

Public Education

Cross-Curricular Focus: Social Sciences



Many countries have national education programs. Some offer students a very basic education. Often, educational opportunities end with primary school. Parents who want their children to keep going to school have to pay a lot of money. Many students are trained to be skilled workers like carpenters, plumbers, and mechanics. They do this instead of continuing with academics. Only the smartest and richest students get to continue learning academic subjects in some countries.

Thomas Jefferson had an idea about **public** education when the United States was a young country. However, the first public schools did not open until the 1840's. Until then, education was mainly for the rich.

Some people thought that school should be for everyone. Horace Mann and Henry Barnard wrote articles for families about education. They worked to raise support for common schools, the old term for a public school. A free public education was available to all primary grade students by the late 1800's.

Benjamin Franklin started secondary schools in 1751. Students were not required to attend. By the mid 1900s, school was a requirement for students until they turned 16. About 75% of students now graduate from high school in the U.S.

Public education in U.S. is mainly controlled by each individual state. Every state has a department of education which makes rules that apply to schools in that state. Local school districts oversee the schools in their area. The district hires personnel and manages the daily business of the schools. Many school districts receive money from local property taxes or new construction fees. State departments of education give districts money based on actual student attendance. The U.S. government provides about 8% of the overall public school budget.

Name _____

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

1) What percentage of students now graduate from high school in the U.S.?

2) Do you think schools should be for everyone? Why or why not?

3) What does a school district do?

4) Do you think requiring students to attend school is a good idea? Why or why not?

5) What was a common school?
