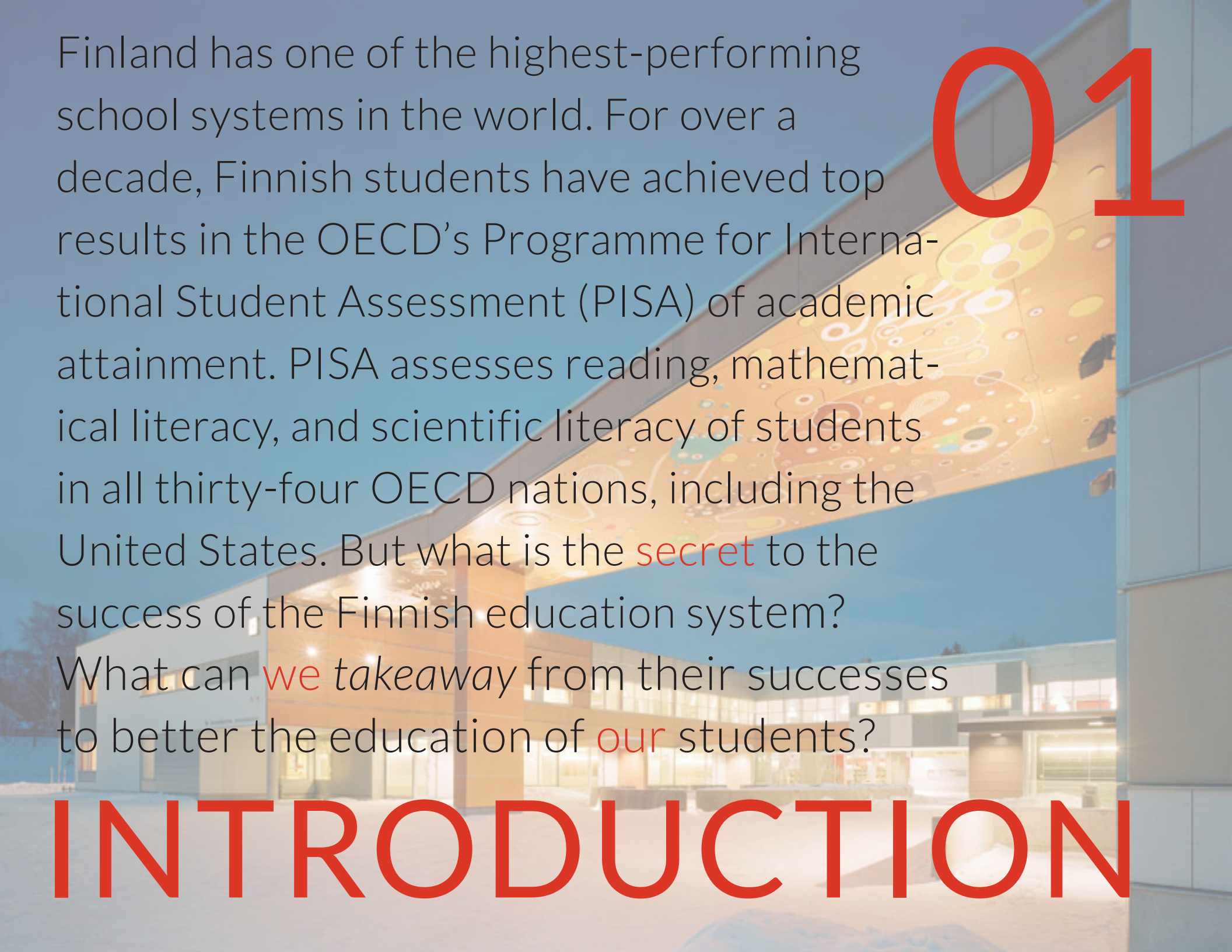


A photograph of a modern school building at night. The building features a curved glass facade that reflects the surrounding environment. The interior lights are on, showing a bright, open-plan space. The building is surrounded by a paved area and a grassy lawn with several small trees and modern light fixtures. The sky is dark blue.

SCHOOLS OF THE FUTURE

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM FINLAND'S
CONTINUED ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

201501



Finland has one of the highest-performing school systems in the world. For over a decade, Finnish students have achieved top results in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of academic attainment. PISA assesses reading, mathematical literacy, and scientific literacy of students in all thirty-four OECD nations, including the United States. But what is the **secret** to the success of the Finnish education system? What can **we** *takeaway* from their successes to better the education of **our** students?

01

INTRODUCTION

Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so **much**
- Helen Keller

02

OPEN SPACES



Finland's schools implement innovative layouts, which are far different from traditional classroom set up. Re-imagining classroom design has allowed Finnish schools to reform how students are educated which helps provide individual support and effective **collaboration**. Teaching takes place in a relaxed atmosphere: children are allowed to sit where and in whatever position they want, and discussion between them in class is even encouraged.

The Finnish education system really believes that *"better architecture contributes to better scholastic experience"*.

The classrooms within these schools have been designed to promote collaboration between students, teachers and the community as a whole. This can help inspire unique and independent learning. Every interior and exterior space is a potential place for learning.

It has shown that in schools like this, which have departed from the traditional educational model, children's educational progress is much higher, while the problems such as bullying are reduced. Schools that have few windows, isolated classrooms, and little public gathering space were harder for adults to supervise, leading to more bullying.

We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created it.

- Albert Einstein

Teaching by TOPIC

Subject-specific lessons such as hour of history in the morning, an hour of geography in the afternoon... are already being phased out of Finland's schools. They are being replaced by what's call "phenomenon" teaching – or teaching by topic. For instance, During English (a second language), students don't waste time trying to memorize verbs and nouns. Instead, they learn the language in an interactive manner with activities like matching weather conditions with the appropriate country on a map of Europe. This activity is not only fun, but also allows the kids to master English and Geography at the same time. Besides helping them learn, this approach allows for greater collaboration and communication between pupils and also helps them develop creative thinking skills.

03

All schools will soon be required to have at least one extended period of the new hour of the new "phenomenon" teaching. Curriculum is developed by the educators and student involvement is required. These methods have already proven successful in some of the schools that have already begun to implement this.

04



SHARED SPACES

The image shows a spacious, modern interior, likely a school or community center. The ceiling is high and features a wooden slat design. The walls are also made of wood, with a large blackboard on the right side. The floor is light-colored and polished. In the foreground, there are several round tables with wooden chairs. In the background, there is a yellow wall and a staircase. The overall atmosphere is bright and open.

Finland's schools are also built for community use. In the evenings, the school turns into a leisure and sports center for all the citizens in the neighborhood. Places such as libraries, theaters, cafeterias, hardware workshops are used to maximum effect.

“Children must be taught *how* to think,
not *what* to think”

- Margaret Mead



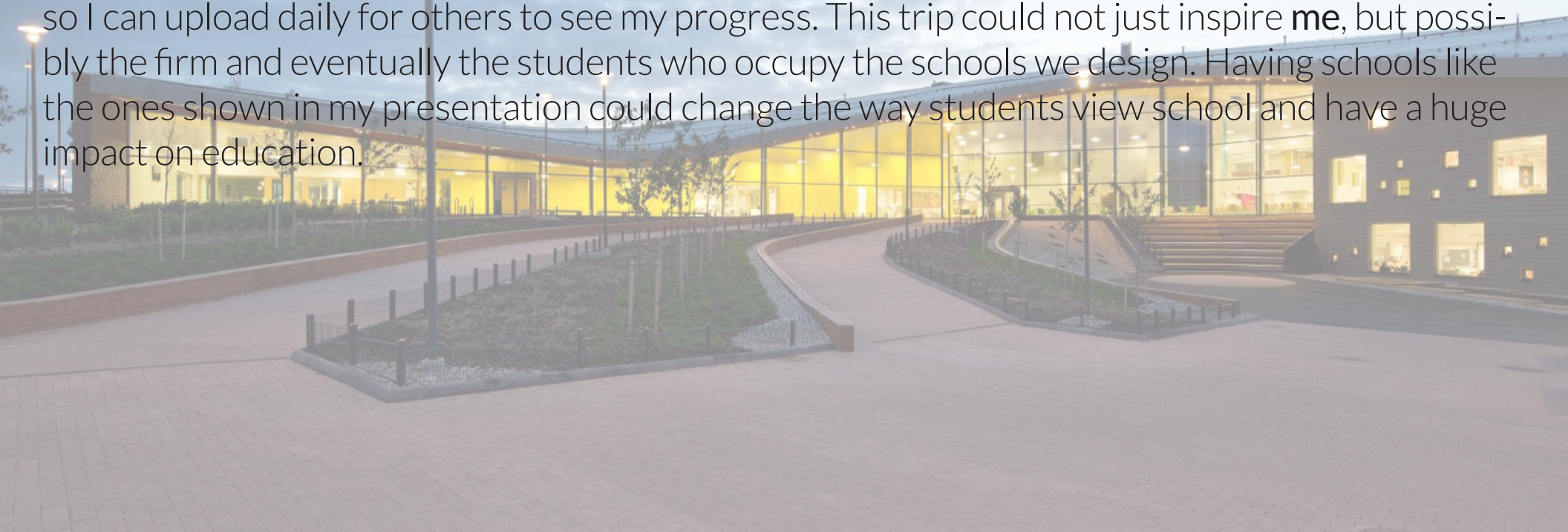
06

Growing up, I always thought school was...just plain school. Classrooms contained traditional desks set up in rows with a whiteboard. When I began to work for RRC, I walked in thinking we just designed schools and didn't have much say in the educational aspect of things. Boy, was I wrong. I immediately became **FASCINATED** with our designs and how we are always striving to take it to the next level.

After briefly researching Finland's schools, I came across the way they educate (referenced in [Section 03](#)) and that only added to my fascination. What can we do to mimic some of these methods?

This is why I would like to travel to Finland.

I plan to visit Strömberg School, Hiidenkivi Comprehensive School and Helsinki Sakarinmäki School in Helsinki, Finland. From Helsinki, I will travel to Espoo (30 minutes) and visit Kirkkojärvi School (they actually conduct tours). I will interview teachers/students and hopefully some of the architects involved, capturing every step of this journey on camera. I will also keep a blog so I can upload daily for others to see my progress. This trip could not just inspire **me**, but possibly the firm and eventually the students who occupy the schools we design. Having schools like the ones shown in my presentation could change the way students view school and have a huge impact on education.



THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY

References:

Strömberg School, Helsinki

Hiidenkivi Comprehensive School, Helsinki

Sakarimäki School and Day Nursery, Helsinki

Comprehensive School in Joensuu

Enter Upper Secondary School and Vocational College, Sipoo