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**Authors**

Annette Ukkola, Jari Metsämuuronen & Maiju Paananen

In autumn 2018, FINEEC assessed the skills of first-grade pupils at the beginning of their schooling. The assessment was called the *starting level measurement*. A total of 7,770 pupils from different parts of Finland participated in it in the basic sample. The starting level measurement assessed skills related to mathematics and mother tongue and literature. Its main results were published in the first report in autumn 2019. They were based on assignments that pupils completed at school during their first school weeks. According to the results, pupils' skills were similar across Finland and showed little variation based on gender, the area of the regional state administrative agency or the language of instruction in the school. However, there were great differences in the skills of individuals. This report describes the link between background factors and the pupil's skills.

In conjunction with the assessment, background information was collected from pupils' guardians. Background information was obtained on 4,316 pupils. The average of these pupils' results was 516 points, while it was 500 points for the entire material. This means that background information was missing especially on pupils whose skills were weaker than average.

The same risk factors were linked to a weaker-than-average starting level in both mathematics and mother tongue: a decision on intensified or special support issued before starting school, the syllabus of Finnish or Swedish as a second language, close relatives with learning difficulties, birthday towards the end of the year and the guardians' low educational background. The skills of pupils studying the S2 syllabus (Finnish as the second language) were approximately 80 points lower than the skills of pupils studying Finnish or Swedish as their mother tongue. The impact of one learning difficulty diagnosed in close relatives on the child's skills was approximately 30 points and the impact of two learning difficulties approximately 50 points. In the material, one out of ten children starting basic education had already been issued a decision on either intensified or special support before starting school. Children in these groups scored approximately 100 points lower in the assignments in both mathematics and mother tongue.

One of the factors explaining pupils' skills was also the educational background of their guardians. If at least one of the guardians in the family had completed a degree in higher education, the pupil's skills were on average approximately 100 points higher than the skills of pupils whose guardians had not completed an education higher than basic education. The guardians' high educational background seemed to benefit boys, in particular.

The number and diversity of the pupil's hobbies were also linked with their skills. The hobby most correlating with the skills was reading, which covered both the child reading himself or herself and reading aloud to the child. Based on the survey carried out among the guardians, reading appeared to be a hobby especially in educated families.

Children's early childhood education and care paths were not directly linked with the starting level. Various early childhood education and care paths can produce good skills. However, it seems that the children most benefitting from full-time early childhood education and care are children who have several risk factors predicting a weak starting level.

The starting level measurement provided information on pupils' starting level at the beginning of comprehensive school. It started a longitudinal assessment of learning outcomes in which the development of skills related to mathematics and mother tongue and literature will be followed during basic education. The next assessment of the same pupils' skills will be carried out at the beginning of grade 3 in autumn 2020 to obtain information on how school increases skills during the first two years of education.

**Keywords:** assessment, basic education, early primary education, evaluation, learning outcomes, literacy, mathematics, mother tongue and literature