

Chapter 18 - The American Educational System



Milestones

No Children Left Behind 2001

Pledge of Allegiance :

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Even though the system from elementary to university is everywhere the same, local authorities (state, county) are responsible for the content of a school day. Federal government has little input into curricula content but makes sure that no inequalities appear in the making of fair opportunities for everyone. Moreover, it brings only 8% of educational budgets.

Some school districts for example, ban the teaching of the evolution theory, for religious reasons, and some don't.

The No Child Left Behind Act, under Pdt. G.W.Bush, reckoned that too many students were underachieving and its goal was to force schools into being more effective and standardized. Some objected because of the cost of these measures, which were funded by the schools, and some disagreed with the very measures.

Not only does the American school system educate the future citizens, but it teaches them patriotic and civic values (see the Pledge), encourages them to develop themselves thanks to activities besides school, particularly sports, artistic or cultural activities which are part of the educational life.

Some parents choose to send their children to private schools, often religious (many of them Catholics), or to "home school" them, for the public system often lacks facilities, or under-achieving.

Since the 1990s, charter schools are public, non-sectarian schools which do not charge tuition, are open to all and attract funding only if they are successful in appealing students, to whom they seem more flexible.

Higher education takes many forms, from the very accessible to the very eclectic. The least selective institutions are the junior colleges, of which one exits after two years with an Associate's Degree (A.A.). Community Colleges, 1/3 of higher education institutions, offer these as well as the four-year widely accepted diploma Bachelor's Degree (B.A.).

It suits working people as it can be part time.

Anyway, the access to college is very selective and expensive. The whole higher educational system is under scrutiny because people start wondering whether this extremely expensive education is worth the investment.

