**THE AMERICAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION**

Education is one of the priorities of the American society. The federal government plays little role in determining the character of the U.S. system of education; even though there are **certain standards and curriculum**, it is rather up to the individual states to regulate schooling in their region.

The American system of education was based on the ideas of a 20th century philosopher called **John Dewey** who believed that knowledge should be practical rather than memorized. He professed the idea of **learning by doing and also stressed teamwork**.

**Levels of education**

Education in the United States of America is carried out on three levels – **primary, secondary and tertiary.**

* By **primary education** pre-school facilities and elementary schools are meant,
* **secondary education** basically equals high school
* **tertiary education** is executed on the college and university level.

Like in many other countries, schools can be divided into two groups – **public and private.** On the elementary and high school level, some 88% of U.S. children attend public schools. Both private and public elementary schools have their distinctive features.

**Public schools:**

a) are supported by taxes and therefore no tuition applies

b) are neighborhood schools open to all children from the district

c) are co-educational (i.e. classes for both sexes)

d) are run by an elected body called the Board of Education

e) are under no religious influence at all

**Private schools**:

a) are parochial, i.e. supported by religious groups

b) some can be secular (= non-religious) – charge tuition (note: private secular schools are mostly high schools and colleges)

c) a dress code applies

**Education**

Education is compulsory from the age of **6 up to the age of 16** but most children attend school till 17 or 18. The majority of American children start attending school at the age of **five** in preacademic classes called **kindergarten**. However, a large number of children have already had experience with attending nursery schools or day care. **Nursery** school offers half-day sessions for children who can socialize and play there and daycare programs make it easier for working parents who do not have anybody to look after their children. The academic schooling of American children comprises **12 academic levels** called **grades**; each grade covers one school year and lasts from late August or early September to mid-June.

**Elementary school**

The first stage of education is **elementary or grammar** school. At the age of 6, pupils become familiar with basic skills, i.e. reading, writing and arithmetic. Grammar schools focus on **mastering English and the individual language skills**, i.e. reading, spelling, writing; social studies with history andgeography in particular, mathematics, science, P.E. (i.e. physical education) and health. Moreover, some elective classes are also available.

During the elementary school years, students are divided into groups and are taught by the same teacher in most subjects, even though this may slightly differ in some school systems.

American pupils attend classes Monday thru Friday and their typical school day is 7 hours long ending at 3 p.m. Children have a two-week winter vacation, a one–week spring vacation, two months off in the summer and also several one-week holidays in the course of the school year.

**Secondary school**

By **secondary** education, high schools are usually meant. **High school** includes grades 9 to 12 (ages 15-18) and students have classes daily from 7:30 to 2.

As for courses, there are both **core** (i.e. compulsory) subjects and **electives.**

**Core courses** include English (literature, writing skills, vocabulary), mathematics + computers and programming (algebra, geometry, trigonometry), some science (biology, chemistry, physics), history and social studies and P.E.

**Electives** consist of some languages (the most popular ones are French and German), art, music, business, etc

*!Throughout high school, exams are done in class and there are rarely ever oral exams. There are no retake tests, however, failing a class does not equal failing awhole academic year. Contrary to the Czech Republic, there are no school-leavingexams in the U.S.A. either. !*

**Universities**

do not organize any entrance exams but select their future students on the basis of their

1. **high school results**,

2**. tests results** (the most common standardized national tests are SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test), GRE (Graduate Record Examination), ACT, or GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test).

3. **other documents** required by the individual programs of study. (essays written by potential students expressing their academic interests and reasons for applying for that particular school and program)

**Types of higher education**

1. undergraduate
2. graduate studies.

**Undergraduate** **studies** embrace only up to four years of studies and therefore are realized on community colleges, which offer only two years of study, and fouryear colleges finished by the bachelor’s degree

**Graduate studies -** students who have earned their bachelor’s degree have the opportunity to transfer to graduate schools and go for further academic degrees. The first one to follow is he master’s degree obtained after one or two more years of university studies.

Like on the bachelor’s level, there are also several types of master’s degrees –**Master of Arts** (M.A.), **Master of Science** (M.Sc.) or **Master of Business Administration** (M.B.A.).

**EVALUATION**

The system of evaluation used in the U.S.A. is different from the Czech one. The assessment scale consists, from highest to lowest, of letters A-D and F where F equals failing a course. Each grade represents a certain number of points (A = 4 points, B = 3 points, etc.) and the average of these points gives student’s GPA (Grade Point Average), a number necessary for being admitted to undergraduate or graduate programs. The closer to the figure 4 your G.P.A. is, the better your prospects of being admitted to a good school are.

**FUNDING FOR U.S. STUDIES**

Not every young person is the U.S.A. can afford to bear the costs of higher education in the U.S. and therefore there are several kinds of financial aid available. Some students are offered scholarships they do not have to repay later on, some take up loans from the government or banks, and others take advantage of student employment offered by the school.

**Použitá literatura**

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