

## Education in America

### Let's get started...

When you were growing up, what were your favorite subjects in school? What subjects did you dislike? Now that you are older, do you still enjoy the same subjects? Share your answers with the rest of your group. Among all of you, which school subject was the most liked, and most disliked?

### New words and Idioms:

Types of schools: public, private, kindergarten, middle, elementary, junior high, high school, community college, university, religious, liberal arts, vocational.

High school/University status: freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior, undergraduate, graduate (as in someone in graduate school).

Required, attend, standards, rules, PTA, meeting, conference, progress, challenges, failure, diploma, certificate, GED, drop out, equivalency exam, graduation, higher education, tuition, scholarship, financial aid, grant, student loan, quarter, "straight-A student," "to make the grade," "to skate on thin ice," "to go against the grain," etc.

### Background:

In the United States, *public schools* are free for all children, from kindergarten to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. In most states, children are *required* to *attend* school from ages 6 to 16. Most of the *rules* about education are made by the states, so there are different *standards* for *high school graduation* in each state. *Private* schools and *religious* schools charge *tuition*, but they must follow state rules also.

It is important for people to earn a high school *diploma* because it is hard to get a good job without one. For many reasons, about 30% of high school students in the U.S. *drop out* before they earn their diploma. Adults who drop out of high school can earn a similar diploma by passing a high school *equivalency exam*. If they pass a test in each of 5 subject areas, they will receive a general education diploma (*GED*).

Many high school graduates apply to college in the fall *quarter* of their *senior* year. And it is also common for adults to go back to school after gaining some work experience. In the United States, college can be very expensive; so many people apply for *financial aid* in the form of *scholarships*, *grants*, and *student loans*.

There are many different types of *higher education* in the United States. We have *vocational* schools; *community*, *public*, and *private* college; There are also many other types of training opportunities and certificate programs, where a person usually receives a *certificate* for studying or training on a specific subject upon completion.



**In pairs for 5 minutes, ask and answer these questions:**

Try to find a partner who is not from your country. Discuss the education system in your respective countries. What are the similarities? What are the differences?

If you cannot find a partner from another country (you are both from the same country), then discuss your educational experiences while growing up in the same country.

**Share your partner's answers with the group.**

**Discussion Questions:**

What are the qualities of a good student? What are the qualities of a good teacher?

What kinds of school did you attend in your native country? Did you enjoy school?

What style of teaching did your teachers use? Did you like it? Why or Why not?

Have you had any schooling since you lived here in the United States?

If so, what kind of schooling did you receive? What did you study?

In your country, do parents participate in the education of their children? If so, what are some ways that parents participate?

In the U.S., most parents are required to attend parent/teacher *conferences* when their children are in elementary school. This gives the parents a chance to ask questions about their children's *progress* or *challenges* in the classroom. They can ask the teacher for ideas of ways they can help their children succeed.

Are parent/teacher conferences required in your country? Do parents enjoy speaking to their children's teachers? Is there any communication between parents and teachers?

Is *failure* in schools a big problem in your native country? What happens to students who drop out? Are they still able to get jobs?

In your native country, what role do parents have in deciding what college their children will attend? Is their decision more important than their child's decision?

In your native country, are people more likely to attend college, or not? Please explain. Is college tuition expensive? How do people pay for college? Is higher education free for anyone?

How long must you go to college to earn a degree? Is it common for adults to travel to other countries for their education?

How important is it to have a high school degree? A college degree? Please explain.

What subjects are important to study in your native country?

Are women encouraged to pursue an education in your native country? Please explain.

How do you think education will change in the future?