



# FUTURES PLATFORM

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## Case study

### **Futures Platform helps teachers to bridge the gap between school curriculum and the fast-moving world outside**

In Espoo, the educational administration uses Futures Platform widely for education development. High school students were impressed with the Futures Platform foresight tool. They saw the platform as an important tool for developing foresight and developing their knowledge around areas covered by compulsory subjects.

Planning for the future is not only crucial in business but also in education. The Otaniemi general upper secondary school uses Futures Platform in different subjects to help students examine and understand possible future scenarios.

Aki Saariaho, English, Philosophy and Ethics Teacher at Otaniemi general upper secondary school got interested in Futures Platform after hearing some of his friends praise it. For a while, he had been searching for a way to bridge the gap between what is being taught at school every day and what is currently happening in the everyday world.

“At home, students hear about what is happening in society. We need to address these topics in school as well. It is important to grasp where we are going and how to approach the future. I think that giving our students the right tools to approach the future with will make our future better, and the future of humankind in general,” says Saariaho.

Saariaho gave his students a task to write about future phenomena. Using Futures Platform enabled the students to dive deep into possible future scenarios and give insightful answers.

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*Aki Saariaho, English, Philosophy and Ethics Teacher, Otaniemi general upper secondary school*

Located right next to the country's capital, City of Espoo is the second largest city and municipality in Finland, employing over 14,000 people in the public sector.

The city uses Futures Platform for many different purposes, such as to enhance collaboration between city units in their operations and to utilize foresight in areas such as strategic development, service development, education development in Education and Cultural Services, school boards in primary schools, secondary schools and upper secondary schools, and especially in learning with pupils of different ages. Otaniemi general upper secondary school is one of the schools participating in the pilot.

## **Writing about the future and growing potatoes in the air**

Students in Philosophy and English classes were given a task to write about possible future scenarios that could take place within ten years' time, basing their insight on a phenomenon taken from a Custom Radar designed for the purpose.

In the English class, Saariaho had two groups – one that used Futures Platform and another that didn't. He noticed that the answers of the students who used the platform were more specific and included scenarios more likely to occur than the answers of those who didn't use the platform.

"Using Futures Platform for school exercises allows me to evaluate their understanding. I have noticed that many young people have similar critique towards society in general. I think it is an observation we should take seriously and focus on."

He explains that they have used the Futures Platform especially for creating a radar and predicting what kinds of possibilities there could be in the future, how different phenomena could manifest and how a trend could affect another trend. In addition to this, they have also looked at the big picture.

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Currently, Saariaho is interested in projects regarding sustainable development. For example, the students are currently growing potatoes in the air, without a need for soil.

"These kinds of projects are important ways for students to learn how to support humankind in the future. If you look at reports, there is going to be a lack of agricultural land. We need to look at vertical farming, aeroponic farming, hydroponic farming and aquaponic farming. Naturally, we can't model these things in class at a scale that would have nutritional value, but perhaps our small projects will spark interest in a student who will then end up studying the subject and become a Nobelist someday. That's why we do this job," Saariaho describes.

## Gaining a wider view on education and building a sustainable future

As a result of using Futures Platform, Saariaho mentions the benefits that using the tool creates for education and preparing for a sustainable future.

“Using Futures Platform is an eye-opening experience. It allows us to see the future possibilities in teaching and education and to prepare students for the global world. In addition, it only contains validated information. Relying only on validated information is crucial if we want to build a sustainable future,” says Saariaho.

He concludes that it is the teachers’ responsibility as educators to remember that they have a massive impact on how their students perceive the present-day world – and the future.

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