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# Promoting student well-being in upper secondary education

Learning support (pedagogical support), special education, and  
student welfare work

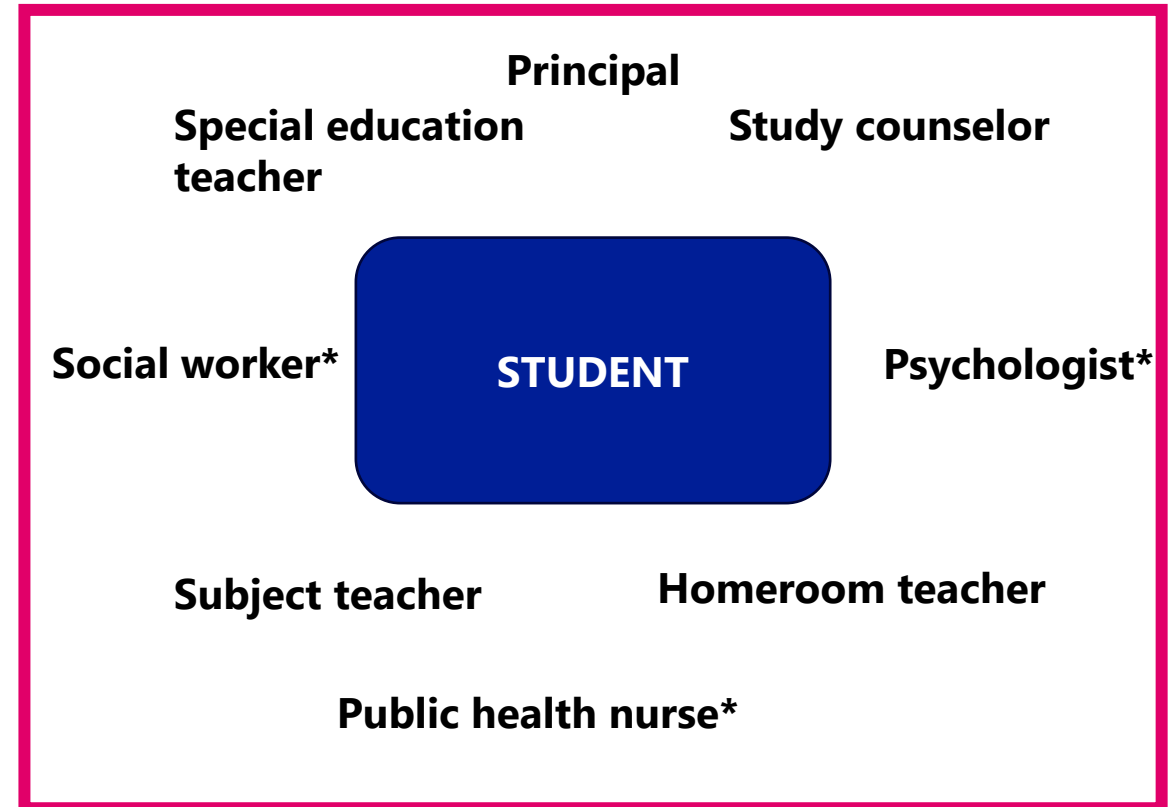


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# Student well-being and learning support each other

- **Well-being is a prerequisite for learning.** When young people feel good, they can concentrate, learn better, and feel motivated to study.
- **Learning strengthens well-being.** Experiences of success, discovering one's own strengths, and progress in studies support young people's self-esteem and coping.
- **Upper secondary school can be a stressful time in life.** A new learning environment, a heavy course load, and pressure about future studies increase the need for support.
- **That is why multi-level support is needed in upper secondary school.** Learning support, special education, and student welfare work form a whole that prevents problems from accumulating and provides timely help.



\* The counselor, psychologist, and public health nurse (student welfare) are administratively employed in the welfare sector.

## Areas of well-being

- **Mental wellbeing.** Adequate sleep, stress management, and emotional balance help young people cope with their studies and life.
- **Social well-being.** Friendships, belonging to a group, and a positive atmosphere create security and encourage participation.
- **Physical well-being.** Healthy nutrition, exercise, and a regular daily routine support learning ability and recovery.

**Well-being is a whole. All areas are interrelated, and when one area weakens, the others are also easily affected.**



# Learning support and student welfare support

## LEARNING SUPPORT (PEDAGOGICAL SUPPORT)

- Implemented through teaching and guidance.
- The responsibility lies with the education provider.
- The aim is to support students' learning, study skills, and progress in their studies.
- Forms of support include remedial teaching, differentiation, guidance from a special education teacher, and extra time in exams.

## STUDENT WELFARE SUPPORT

- Provided by student health care, the school counselor, and the psychologist.
- Responsibility lies with the wellbeing services county.
- The goal is to support students' well-being, health, and life management.
- Forms of support include health care, mental health support, social guidance, and crisis assistance.



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# Learning support and guidance in upper secondary school



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# The roles of teaching staff in guidance and support

## PRINCIPAL

- Creates opportunities and resources for guidance and support.
- Responsible for ensuring that students' right to personal guidance is realized.
- Coordinates student welfare together with the student welfare team.
- Ensures that guidance and student welfare plans are updated.

## SUBJECT TEACHER

- Guides students in their study skills in their own subject and in preparing for the matriculation examination.
- Supports learning skills and readiness for further studies.
- Provides remedial teaching when necessary.

## HOMEROOM TEACHER

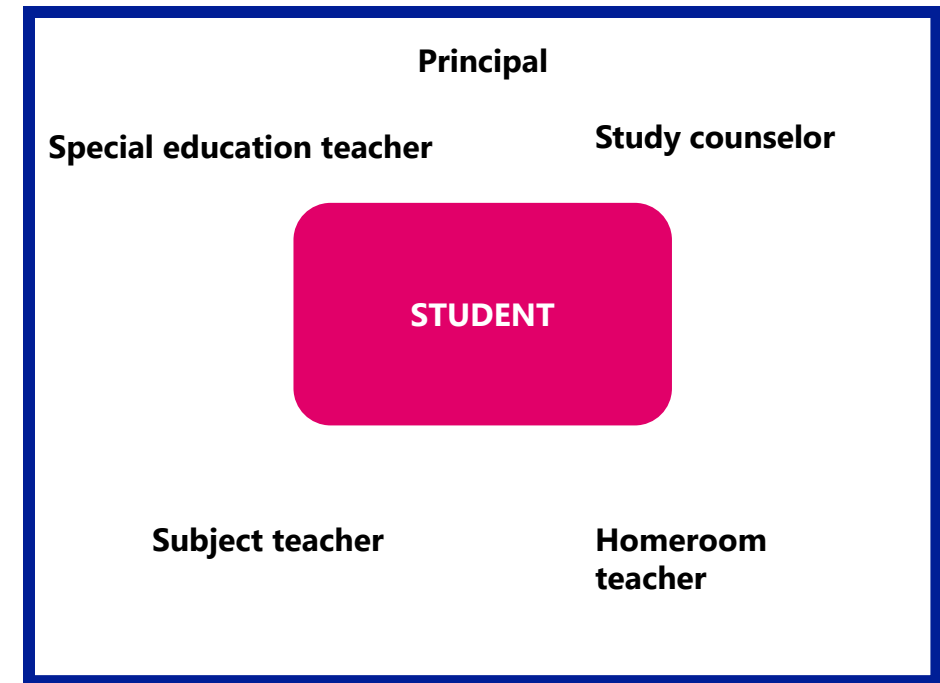
- Is the student's immediate contact person at school.
- Supports group cohesion and familiarises students with upper secondary school practices.
- Monitors students' progress, choices, absences, and completion of the matriculation examination.
- Acts as a link between home and school.

## STUDY COUNSELOR

- Responsible for overall study guidance and its coordination.
- Supports students in their studies, choices, and life situations.
- Helps students identify their strengths and areas for development as learners.

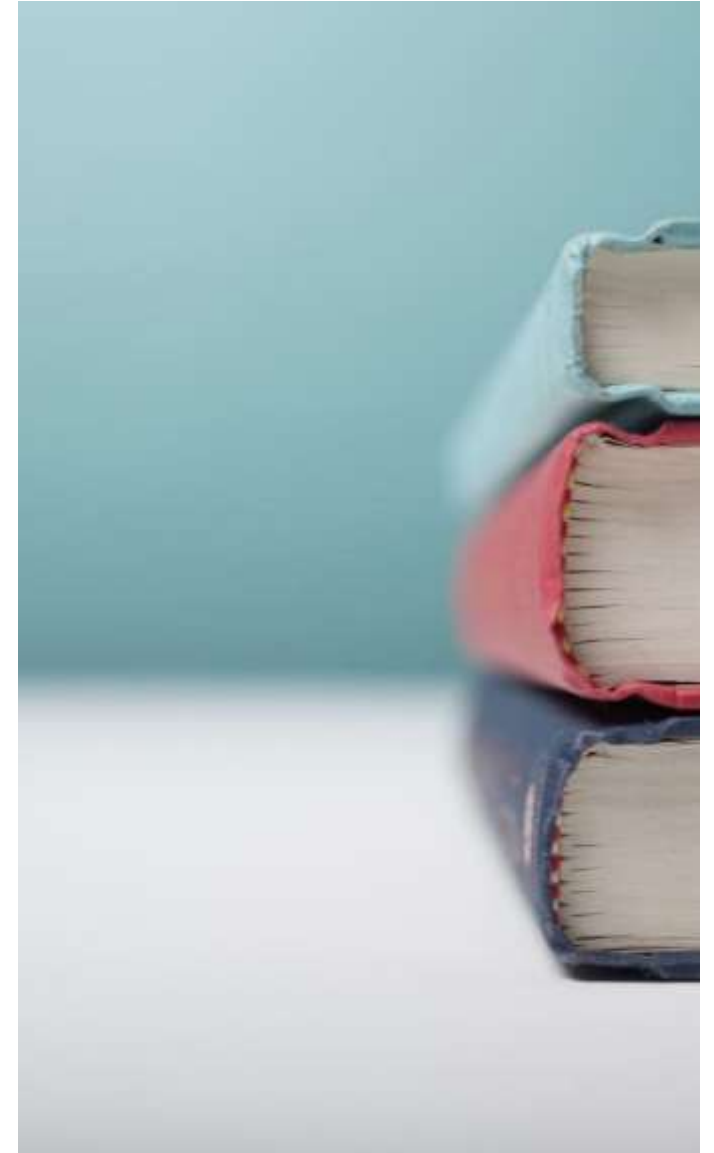
## SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER

- Strengthens students' positive self-image as learners.
- Identifies learning difficulties (e.g., reading difficulties) and plans support measures.
- If necessary, prepares statements for special arrangements for the matriculation examination.



# Learning support

- **Learning support is a student's right.** It is provided as soon as the need for support arises, so that difficulties do not accumulate and prevent progress in studies.
- **Support is part of everyday life.** Subject teachers take students' needs into account in their planning, differentiate their teaching, and provide remedial teaching when necessary.
- **Multidisciplinary cooperation strengthens the support.** Special education teachers, study counselors, and other staff support students together with teachers.
- **Support is flexible and diverse.** It can mean different teaching methods, small group work, practicing study techniques, or extra time on exams.



# Learning support in upper secondary school

## BASIS FOR SUPPORT MEASURES

DATA TRANSFER  
FROM PRIMARY  
SCHOOL

DIGITAL SCREENING

EDUCATIONAL  
SUPPORT PLAN

STUDENT  
EXPERIENCES AND  
TEACHER  
OBSERVATIONS

## DURING STUDIES

REMEDIAL  
TEACHING

EXTRA TIME IN  
EXAMS

MULTIFACETED  
WAYS OF  
DEMONSTRATING  
SKILLS

PRACTICING STUDY  
SKILLS

STUDY GUIDANCE

SUPPORT FROM A  
SPECIAL  
EDUCATION  
TEACHER

SPECIAL  
ARRANGEMENTS FOR  
MATRICULATION  
EXAMS

EXTENDING THE  
STUDY PERIOD

# Special education in upper secondary school

- **Students have the right to special education.** If the learning support provided is insufficient for the student's needs and they have verified learning difficulties or other comparable reasons, they can apply for special education in order to complete the upper secondary school curriculum.
- **Special education requires an administrative decision.** The education provider makes the decision on special education after consulting with the student and, if necessary, their guardian.
- **The special education teacher is responsible for special educational support measures.** They provide guidance on study strategies, assess the need for special arrangements, and provide long-term support to the student.
- **Special education is goal-oriented and systematic.** Support measures are agreed upon with the student and evaluated regularly.



# A special education teacher at a upper secondary school supports students in situations such as the following



**ARE YOU WORRIED THAT YOU HAVE READING DIFFICULTIES, MATHEMATICAL LEARNING DIFFICULTIES, OR DIFFICULTIES IN PERCEPTION?**

**THE RESULTS OF THE DIGITAL SCREENING ARE WORRYING**

**YOU WANT TO REFLECT ON AND IMPROVE YOUR STUDY TECHNIQUES**

**YOU NEED HELP WITH EXAM PERIODS, FINAL WEEKS, READING BREAKS OR STUDY SCHEDULING**

**YOU HAVE LOST YOUR MOTIVATION TO STUDY**

**YOU ARE NERVOUS AND/OR STRESSED**

**YOU READ EXAM QUESTIONS INCORRECTLY AND THEREFORE ANSWER IRRELEVANTLY**

**YOU CAN'T KEEP UP WITH YOUR STUDIES AND YOU WONDER WHY**

# Support provided by special education teachers in primary school vs. upper secondary school



## SPECIAL EDUCATION AND SUPPORT PROVIDED BY SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

- The special education teacher often works as a co-teacher with the class teacher/subject teacher.
- The special education teacher can provide support in smaller teaching groups:
  - Part-time
  - Full-time
- A special education teacher can provide support in smaller groups, for example during exams.
- Special education teachers can support students **several times a week or every day**.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION AND SUPPORT PROVIDED BY A SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER IN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

- The support provided by special education teachers in upper secondary school focuses more on individual students.
- Support may include, for example:
  - discussions about support needs and ways to support learning, testing for reading difficulties, assessing the need for special arrangements for the matriculation examination, and applying for special arrangements.
  - teaching appropriate study strategies or providing support for scheduling assignments and independent and goal-oriented study.
- If necessary, the special education teacher can meet with the student, for example, **three times per academic year or for one hour per period**.



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# Student welfare support in upper secondary school



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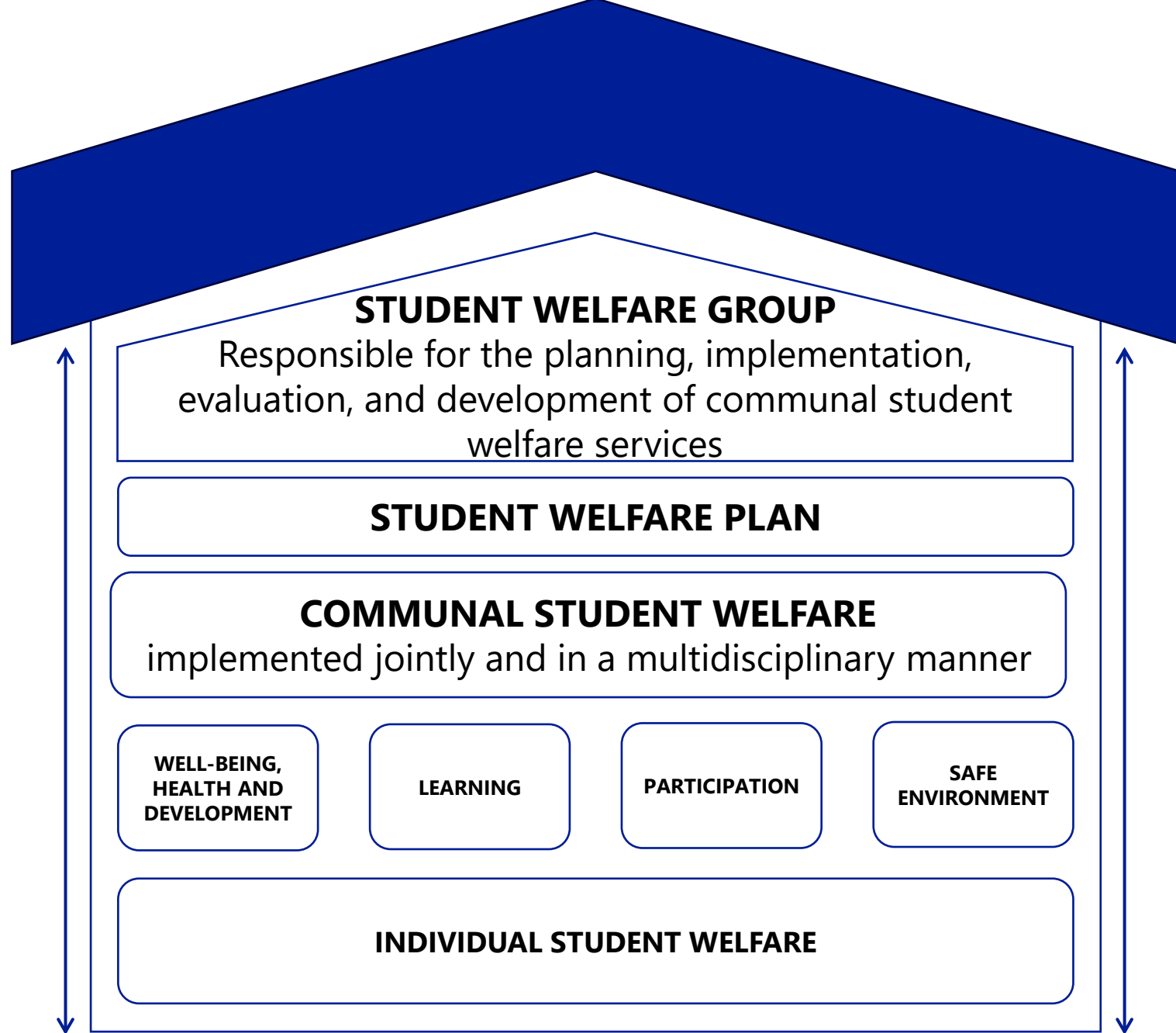
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# Student welfare services in upper secondary schools and vocational institutions



## Student welfare work in upper secondary school

- Student welfare is both communal and individual.
- Preventive work that supports the entire community is a priority.
- The student welfare team is responsible for planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating student welfare.
- The document guiding the activities is the student welfare plan, which is a public document.



# Student welfare work in upper secondary school



## COMMUNAL STUDENT WELFARE

- Supports the well-being and learning of the entire school community.
- Builds a safe, healthy, and accessible learning environment.
- Strengthens student participation and a positive community atmosphere.
- Is preventive work that aims to prevent problems from accumulating.
- Involves all adults at the educational institution, not just student welfare professionals.

## INDIVIDUAL STUDENT WELFARE

- Focuses on the needs and life situation of individual students.
- Services: student health care, counselor and psychologist services.
- If necessary, a multidisciplinary team of experts can be assembled to support the student.
- Support is based on voluntary participation and confidentiality.
- Responsibility for organizing this lies with the welfare services.

# Communal student welfare

- **Community-based work is the primary form of student welfare.** It supports the well-being of all students in their everyday activities.
- **The goal is to create a safe, healthy, and accessible learning environment** where students' voices are heard and their participation is strengthened.
- **The entire staff participates in community work.** This is reflected, for example, in team building, bullying prevention, and developing the school atmosphere.
- **Prevention is key.** Community-based student welfare aims to prevent problems before they turn into individual support needs.



# Examples of communal student welfare work in Raksila



## Student welfare group

- **The student welfare group is a multidisciplinary** forum that plans, implements, and evaluates community-based student welfare.
- **The group is led by the principal** and includes teachers, a study counselor, a special education teacher, a school nurse, a school social worker, and a psychologist.
- **The group's work utilizes information** such as school health surveys and experiential well-being surveys.
- **The group's task is not to deal with individual students,** but to focus on the well-being of the entire community and the development of the learning environment.



# Examples of the work of the student welfare group in Raksila



WELFARE PLAN &  
EVALUATION

SURVEYS & FEEDBACK

STUDENT & PARENT  
VOICE

MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
MEETINGS

HOMEROOM TEACHER  
INPUT

# Meeting agenda example for the student welfare group in Raksila



## OHR Raksila Upper Secondary School Agenda

**Tue, May 13, 2025, 8:15–9:30 a.m. Raksila Upper Secondary School, Room A110**

**Present:** Principal, Vice Principal, Special education teacher, Harassment Liaison, Study Counselors, School Nurse, Psychologist, Social worker, Coordinator, Youth Worker, Guardian, Guardian, Student, Student

### 1. Organization of the meeting

### 2. Approval of the agenda

### 3. Minutes of the previous meeting

### 4. Dates for OHR meetings in the 2025–2026 academic year

Planning the dates for the OHR meetings for the next academic year.

Tue, Aug. 12, 2025

Tue, September 16, 2025

Tue, Oct. 14, 2025

Tue, Nov. 11, 2025 (3rd–4th year group leaders and student representatives)

Tue, Dec. 9, 2025 (2nd year group leaders and student representatives)

Tue, Jan. 13, 2026 (1st-year group leaders and student representatives)

Tue, Feb. 17, 2026

Tue, March 17, 2026

Tue, April 14, 2026

Fri, May 8, 2026 planning day

### 5. Learning support

Review the file received from the LOPS steering group on the implementation of learning support and special education. Make school-specific entries.

### 6. Evaluation of activities

How successful has the student welfare team been in its activities this academic year?

What areas for improvement are there?

### 7. Training announcements

### 8. Other matters

### 9. Next meeting on Tuesday, August 12, 2025, in conference room A110

## Individual student welfare

- **Individual student welfare services provide assistance to students** in their own specific situations.
- Services include **healthcare, counseling, and psychological services**, which are provided by the welfare department.
- **The services are free of charge**, and students have the right to receive assistance quickly.
- **Individual work is voluntary and confidential for students.** If necessary, a multidisciplinary team of experts can be assembled with the student's consent.

### CURATOR/SOCIAL WORKER

- Assesses the student's life situation and mental/social well-being
- Provides discussion support and guidance in managing everyday life
- Supports guardians in their parenting
- Participates in acute crisis work and refers students to social services when necessary.

### PSYCHOLOGIST

- Supports the student's psychological well-being and mental health
- Assesses risks to learning and study ability and conducts examinations when necessary
- Offers individual, family, and group discussions
- Refers students to further examinations and treatment services and supports teachers and guardians

### PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE

- Conducts health checks and assesses students' health
- Supports resources and provides guidance on healthy lifestyles
- Provides vaccination and health counseling as well as sexual and mental health support
- Refers to a doctor or other services when necessary

# Multidisciplinary expert group

**A multidisciplinary expert group is assembled to support the student when a single professional is not sufficient.**

- The consent of the student (and, in the case of minors, also their guardian) is required to assemble the group.
- The group may include, for example, a teacher, group leader, special education teacher, study counselor, curator, psychologist, health nurse, student, and guardian.
- The group agrees on support measures, responsibilities, and schedules.

## Tasks

- Assess the student's overall situation and need for support.
- Agree on concrete support measures and follow-up.
- Ensure the flow of information and division of labor.
- Prepare a student welfare report on the agreed matters.

## Principles

- Voluntary participation and confidentiality.
- Focus on the student – their views guide the planning.
- The goal is comprehensive and timely support.

## Examples of multidisciplinary expert group compositions

STUDENT, GUARDIANS,  
TEACHER, STUDENT  
COUNSELOR, AND HEALTH  
CARE PROVIDER

STUDENT, GUARDIANS,  
TEACHER AND CURATOR

STUDENT, GUARDIANS, AUNT,  
TEACHER, PRINCIPAL, HEALTH  
CARE PROVIDER, AND SOCIAL  
WORKER

# Teacher's checklist if concerns arise

1  
**TEACHER**  
Assess whether the concern is related to student welfare or pedagogy.

**CONSULTATION**  
If necessary, you can consult the members of the student welfare team anonymously.

**STUDENT**

- Discuss the concern with the student.
- Consider how you can support the student during the school day.
- Assess with the student whether it is necessary to contact student welfare services.
- Assess with the student whether it is necessary to assemble a multidisciplinary team of experts.

**GUARDIANS**  
With the student's consent, contact the guardians and discuss their support needs with them.

**MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDENT-SPECIFIC EXPERT GROUP**

- Depending on the student and the situation, a decision will be made with the guardian about who to invite to the group.
- The student and, if they wish, their guardian are always members of the group.
- The group will select a person in charge and a person to record the student welfare report.



**The teacher is important to the student:**

- The first to listen
- Face-to-face
- Always an adult
- Welcoming and guiding



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# Workshop: Student cases



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# WORKING INSTRUCTIONS

## STEP 1: HOW CAN WE SOLVE THE SITUATION THROUGH MULTIDISCIPLINARY COOPERATION?

**Instructions: Your group has been given a worksheet describing a student case. Discuss based on the case:**

- As a representative of my professional group, what are my thoughts on the situation based on the student's description?
- What could be the reason for the student's situation? Who should be contacted?

After the discussion, **complete section 1 of the worksheet: How would you proceed in the situation described? Describe how the process would proceed in concrete terms.**



# WORKING INSTRUCTIONS

## STEP 2: NEW INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDENT'S SITUATION

**Instructions: The group receives additional information about the student's situation.**

- **Discuss the following questions based on this information:**
  - How does the additional information change your actions?
  - How can your professional expertise be utilized?
  - Would it be appropriate to involve parties outside student welfare services?
- After the discussion, complete **section 2** of the worksheet: **How will you continue your actions?** Describe concretely how the process would continue.



## WORKING INSTRUCTIONS

### STEP 3: ASSESSING THE ADEQUACY OF THE ACTIONS TAKEN

**Instructions: Discuss the following questions:**

- When has a student received sufficient support?
- How do you know that the student has received the help they need and that the process can be concluded?
- After the discussion, complete **section 3** of the worksheet:  
**Describe in concrete terms how the process ends.**





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# Summary



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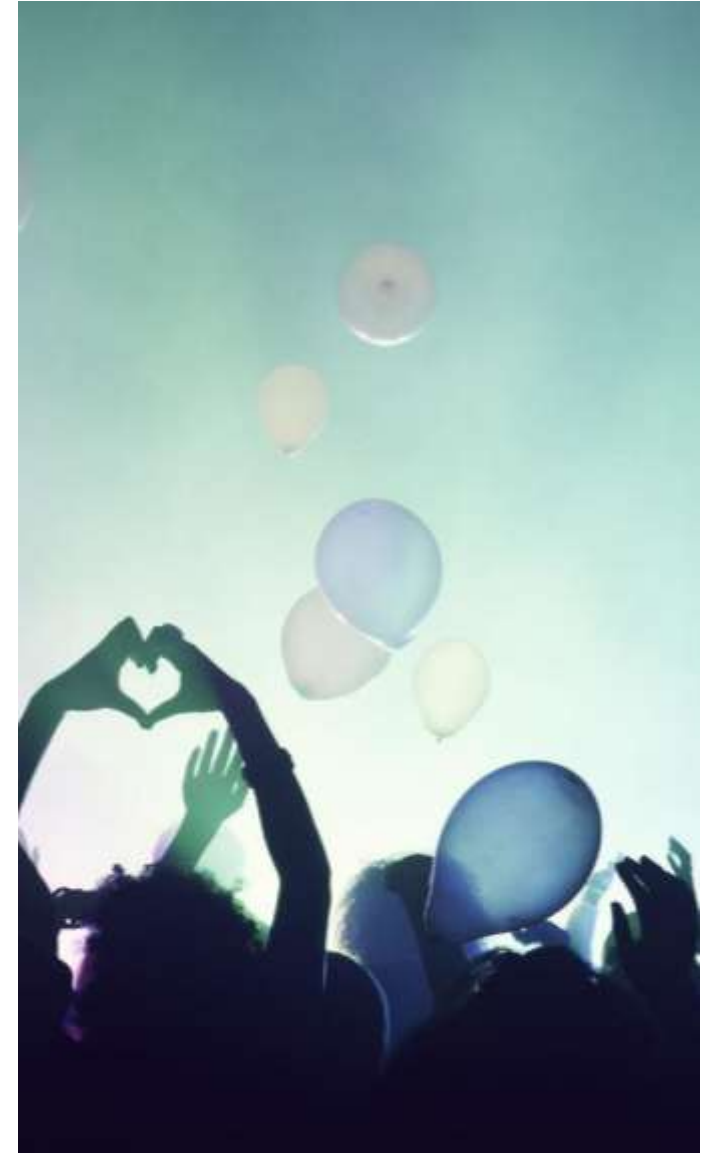
## A thriving school community

- **A safe everyday life is the foundation of everything.** A thriving upper secondary school provides a physically, mentally, and socially safe environment.
- **A positive atmosphere strengthens resilience.** Caring and encouraging interaction increases attachment to school and enjoyment of studying.
- **Team building and student participation are very important.** The student council, tutors, and joint events support a sense of togetherness.
- **Prevention is more important than correction.** Well-being is monitored systematically, and minor concerns are addressed in a timely manner.



## Summary

- **Well-being and learning support each other.** Students' coping and experiences of success strengthen their motivation and learning.
- **Learning support and special education are the rights of students.** They help ensure that every young person can progress in their studies from their own starting point.
- **Student welfare services build security and trust.** Collaborative work creates a good atmosphere, and individual services support young people in their own situations.
- **The most important thing is that students are not left alone.** When pedagogical support and student welfare work together, everyone has the opportunity to succeed in their upper secondary school studies.





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# Promoting student well-being in upper secondary school

Learning support, special education, and student welfare work



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