

Education in the USA

The educational system in the USA varies from state to state. Each state has its own responsibility for education, which means that there is a difference in the subjects offered and in the organization of the school system.



THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE USA

The age for compulsory education in the USA varies from state to state. Children start school between the ages of 5 and 8 and end between the ages of 14 and 18. Although education is compulsory, not all US children go to a school. Some are educated at home with approved **home school programmes**.

In most public and private schools, education is divided into three levels: elementary school (5-11), junior high school (often called middle school) (11-13), and high school (13-16/18). In almost all schools at these levels, children are divided by age groups into 'grades'. Students move up one grade each year, till the 12th grade in high school.



Homeschooling

In many countries homeschooling is a legal option. Countries with the most prevalent home education movements include Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. In the USA, 1.5 million children (2.9% of all US children) were educated at home in 2007, compared to about 50,000 children in Britain. Parents may decide to teach their children from home for many reasons. These include: improved character and morality development, objections to what is taught in school and situations where a child is disabled or has special learning needs. Homeschooling is also an option for families who live in isolated locations or who live abroad temporarily.

Graduation

American students graduate at the end of 12th grade. There is a graduation ceremony in each school to celebrate the event. Students wear a cap and gown and receive a diploma from the head of the school. They often buy a 'class ring' with the school symbol and a yearbook, a photo diary with pictures of friends and teachers, sports events, class trips and everyday school life.

Warm up

1 Answer these questions.

- 1 Is the school system in your country organized in the same way all over the country?
- 2 Can different schools have different timetables and holidays?

Reading

2 Read these pages and find the following information:

- 1 the ages at which children must start primary school in the US
- 2 the three levels of education

- 3 the percentage of US children who study at home
- 4 what grades are and how many grades there are
- 5 what a graduation ceremony consists of
- 6 the five compulsory school subjects in the USA
- 7 what elective studies are
- 8 the role of sports in US education.

Speaking

3 Class discussion. Discuss the following.

- Is homeschooling legal in your country?
- What are its advantages and disadvantages?
- Would you like to study at home? Why? Why not?