, continue the group discussions, one writes down notes	English: Meet at 10:00! Chinese: assignment in Classroom
10.45 - 11.45	Science: check Classroom	Math group 1: Meet at 10:45! DO THE TEST in Classroom English: check Classroom	Math: Meet at 10:45! Starting a new unit (percentages) together.	History: assignment in Classroom	Finnish: Meet at 10:45! Prepare to present your review to your peer group.
11.45 - 12.45	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK
12.45 - 13.30	Math: Meet at 12:45! Revising for the test together	Science: check Classroom	Elective: see instructions from your elective teacher	Chinese: check Classroom Swedish: check Classroom	Religion: Meet at 12:45! Have last week's exercises ready to be checked Ethics: check Classroom
13.30 - 14.15	English: Meet at 13:30! Do review exercises for Unit 3 Chinese: check Classroom	Science: cnt'd…		Swedish: cnt'd…	Math group 2: continue the new unit (percentages) English: check Classroom
14.15 - 15	PE: check Classroom	Math group 2: Meet klo 14:15! DO THE TEST in Classroom			

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Time management and task differentiation

- Distance learning requires good time management skills from students

- The least you can do as a teacher:

  - Evaluate and state clearly how much time is intended to be spent on the tasks

  - Make it clear for students when each task is due

  - Consider splitting larger assignments into smaller units

    - Returning one piece at a time -> helps students to manage workload

  - Consider giving tasks that require different levels of knowledge or skills

    - Easy tasks for learners with e.g. learning difficulties and harder tasks for advanced learners

    - This way each student's workload and time spent on tasks stays reasonable

Student engagement

- Require students to have their camera on during video lessons

- Have lessons with smaller groups at a time (around 5-10 students)

- Form small study groups
  - Works well for math or languages, for example
  - Group discussions and debates on a given topic
  - Opportunity for students to learn to ask and give peer support
  - Technically, for example:
    a) create different video call links in advance → split students into groups → provide link to each group → visit each group's video call
    b) split students into breakout rooms (Zoom, Teams, Meet)

Monitoring and support

- Checking for understanding

  - Online tests and questionnaires (e.g. Google/Microsoft Forms)

    - results highlight which students need extra support

  - Supportive video lessons for individual students or small groups

  - Open video call for students to pop in with their questions

  - Chat tool (e.g. Google Chat, WhatsApp) for peer and one-on-one support

  - Individual video and phone calls from teacher to student

- Giving continuous feedback for student work (e.g. Google Classroom)

Student feedback

- Due to the lack of personal contact, teachers may be unaware of how students are coping

- Longer and shorter questionnaires to monitor students' wellbeing and feelings about distance learning

  - Created with Google Forms

- Provided valuable information to teachers

Name and class *

Your answer

How do you feel about distance learning today? You can select many feelings. *

- [ ] happy
- [ ] excited
- [ ] energetic
- [ ] hopeful
- [ ] alright
- [ ] overwhelmed
- [ ] annoyed
- [ ] hopeless
- [ ] frustrated
- [ ] angry
- [ ] Other:

Why do you feel this way?

Your answer

Would you like to chat with the teacher privately? *

- ○ yes
- ○ no

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Teacher collaboration

- Teacher's workload can be heavy

- Find ways to collaborate with colleagues whenever possible, for example:
  - planning together
  - dividing planning responsibilities for different subjects
  - sharing ideas and tasks in a shared cloud-based platform (such as a Google Classroom group)

Typical problems and solutions

Written tasks are time-consuming and tedious	Give various kinds of assignments: make a video, draw and take a picture, have an online group discussion or debate... endless options!
No way to check workbooks and notebooks	Students take pictures of their notebook work and return the pictures to teacher or digital platform
Students are just passively following video lessons	Find ways to engage students: have quizzes and small competitions, create small study groups for support and online discussions
No idea how students are doing	Collect feedback, have one-on-one phone/video calls
Students keep asking for technical support	Keep it simple first, have lessons where you just learn the tools, create a "technical support" chat managed by tech-savvy students

Thank you!

- Contact:

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