

Wir stellen vor ...

We present ...

Art Kindergarten Konsti, Kerava, Finland

MAARIT LAVAS

In Art Kindergarten Konsti, the early age education plan and its content areas are based on the Finnish National and the Keravas municipal early age and pre-school curricula. Konsti specializes and focuses on the use of art in education to support learning and growth. Our goal-orientated art education plan is developed with the art school teachers and then implemented by our highly skilled staff.

Konsti Kindergarten is located in Kerava, a small town of 35,000 residents, only thirty kilometres from the Finnish capital, Helsinki. The Kindergarten's story leads back to 1995, when three art institutes of Kerava decided to put their knowledge and skills together to serve the families of Kerava better. The kindergarten started with the idea that children could receive early age art education during their day in kindergarten and have free family time in the evening. Since then, the art teachers from the Music Institute, Dance Institute and Visual Arts Institute have come to Konsti to teach the children weekly, and also to educate the kindergarten staff. The headteachers of the institutes also form the board of the kindergarten, so they are constantly aware of the state of the school.



In the Finnish school system, children start school at the age of seven. One year before that, they attend pre-school, which is part of compulsory education. Younger children take part in early education with kindergarten teachers; here they experience a lot of play, music, outdoor life and pedagogically planned daily routines. In Konsti, the art education is built to penetrate the daily routines. It is inside everything that we do in creative ways. Also, the staff are very knowledgeable on the children's early physical and emotional development. We offer both early-age education and preschool.

Konsti is a private Kindergarten owned by an organization. We have around one hundred customer families and enroll 120 children. The number changes a little bit each year depending on the age of the children. The youngest children (1–3 year-olds) work in smaller groups (12 or less) than the older ones. We have room for six individual groups. The Finnish government supports private early-age education with a considerable amount of money. That makes it possible for many families to apply for a place in a private kindergarten. In municipal kindergartens the fees are calculated according to families' income. In Konsti, all families have the same fees. Families can still get extra support from the Social Insurance Institution of Finland based on low income. This makes private kindergartens more available for different type of families. In Konsti, we do not have only the wealthiest families, but families who are willing to invest a little more in their children's' early-age education. It might, however, require them to make a compromise in something else. The commitment of the families can be seen in the very active parent organization. They make a

huge effort every year to organize fund raising and other events, so their children can enjoy their education in various ways. The biggest of the projects is the musical theatre production that we present each year.

Children often spend their whole day in Konsti while both parents are working. The schoolhouse is open from 6.30am until 5pm. That is why we do not have fully planned daily schedule. We leave space and time for free play. We put the childrens' own ideas and wishes into practice and also organize time for rest and silence. We encourage children to learn through physical movement, dance, music and visual arts.

Konsti uses the Orff-Schulwerk pedagogical approach to music and movement education. We have been a part of the Associated Schools and Institutes (ASI) group of the International Orff-Schulwerk Forum Salzburg since July 2016. Art Kindergarten Konsti cooperates with JaSeSoi ry in offering professional development for our kindergarten teachers. Even before joining the ASI, Konsti claimed to



have an Orff-Schulwerk pedagogical approach to arts education and is interactive. Children explore the elements of rhythm, speech, melody, singing, movement, instruments, improvisation, listening and playing. They combine these with visual arts, stories, poems and play. The starting point for both music education and visual arts education is experimental experience. Through this play the child's interest towards music and arts are raised, while supporting creativity within the group and environment.

We have two highly qualified Orff-Schulwerk music and movement educators and three kindergarten teachers who have attended Orff-Schulwerk Teacher Education courses in Finland. Our staff also has varied and numerous artistic interests (drama, dance, visual arts education etc.), that they include in their lessons with our students.

The children's skill development and overall growth are monitored by teachers every day. In meetings with parents, an individual learning plan is created for each child. In preschool, the children also take part in the meetings. Each yearly health and wellness appointment with a nurse or doctor is documented in our kindergarten files, and teachers' communications are shared with the medical professionals as well. This type of cooperation provides reliable ways to give each child the support they need. Sometimes speech or physical/occupational therapists are invited to the support network around the child. Here, an even wider circle of support from our society works together for the best support of the child. During their Konsti years, children and teachers assemble a portfolio of each child's growth with artwork, photos, stories. All the important experiences of the child's life at school will be there for the parents and children to remember for years to come.

Each year, Konsti adopts a theme around which much of the learning is planned and related. This theme is finalized and shared by the principal each year. During the years we have had themes like "Four seasons", "Local Art", "Once upon a time ...", "Wild colours" and so on. We choose a topic

and define it with a few sentences leaving space for teachers to add their own, and of course, children's ideas. This year we chose to follow the International Orff-Schulwerk Forum's idea "Encounters between Orff-pedagogy and modern arts". Finland is celebrating its 100th birthday this year, so we defined the theme to cover Finnish modern art. As a starting point we are using children's poetry and stories. The topic this year is not "Once upon a time there was ...", but "Currently there is ...". So we concentrate on modern children's culture using art integration in everyday life.

The yearly action plan, as well as the evaluation is part of the managing process. Projects by students are documented with photos and teachers' evaluation. By sharing our experiences and perceptions of the students individually and as a group, we come up with the developing needs for the years to come. The manager invites the staff yearly for individual discussions, and takes part in the team meetings. This is the opportunity for the manager to come to understand what kind of knowledge and support we need as professionals. Artistic skills and pedagogical information is part of the staff's education each year. Together we grow as a Konsti Family.
www.taidepaivakotikonsti.fi



Maarit Lavas

kindergarten teacher, graduated 2001, has worked in Konsti Kindergarten since 2013, associate manager, creative outlook on life, in and outside kindergarten, mother of two boys aged 9 and 11, former Konsti-children themselves. present studies:

Orff II next summer, Adults' basic visual art studies