

To whom it may concern

I share with others a growing global concern about the current increase in developmentally inappropriate policymaking together with education systems that prioritise standardization of teaching and learning, competition over enrolment and test-based accountability over child and family happiness and wellbeing. The frequently quoted OECD's PISA study does not support such a focus, nor does it support the current faith in market mechanisms as the best vehicles for whole system improvements. It is clear that more child-friendly and trust-based systems can be equally, if not more, effective in terms of later attainment. Finland is a good example of this. Our own public policies prioritise:

- collaboration
- removing unhealthy competition from the school system
- sample-based student assessments instead of census-based standardised tests
- individualised, personalised learning for creativity
- an ethos on trust-based responsibility
- sustainable, evidence-based policies
- child wellbeing and happiness through postponed entry to formal schooling
- Strong focus on equity of outcomes that goes hand in hand with quality

I agree that throughout the world those working with young children have a duty of responsibility to highlight inappropriate practices and policies and to protect children from anything that might damage their long-term wellbeing and innate learning dispositions. To that end I fully support the statements and aims of the new early years alliance in England together with the Save Childhood's *Early Years Manifesto - 'Putting Children First'*.

Focus on equity gives high priority to universal early childhood programs, comprehensive health and special education services in schools, but also demands a whole-child approach to curriculum that does not put narrow academic attainment over vital social and emotional skills and personal development. This also requires, as OECD's PISA results show, that the more successful countries pay more to their teachers and give them higher status in society.

There is no evidence that extending the length of formal schooling in anyways would enhance children's learning and wellbeing. We do know, however, the positive impact of unstructured play and self-directive learning to individual's development of mind, imagination, self-control and creativity. The most worrying situation for children and families is when universal provision is pushed through without the necessary regard for evidence. We need to take urgent notice when such an alliance of experts in the field alerts us to the fact that this might be the case.

In Cambridge, MA, on 14 April 2014



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