



# AMERICAN SCHOOLS

*Intermediate ESL Level*



## I. Pre-reading

Think about schools in your native country. Do all children go to school? Is school free? Where does money for schools come from? How many years do children usually go to school?

## II. Vocabulary

communities  
tuition  
federal

policies  
graduate from  
vocational

loans  
opportunities  
skills

completion  
difficulty  
principal

## III. Reading

Most **communities** have schools for children. Most children attend public schools.

Public schools are free. Sometimes parents have to pay for books and supplies, but they don't have to pay **tuition**. Most of the money for public schools comes from property taxes. If you own a home, you pay property taxes. Public schools also get money from the **federal** and state governments, so they have to follow government **policies**.

### ***KINDS OF SCHOOLS***

***Preschool:*** Many children begin preschool when they are 3 or 4 years old. Some preschools are public, and some are private. In preschool, children play with other children and learn to listen to the teacher.



***Kindergarten:*** Children who are 5 years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> can go to kindergarten. Children do not have to go to kindergarten, but most children do. Most kindergartens are public. Kindergarten classes usually meet for half-days Monday through Friday. There are some full-day kindergartens, too.

**Elementary School:** School years in the United States are called grades. Elementary schools usually have kindergarten and grades 1 to 6. All children who are 6 years old must attend grade 1 or first grade.



**Middle School/Junior High School:** After elementary school, children attend middle school or junior high school. They usually have grades 7 and 8, but middle schools can have grades 5 or 6, too. Sometimes middle schools or junior high schools are in the same building as elementary schools.



**High School:** After middle school or junior high school, children begin high school. High schools usually have grades 9 to 12, but some schools have 10 to 12. Students are called freshmen (grade 9), sophomores (grade 10), juniors (grade 11), and seniors (grade 12). High school prepares students for jobs or for further study after high school.

In the United States, all children until they are 16 years old. When last year of high school, they are Most children **graduate from** receive a diploma, but not finish. Some drop out before



must go to school children finish their usually 18 years old. high school and sometimes they do they graduate.

**After High School:** Students who graduate from high school can continue to study at **vocational** schools, community colleges or universities. Vocational schools are usually private. They prepare students to work in certain fields such as cooking or TV repair. Community colleges are two-year public schools, but they are not free. Universities offer degrees in many fields. In the United States, there are both public and private four-year universities and colleges, and they can be very expensive. Students can also apply for financial aid such as scholarships or **loans**. High schools, colleges, and universities can provide families with information about financial aid.

**Adult Education:** In the United States, everyone can go to school – even older adults. There are many learning **opportunities** for adults. Many classes are free, but some charge tuition. Classes are offered during the day or evening

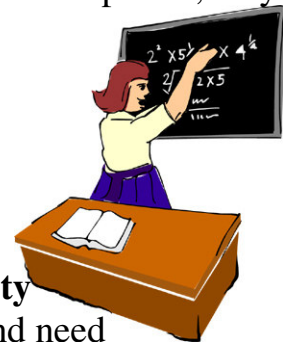
and on weekends. Classes for adults are often held at community colleges, schools, libraries and community centers. Some adult education classes are:

- English as a Second Language (ESL): to learn basic English language **skills** for everyday life
- Basic Skills and GED: to learn basic reading and math skills; to prepare for the GED test (high school **completion** test)

When adults have good English skills and a high school or GED diploma, they can enter a degree program at a college or university.

### ***SPECIAL SERVICES***

Public schools must provide education to all students, including those with special needs. Some students have physical differences, such as blindness, deafness, or **difficulty** moving their bodies. Some students have trouble learning and need special help. Schools may have gifted programs for very smart students. Some schools provide bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for students who don't speak much English. Parents should talk to the school **principal** or their child's teacher if their child needs special services.



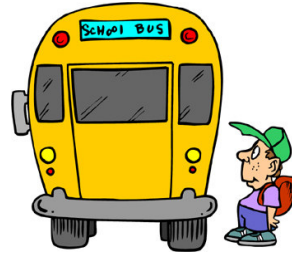
## **IV. Post-reading**

**Match the words with their definitions.**

- |                  |       |   |
|------------------|-------|---|
| 1. community     | _____ | a. head of an elementary or high school.      |
| 2. completion    | _____ | b. to finish the program of study at a school |
| 3. difficulty    | _____ | c. money paid for instruction                 |
| 4. graduate      | _____ | d. all the people in a town                   |
| 5. opportunities | _____ | e. abilities to do something well             |
| 6. federal       | _____ | f. finished                                   |
| 7. principal     | _____ | g. hard to do                                 |
| 8. skills        | _____ | h. good chances                               |
| 9. tuition       | _____ | i. national                                   |



**Choose the correct answer.**



1. If you were 5 years old, what school would you probably attend?  
high school      university      kindergarten
2. If you were 20 years old, what school would you probably attend?  
high school      university      junior high school
3. If you were 8 years old, what school would you probably attend?  
junior high school      preschool      elementary school
4. If you were 16 years old, what school would you probably attend?  
preschool      high school      university
5. If you were 4 years old, what school would you probably attend?  
high school      elementary school      preschool
6. If you were 12 years old, what school would you probably attend?  
middle school      university      kindergarten

## **V. Activities**

**If you are working with a tutor or a partner, discuss your answers.**

1. Make a list of the types of schools in your country. Compare the list to American schools. How are they the same or different?
2. Use a search engine like Google to find a university of your choice. Go to their website, and find out about the school. Then try another university, and compare the two. What are the differences in tuition?
3. Write about an experience you had while you were in school.



*Adapted with permission from  
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