
Finnish Schools on the Move is a programme funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture and organised by the Board of Education, regional state administrative agencies and various other organisations, and it is part of the Government Programme. The goal of the Finnish Schools on the Move programme is to encourage children to be physically active in accordance with the recommendations for physical activity – at least an hour a day – during the school day or immediately before or after.

This report on the pilot phase (2010–2012) of the programme describes the projects that were part of the pilot phase and presents the operations and results of 21 regional projects. A total of 45 schools took part in these projects. The objective of monitoring and studying the pilot phase was to determine how physically active schoolchildren were and how their level of activity changed during the programme. Changes in schoolchildren's physical activity were measured with the use of surveys and objective measurements. The surveys also aimed to reveal how the programme affected the atmosphere in schools and during school breaks. The progress of the individual programmes was monitored by interviewing the projects' coordinators and through the use of surveys and diaries. These results were used to map how the programme was progressing and what the prerequisites and obstacles were for the success of the project for individual schools. The children's own thoughts on physical activities during the school day were gathered through various means.

In a post-programme survey, approximately half of all lower comprehensive school students and one-third of upper comprehensive school students reported increased physical activity in various forms. According to surveys conducted on four occasions during the programme, physical activity increased slightly in lower comprehensive school students and decreased in upper comprehensive school students. For lower comprehensive school students, active short school travel increased. Children were more active in spring than in autumn. According to objective measurements, physical activity increased in lower comprehensive school students on weekdays outside school times. In upper comprehensive school students, physical activity increased in autumn measurements, but decreased slightly in spring measurements when the same students were followed up for one and a half years. Time spent sedentary in school increased steadily by age for both lower and upper comprehensive school students. School staff experiences on the Finnish Schools on the Move programme were mostly positive and according to the survey: most of them believed that schools would adopt permanent changes as a result of the programme.

The Finnish Schools on the Move programme created both administratively and functionally new approaches and succeeded in linking the goals of various parties into a shared network. Finnish Schools on the Move was perceived as a positive and successful programme, but the actual impact on the physical activity of schoolchildren was relatively small. It takes some time for the actions taken to manifest and as a result, long-term and systematic development work is required to increase children's physical activity during the school day.