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Educators go to school on Finns

What can Finland's top-ranking school system teach our educators here in Canada?

How about this: Everyone is a genius. Or this: if you ask a fish to climb a tree, the fish will think he's stupid.

These are two basic tenets behind the successful Finnish education system and they're truths that other countries can incorporate if they want their children to achieve as well, according to Pasi Sahlberg, director general with the Centre for International Mobility and Cooperation in Finland.

Mr. Sahlberg was speaking Wednesday morning to about 700 educators, students and parents who gathered at Richmond Hill's Sheraton Parkway hotel for the annual Quest

conference, to learn what the world's top education systems are doing right.

Mr. Sahlberg said there's a reason why his country consistently performs at the top in world rankings and it's not, he joked, because this land of snow, ice and darkness means there's nothing else to do except study and go to school.

Finland's schools excel at treating each child as an individual, he said.

Finnish children don't start school until age 7 and they are not marked with numbers or letters until Grade 5 or 6.

— Kim Zarzour

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