

Communality from the perspective of
safety and well-being in Ritaharju

OUR RITAHARJU



I am okay

You are
okay

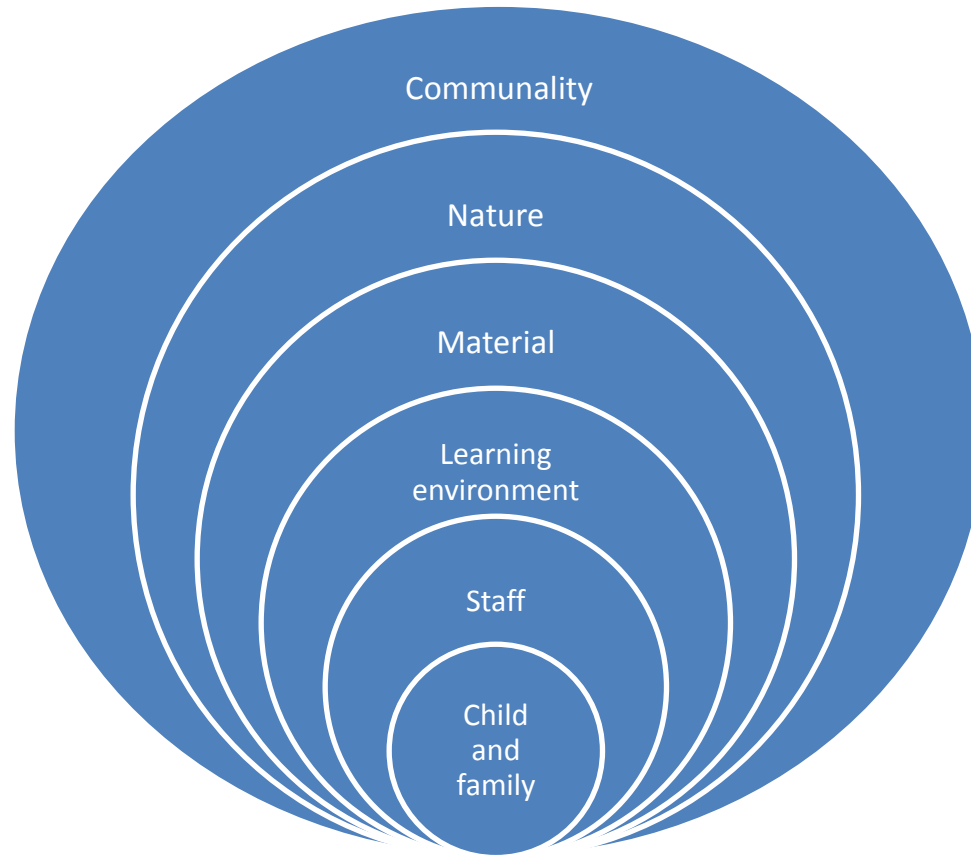
We are
okay

STEPS OF COMMUNALITY

Principles and periods guiding action

- Rules
 - children
 - adults
- **Supporting structures:**
 - KiVa school
 - Peacekeeping (?) activities
 - KaKe
 - Verso (mediating)
 - CWT
- **Participation:**
 - Ritaparliament
 - Parent-teacher association
 - Family café
 - <http://www.mll.fi/perheille/perhekahvilat/>
 - Father groups
 - Groups for grandmas and grandpas
 - <http://www.mll.fi/perheille/kylamummit/>
- **Projects:**
 - Allies
 - www.oulu.fi/naistutkimus/allies.htm
 - MätäJämnt
 - <https://wiki.oulu.fi/display/ma+ta+jamt/Ritaharju+-+pilot>
 - Eveline
 - <http://ritayhteiso.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/eveline-vanhempainilta-23-03-2011.pdf>

Principles and periods guiding action



1. Child and family

- Shared values: creativity, joy, self-appreciation, appreciation of others, encouragement and enthusiasm
- Activities are based on each child's individual needs and child-oriented approach on one hand, communality and cooperation on the other
- Non-violence, positive self-image, emotional skills
- Participation; authority in making decisions about things for which the child is able to take responsibility
- Ritaparliament (children) and parent-teacher association
- Active contact with parents and making both parents and grandparents participants in the everyday life of the community center
- Annual enquiry to children, parents and staff regarding well-being, communality and safety

2. Staff

- Positive attitude, joy, caring, openness, sincerity
- Solution-centered, respectful discussion and communication culture
- Own areas of responsibility but also cooperation between different professions
- Zero tolerance: no discrimination based on age, sex, political affiliation, sexuality, ethnicity, educational level, etc.
- Equality
- Songs, movement, creativity in the practices of everyday life → active participation

3. Learning environment

- Learning environments are planned out carefully
- The goal is to create a peaceful environment where every detail is thoroughly thought about
- Each thing has its own assigned place
- Taped markings, bounds; freedom within the boundaries
- Utilization of technology
- Unnecessary decoration is avoided:
 - dividing public and private space
 - avoiding overloading children with sensory stimulation

4. Material

- Careful consideration regarding equipment → things are well taken care of
- Using material that encourages using imagination, thinking in a solution-centered and creative way, communicating and cooperating
- Material that might encourage fighting and violence is used as little as possible
- Using material that can be used and played with independently
- A lot of natural material
- Mattresses, blocks, pillows, clay, Legos...
- Excessive supply of things and toys is avoided
- Things and toys are always in order
- Careful consideration towards the books that are being read to children → avoidance of offering stereotypic images

5. Nature

- Plenty of outdoor activities
- Doing "real" jobs
- Respecting nature, supporting sustainable development, keeping the environment clean, recycling

6. Communnality

- Simple rules that everyone agrees to follow
- Respecting human rights: "Own name, own space, own things"
- Creating an atmosphere that is joyful, friendly and enthusiastic, but also peaceful
- A child that behaves in a challenging way is not automatically removed from the group → the system is changed until a solution is found
- Specific emphasis on not allowing treatment that hurts others – this is apparent in everything. The problem is targeted as soon as it appears: it is analyzed until the reason for the problem is found, and then the solution for the problem is searched until balance is reached
- Using the word 'no' is avoided; constructive feedback, using common sense
- A special focus on peaceful movement and transition from place to place
- Learning sense of community through proceeding on the steps of communnality: I am okay, you are okay, we are okay

Cycle of a year: The periods

- A school year is divided into six periods which are based on annually deepening cycles of learning social skills and making the most of children's potential
- At first implemented on the level of preschool up to second grade → gradually expanding to the entire community center

1. period: **Rules** – *Manners, behavior, encountering others with respect, thoughtfulness, politeness*
2. period: **Positive self-image** – *Independence, safety, self-confidence, self-expression*
3. period: **Relationships** – *Tolerance, helpfulness, broadmindedness, solidarity*
4. period: **Positivity** – *Optimism, joy, defense, fairness, straightforwardness, outspokenness*
5. period: **Friendship** – *Companionship, caring, closeness, love*
6. period: **Courage** – *Audacity, energetic and dynamic attitude, activity, initiativeness*

Rules for the staff

Recesses:

- Shared responsibility of supervising that children do not run or yell indoors.
- Pupils and recess supervisors go to recess and back indoors after recess without lingering.
- The teacher teaches children to take responsibility for the tidiness of hallways and also monitors the implementation of the rule regarding overall coziness of the school for her/his part.
- Supervising a recess lasts for the entire recess.
- A recess supervisor wears a yellow vest.
- A recess supervisor intervenes in rule offences and reports the conflicts to the teacher(s) of the participants. Play fights are not allowed.
- The job of indoor supervisors is to make sure that rules are followed indoors.

Afternoon activities:

- Rooms and facilities that are used in afternoon activities will be left clean and tidy after the activities.
- Jointly decided rules apply also to afternoon activities.

Eating:

- The staff makes sure that good table manners are followed and monitors the pupils' behavior in the dining room. Special focus is put on using cutlery carefully (not putting forks and knives in the trash can, avoiding breaking dishes).
- A pupil cleans up the mess she/he has made (help given when needed).
- Pupils are requested to take only as much food as they can eat. All foods should be tasted.
- Running is not allowed in the dining room.

Playing and using computers

- See separate instructions.

Educational partnership among staff:

- Valuing each other's professional skills and individuality.
- Utilizing the various skills in the community center through cooperation.
- Aiming at discussing difficult topics in an open and constructive way, without putting blame on anyone.
- Giving positive feedback.
- Noticing the members of the work community by greeting them.
- Taking care of one's own well-being and resources; supporting colleagues the best we can.

Education partnership with homes:

- Parents are informed about matters related to school.
- Discussing with parents about things regarding the child and asking the parents' permission to discuss the issue further in child-welfare team if necessary.
- Encouraging networking between parents and offering possibilities for doing so, as well as for developing educational partnership, by organizing e.g. parents' evenings and other events.
- Parents are offered a chance to participate in the everyday life of the community center.

Educational partnership with the child:

- Increasing children's participation and giving them responsibility when they are ready for it (e.g. organizer's duties, Ritaparliament, Verso-mediating)
- Supporting child's well-being through common, enhanced and specific support.
- Organizing time for the teachers and nurses of the community center to face each child on a regular basis (e.g How are you –chats in small groups)
- Intervening in things that threaten the child's well-being as early as possible, utilizing multiprofessional know-how and cooperating with homes.
- If a child has not done her/his homework, she/he will be sent to a homework workshop the same day.
- If there are problems in following the rules, solutions are searched through multiprofessional know-how and cooperating with parents.

KiVa school project in Ritaharju 2011-2012

- We are participating in KiVa school project that provides us with a tool to intervene and prevent bullying.
- The preliminary survey about bullying is done for pupils in May 2011.
- KiVa school lessons will be held to grades 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8 during the school year 2011.
- Every cell has its own KiVa school adults who settle the bullying cases of the cell.
- For more information, go to:
<http://www.kivakoulu.fi/>

Peacekeeping activities

- The job of a peacekeeper is to make sure that a situation which interrupts the peace of study and work environment is intervened in immediately; a peacekeeper works in cooperation with the teacher to ensure the continuation of undisturbed and safe work of the classroom.
- After evaluation the situation together with a teacher, a peacekeeper can:
 - take the pupil to some other room to calm down and have an educational discussion (?) with her/him (KaKe) or
 - look after the rest of the classroom while the teacher sorts out the conflict or has an educational discussion with the pupils that have participated in the conflict

Laws that guide the activities:

POL 29§ OIKEUS TURVALLISEEN OPISKELUYMPÄRISTÖÖN

POL 35§ OPPILAAN VELVOLLISUUDET

- Oppilaan on suoritettava tehtävänsä tunnollisesti ja käyttäydyttävä asiallisesti

POL 36§ KURINPITO

- Luokasta poistaminen tunnilta tai loppupäiväksi

POL36b§ Häiritsevän ja turvallisuutta vaarantavan oppilaan poistaminen (toimenpide kirjattava)

Educational discussion (KaKe)

- The main purpose of an educational discussion is the immediate intervention in children's wrongdoings and discussion about them, as well as aiming for a change in manners and immediate informing the guardian(s).

The goals of an educational discussion

- getting the pupil to think about her/his wrongdoings more closely
- getting the pupil to understand the consequences of her/his actions
- getting the pupil to be open with her/his parents and tell them about the wrongdoing
- getting the pupil to follow the rules of the school better
- decreasing the amount of detentions
- getting parents to be more active participants in the school's everyday life

- The educational discussion is not a punishment, but an efficient way to take care of informing homes about unwanted things, and also a way to increase the pupil's responsibility for her/himself and others.

Educational discussion in practice:

- When the child breaks common rules, it is the responsibility and duty of the adult teaching/looking after the child to have an educational discussion with the child.
- The child uses her/his own words to tell what has happened and what went wrong.
- The child is offered a possibility to use the phone and let the guardian know about the discussion. If the child refuses to inform the guardian, the adult will do so.
- The child comes up with a suggestion on how to make things better by her/himself.
- At the end of the discussion, the situation and proposal for improving it are written down. The document is saved, printed out, signed (the child and the teacher), scanned and sent home as a pdf-file. The guardian will let the teacher know when she/he has seen the document.
- If the child continues to break the school rules repeatedly, the guardian(s) will also be invited to the third educational discussion.
- If necessary, the guardian(s) can be invited to the school already during the same school day.
- The educational discussion can be had right after the wrongdoing or later the same day, e.g. at the end of the school day.
- If necessary, a peacekeeper will come to supervise the rest of the class while the teacher has the discussion with the child. In some cases the discussion can be had between a peacekeeper and a child.

Typical reasons for an educational discussion:

- leaving school premises without permission
- being constantly late
- continuous neglect of homework
- playing hookey
- disturbing classes constantly
- being removed from classroom
- fights
- violent behavior
- continuous breaking of school rules, e.g. throwing snowballs at school yard or playing ball indoors
- constantly skipping outdoor recess
- using inappropriate language
- mischief or vandalism towards the school building, school property, or the property of a teacher or another child
- cheating
- not following teacher's rules
- dishonest behavior
- stealing
- bringing an edged weapon or equipment for making fire to school
- intoxicants and smoking
- NB: Bullying situations are handled by the KiVa team.

VERSO – mediating (work in progress)

- VERSO i.e. peer mediating is a method based on solution-centered approach. It offers an optional and voluntary way to solve conflicts between children in their everyday life. The purpose of this method is to decrease schools' functional troubles by improving children's interaction skills. Mediating is a way to intervene in hurtful behavior as early as possible.

The goals of peer mediating (*Belinda Hopkins 2006*):

- Improving the safety, work peace and atmosphere of the school community
- Decreasing social isolation and withdrawal
- Supporting solidarity and communality
- Improving morale and self-respect
- Decreasing conflicts and disturbing behavior in the entire community
- Decreasing the exhaustion of school staff

Family café

- The family café of Ritaharju and Kuivasjärvi will start in the youth club rooms of the Ritaharju Community Center in August 2011.
- The theme of the family café is the construction of a peaceful community.
- The cafés will be organized through the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL) and the leader of the activity will be Salla-Maarit Sarajärvi.
- More detailed information about the opening times will be given at the end of the summer.

Father groups

- The goal of the father groups is to increase fathers' participation from the perspective of communality and educational partnership.
- Networking, increasing children's safety, peer support in matters related to parenting and fatherhood
- Father-child activities and a father group will start in Ritaharju Community Center in the fall 2011 on Sundays at 5pm.
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