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Multilingual native language lesson pilot project

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In Finland the teaching of students' native languages is largely funded by the state. Because the number of the students influences the amount of finance, it is not possible to open separate language groups for less frequently requested languages with fewer speakers. A multilingual native language lesson is a lesson where primary school students speaking different languages are being taught simultaneously by two teachers - a Finnish as a second language teacher and a native language teacher (a Russian and Estonian teacher). Even though they do not speak the students' languages, it is possible to provide an opportunity for the students to use their own languages and enlarge their vocabulary. The students are highly motivated and enthusiastic. Their ability to switch from one language to another has improved. They are doing better with their reading and writing skills, both in Finnish and in their native languages. Our project has shown that this kind of a model is one more possibility for including the students' native languages in the learning process and provides a way for them to be included and not excluded. It is also a clear message from the school to the families that their native languages are appreciated and seen as worth preserving.