



LATEST NEWS April 7, 2006

Turku repairs schoolyards



The condition of schoolyards has been mapped in Turku from the beginning of the year. The purpose is to determine where to start when the City begins to repair the yards next year. There will be plenty of work, as Turku has 44 lower comprehensive schools alone, in addition to which come upper comprehensive schools, upper secondary schools, and the Vocational Institute.

The first yard plans will be made this year, and the actual work will start next year. The plan is to repair at least three yards in 2007. The renovation of schoolyards is a topical issue, because many schoolyards in Turku are very barren. In a comparison of large Finnish cities by Nuori Suomi association, Turku's schoolyards scored poorly. Pleasant schoolyards are often the result of the school's own activity or have been achieved, for example, with the assistance of a parents' association.

The City is now taking serious action in the matter, as the repairing of schoolyards has been recorded as one of the goals of the Turku Strategy. Different administrative bodies of the

City have pondered how the yards could be made more pleasant. It is a major issue just because children spend more time at breaks than they do on physical training classes - it would be important to guide them to move between lessons. For that, there must be more than parking spots in the yard.

A decision was made that schoolyards will be built into local exercise places. Formerly schoolyards have been areas where no trespassing was allowed after the school day. It is natural

and sensible to utilise the yards after the school days, too.

Building schoolyards into local exercise places is also supported by the fact that it is possible to get government subsidy for 30 per cent of the costs. It is a significant proportion of the whole sum, as repairs of one yard easily cost € 85,000-100,000. The City has hired a schoolyard planner who started work in February. **Anne Huttunen** works under the City planning office and is currently preparing a development plan for schoolyards.



WELL-BEING AND COMFORT TO SCHOOLS THROUGH PHYSICAL EXERCISE

The objective of the SCHOOLS ON THE MOVE project (2004-2007) is to increase the opportunities of children and young people for physical activity (PA) during the school day. The project involves 18 lower comprehensive schools, 3 upper comprehensive and secondary schools, and the Turku Vocational Institute, with a total of almost 9,000 pupils. The operating processes of the schools are supported with training, materials and products etc. In addition, the schools are supported by extensive co-operation between administrative bodies and with the Nuori Suomi ry association. The project is part of the Shape up project financed by the European Commission that aims at preventing overweight of children and young people. Areas being developed include e.g. PA during breaks, condition of the yard, PA on the way to school, health-promoting club activities, advice on PA, PA in groups of friends, PA and health information etc. In the future, the ideas generated in the project will be integrated into normal operations.

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