

Culture Education

Learning objectives

- The students learn about the secondary education systems in four countries around the world.
- In the project stage, students write a description of their ideal school system.

Warmer

1 Divide the class into two groups. One half should make a list of the positive things about education in their country and the other half should make a list of any negative things about education in their country. Tell them to think about school hours, holidays, exams and compulsory subjects.

2 Put students into pairs (one from each of the two groups) and ask them to debate education in their country. In feedback, discuss their ideas as a class.

1 Elicit which subjects are compulsory (i.e. ones you must do by law) in your students' country. Direct students to the article and tell them to read it quickly to find the answers. Check answers.

Mixed ability

Put weaker students into groups of three and assign one country to each student. They can then complete the exercise as a group. Stronger students can work individually.

Answers

Australia: English, maths, science, history, geography, physical education and another language

France: French, maths, science, history, geography, civics, physical education, art, two modern languages

South Africa: maths, two South African languages, life orientation

2 Tell students to read the sentences and to discuss with a partner which ones they think are a good idea. Are any true for their country? Then ask them to read the texts again and to match them to a country. Check answers.

Fast finishers

Ask fast finishers to rewrite some of the sentences in exercise 2 so that they are true for the education system in their country. Elicit some examples as you check answers to exercise 2.

Answers

- 1** South Africa **2** Australia **3** France **4** France
5 Australia and South Africa **6** South Africa
7 Australia and South Africa


3 Put students into groups to discuss the questions. After a few minutes, elicit some ideas from the class. You could copy the questions onto slips of paper (one set for each group) and do this as a 'books closed' activity, with students taking turns to take a slip of paper and talking on the subject for one minute. Alternatively, you could ask them to choose the questions they think are most interesting, and form groups based on the topics they most want to discuss.

Extension activity

Put students into groups of four and give them these debate topics (or any of your own). Tell two students to argue in favour of the statement, and two students to argue against it. They should swap roles for each topic.

- 1** People should not study science, as it is not relevant to everyday life.
- 2** People rarely make use of complicated maths in their daily life, so we should stop studying it at 14.
- 3** Studying art is unlikely to lead to a job and should therefore be banned.
- 4** Girls perform better in single-sex schools, so all schools should be single-sex.

After the debates, ask each group to summarise some of their main arguments and feed back as a class.

4  **1.09** Tell students that they are going to listen to a description of the secondary school system in China, and elicit anything that they already know about it. Before they listen, ask students to read the sentences and to think about the type of information they will need to complete each gap (e.g. a word or a number). Play the recording and allow them to check their answers in pairs before checking as a class.

Extension activity

Put students into pairs to discuss the Chinese school system. How is it different from the system in their country? Elicit ideas from different pairs.

Answers

- 1 junior secondary 2 two terms 3 four 4 eight
5 Maths; science 6 exam; last year 7 secondary
8 enter university 9 eight million

Audioscript

In China, there are nine years of compulsory education. During the first six years, students attend primary school, which is followed by another three years of junior secondary school, which begins when students are twelve years old.

The Chinese school year is divided into two terms of twenty-one weeks. The first term starts in September, and the second in March. Students have about ten weeks of holidays every year. The longest breaks are in summer, when students have four weeks of holidays, and in January or February, when they get three weeks off to celebrate the spring festival, or Chinese New Year.

Chinese students have classes from Monday to Friday, and the school day is usually about eight hours, from seven or eight in the morning until four in the afternoon. Most students also take extra classes after school and at the weekends, especially in maths and science, which are the most important subjects for their exams. Most students also spend a lot of their free time studying as well.

At the end of their last year of junior secondary school, when students are fifteen years old, they must take an official exam called Zhong Kao. Their results on this exam are extremely important, since students with the highest grades can attend the best senior secondary schools and their parents will also pay less for their education. Students who don't do very well cannot go to the senior school they prefer, and they may have to attend a private school, which is more expensive. Students who fail the Zhong Kao exam can go to special schools for basic job training.

After passing the Zhong Kao exam, Chinese students attend senior secondary schools for three or four years. Some schools offer more technical programmes, while others prepare students for the National University Entrance Exam, or Gao Kao. This is another very important exam, since it affects where students can go to university, what careers they can study, and how much their education will cost. As a result, there is enormous pressure on senior students to do as well as possible.

The Gao Kao exam takes place in summer, and lasts for three days. About eight million Chinese students take the exam every year, but only three million of them are successful.

Again, science and mathematics are a big part of this exam, along with Chinese and a foreign language, which is usually English. The Gao Kao exam is also very important for teachers, because if their students don't do well, it's not good for a teacher's reputation.

- 5 Put students into pairs to describe their secondary school system. They can use the reading texts and the listening text as a model. Monitor and join in with the discussions, helping and giving positive feedback where possible. Nominate a stronger pair to describe the system to the class. Elicit what students think about the system compared to others they have studied in this unit.

Cooler

Put students into pairs and give them two minutes to make a list of all the academic and vocational subjects that they know of. Ask the pair with the longest list to come and write them on the board. Tell students to imagine they attend a school where they are only allowed to study four of the subjects on the board. Give them a few minutes to choose their subjects. Then put students into groups of four to discuss which subjects they would choose and why. Share ideas as a class.

Project

Put students into small groups to discuss the questions. Tell each group to choose a spokesperson to feed back their thoughts to the class. Get students to vote on the ideal system, and hold a brief class discussion about why it is so popular. For homework, ask students to write an individual response to the questions. These can either be posted on the class blog or displayed around the classroom for other students to read.