

Comparison between american and belgian education



American and Belgian Education: The Learning Journey

Schools in America work diligently to increase their graduation rates. Many schools have a mission statement for students to be college and career ready. In efforts to get students to that point, districts and teachers look at ways to achieve success. Retention is highly frowned upon and thought to be ineffective. There is lots of research that discuss the effects of retaining students. With that stigma of retention many Americans believe the emotional and social effects highly out way the lack of academic success. As America continues to push students along, more and more students are not proficient in skills and struggle. As these students struggle they often become disciplinary issues and fall further and further behind. This academic struggle sometimes is a factor in students dropping out. Where is the happy medium? We want students to graduate, be successful, and be college and career ready, BUT we don't want to retain students that are not proficient or academically ready to move on. In Belgium, doubling (repeating a year) is common. There is very little stigma with doubling because this is the norm if students are not ready to move up. Children are tested with different methods (assessment/supervised test for preschool & primary and exams for secondary) at the end of each year of pre-school, primary and secondary school to decide if they are ready for the next year.

When looking at the American education system and the Belgium education system, there are a few differences and a few commonalities.

In Belgium there are 4 types of schools:

Community schools: These are schools operated by the Flemish Community. They account for about 15% of schools. These schools are “neutral”, in that they are not part of a particular religion or education philosophy.

Subsidized publicly run schools: These are operated by the municipal and provincial governments and account for 16% of schools.

Subsidized private schools: These are operated by religious and other non-profit organizations. The majority are Catholic schools and account for 68% of schools.

Non-subsidized private schools: There are a small number of non-subsidized schools, accounting for about 1% of schools. (NCEE, 2006)

In America there are 13 different types of schools that can be sorted into two main categories, private and public.

Private: Private schools are not funded by the government. The separation from government funding gives them the freedom not to follow the national curriculum. Private schools such as Traditional private school, Boarding school, Language immersion school, Montessori, Private special education school, Parochial, Religious school, Reggio Emilia School, and Waldorf School (Flavin, 2016) make up about 10% of students in the United States.

Public: Public Schools are operated by local, state, and federal government funds. Traditional public schools need to abide by certain standards.

Teachers must have the appropriate licensure to work at a public school, which is usually mandated by the state in which they are located. About 90%

of students attend public schools whether it is a Traditional public school, <https://assignbuster.com/comparison-between-american-and-belgian-education/>

Charter school, Magnet school, or Public Virtual (online) school. (Flavin, 2016)

In Belgium, Nursery School is sometimes referred to as Kindergarten. Nursery school is not compulsory, but is free of charge and is offered to children over 2 1/2 years to age 6. In America there is preschool, pre-Kindergarten, and Kindergarten that encompass that same age group of 2 ½ years-6. Preschool and pre-kindergarten are not compulsory, but usually require a fee. In America Kindergarten is compulsory and free.

Belgium's primary school serves children 6-12 years. Classes are organized by age, some also group by competence. Required primary subjects are: Dutch, World Orientation, Math, Music, Physics, Learning to Learn and Social Skills. French is usually added at the third grade level. At the end of primary school, children receive a certificate of primary education. America's primary school also serves 6-12 years and most classes are organized by age. Each state has their standards that are required for each particular subject. Students have report cards that show progress throughout their primary education.

When looking at secondary school, both America and Belgium, serve students 12-18 years old. Belgium's secondary school has a more uniform structure. It is divided into three stages. The first stage is devoted to a core curriculum and lasts for two years. Subjects required include: Dutch, French, English, Math, History, Geography, Art, Science, Technical Education, Physical Education and Religion or Ethics. In the second stage students choose between four different types of programs: general secondary

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education (ASO) technical secondary education (TSO) secondary education in the arts (KSO) vocational secondary education (BSO). They continue in this program through the third stage. There is a core curriculum for each program with increasing numbers of optional courses as students specialize. At age 15, students can transfer to part time education in a part time vocational school (DBSO), an entrepreneurship course or other recognized part time programs. A student receives a certificate of secondary education after completing six years of ASO, TSO, KSO or seven years of BSO. With this certificate, a student can enter any type of tertiary institute. (NCEE, 2006)

America's secondary school consists of middle school and high school.

Particular subjects are required at each grade level. As students work through grade levels they may pick electives or particular classes that can aide their career path. Each state sets their requirements for completion of secondary school which results in a high school diploma. After high school graduation students may choose to move on to college.

The average ratio of students to staff in Belgium is 13 at primary level and 15 in the United States and 10 at secondary level for Belgium and 15 for the United States (compared to the OECD average of 15 and 13 respectfully).

Some believe that Belgium's efforts of having students choose a particular path during the second stage, approximately age 15, is just too early. With great student to teacher ratios one would think that the rate of retention would decrease, but maybe the push for career path selection so early puts rigid expectations that students aren't quite ready for yet. Ultimately leading to doubling so students are properly "trained" and meet the expectations for that career. Doubling (retention) is a cultural norm in Belgium and is not <https://assignbuster.com/comparison-between-american-and-belgian-education/>

in America. As long as studies continue to show negative impacts socially, emotionally, and academically, America will continue to find other ways to help students instead of retaining. Neither repeating a grade nor merely moving on to the next grade provides students with the support they need to improve academic and social skills. Holding schools accountable for student progress requires effective intervention strategies that provide educational opportunities and assistance to promote the social and cognitive development of students. Recognizing the cumulative developmental effects on student success at school, both early interventions and follow-up strategies are emphasized (*NASP, 2003*). Not to say that retaining does not occur in America, it is just not culturally accepted like in Belgium. It is found that countries that do not allow or it is very uncommon to retain outrank other nations in reading, math and science (Briggs, 2013).

Two main ideas seem to be the key components to the Belgium education system. Those components are choosing and completing education that best fits your chosen career path and doubling / retaining. Both ideas are not new to the American education system, but viewed a bit differently than Belgium. Americans continue to look for best practices and giving our students the best opportunity to excel in what they are good at and where their future may take them. Americans also continue to retain students, it is just not culturally accepted or viewed as normal. Educators look at providing students with educational opportunities and assistance to promote their social and cognitive development. Both countries are using components to help their students to be college and career ready. As Belgium and America

continue to strive for success they may have the same ideas but not necessarily the same implementation and beliefs around those ideas.

Resources:

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- National Center on Education and the Economy. *An Overview of Education on Flemish Belgium* , 2006, <http://ncee.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Belgium-Education-Report3.pdf>
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