

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 your group, which school subject was the most liked, and most disliked?

Background:

Many families who come to the United States can be confused by American schools. American schools may appear to be very informal, but they do have rules about clothing, language, drugs, medicine, weapons, and harassment. Sometimes children from other countries may not understand what the rules are and get into trouble. Also American schools encourage parents to be active in their children's education. They like to have parents participate in school activities.

There are also many kinds of adult education in the United States. In the 21st century, workers need to be lifelong learners, able to adapt as jobs change with the economy. Many workers will need to go back to school to learn new skills. Computers have opened up new ways to learn and go to school. Distance learning through the Internet, cable TV, or video is becoming more popular.

In pairs for 5 minutes, talk about these questions. Then discuss your answers with the group.

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

Discussion Questions:

In the United States, parents take part in their children's education. They have meetings with the teacher, read to children at home, make sure homework gets done, and sometimes volunteer in the classroom. Do parents do this in your home country?

How many days a week do children go to school in your home country? How many hours each day are children in class? What do children do after school? Who takes care of them?

In the United States parents must call the school office if a child cannot be in school that day. With a partner, practice calling the school to tell them your child is sick.

Discuss these questions about schools. Which things are the same in the United States and in your home country? Which things are different?

	In the US	In Your Home Country
What supplies do students need to buy for school?		
How do students behave in class?		
How do teachers behave in class?		
How do you travel to school?		
Are there meals at school?		
How far from your home is school?		
What do kids wear in school?		

Do kids have different clothes to wear for physical education class?		
How big are classes?		
Is it important to be on time?		
How much homework is there?		
How important are grades?		

How much education you have can make a difference in what kind of job you have and how much money you can make in your lifetime. How important is education to you?

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

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

In your native country do most students attend college? Is college tuition expensive? How do people pay for college? Is higher education free for anyone?

How many years must you go to college to earn a degree? Do people travel to other countries for their education?

Some companies will pay for classes that their workers take. Do you think that this is a good benefit?

On-the-job training (OJT) is a good way to help workers learn new jobs where they work. Sometimes they can take classes at work, too. Do you think that this is a good way to learn?

In the United States, many adults go to school in their free time to learn new things. For example, some people study photography, plants, travel, feng shui, how to play card games, or how to use a computer. Some places have special classes for senior citizens. What kind of a class would you like to take "just for fun"?

These websites of local school districts might be helpful for parents of children in school. You can look up information about school locations, dates, papers you will need to fill out, and other questions you might have.

Lake Washington School District, Redmond: www.lkwash.wednet.edu

Bellevue School District : www.bsd405.org

Northshore School District, Bothell: www.nsd.org

Issaquah School District: <http://www.issaquah.wednet.edu/Schools/list.asp>

Shoreline School District: <http://www.shorelineschools.org/>

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).

Other vocabulary: required, attend, standards, rules, "act out," PTA (PTSA), meeting, conference, progress, challenges, failure, diploma, certificate, GED, drop out, graduation, higher education, tuition, scholarship, financial aid, grant, student loan, quarter, feng shui, "straight-A student," "to make the grade," "to skate on thin ice," "to go against the grain," etc.