



Helsinki, 16 September 2015

Message from Finnish Minister of Education Sanni Grahn-Laasonen at the 3rd Annual Education Summit in Atlanta sponsored by Finnish American Chamber of Commerce and Scandinavian American Foundation of Georgia

Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be able to send you my warmest greetings to this Summit even though I could not personally come to Atlanta, due to previous engagements.

I am very happy that education continues playing such a key role in your Summit. Finland is well known throughout the world for its excellence in education. We are always being asked what is the secret behind our success. There is no simple answer, of course, because education is just part of a wider social construct: it is an element in our culture and one of our national values. Nevertheless, I will briefly mention a few key factors.

First of all, we believe that an education system of consistent quality, and, which is available to everyone, produces the best possible outcome. Finnish children and young people receive the same high quality education wherever they live in the country and regardless of what their family's socio-economic background is.

Secondly, we think that by delegating both responsibilities and powers to the school level and especially to the teachers, the best decisions and practice to support each individual learners needs are made. There are of course common national objectives defined and described in our national core curriculum, but we rely a good deal on the professional skills of teachers to transform and localize these objectives locally.

This brings me to the third point I would like to make. In Finland, the profession of teacher is valued. Value means, that all our teacher earn the respect every day through professional work ethics and inspiring learners to learn more. As you

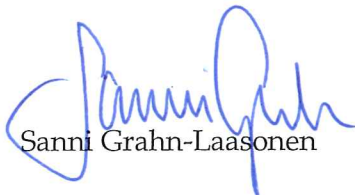


already know, we are lucky to have the best talent available for teaching profession. Only around 10% of those who apply to universities to be trained as teachers are accepted.

Fourthly, I would like to raise the subject of capacity for renewal. Even a good education system is never complete. In fact, we in Finland have always been very critical about our system, even when we have come a brilliant first in international comparisons. It is only through constant self-criticism and open discussion with wider audience that we can guarantee a top quality education system now and in the future.

On behalf of Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, I would like to thank you all for the work you have done to promote and increase knowledge of Finnish Education. We too in Finland are also keen on bringing new exports and investments opportunities for business in the field of education. I know that many delegations have flown across the Atlantic Ocean back and forth. I hope that this lively exchange of ideas, knowledge, practice and services will bear fruit in a near future. Let's use these peer learning opportunities to learn the best from both systems. I am sure that both of us, those working in the field of education and those in the business supporting next generation learning can both benefit from this and find ways to complement each other.

Wishing you fruitful discussions and most successful Summit!



Sanni Grahn-Laasonen