

The High-School Experience in Latin America

- 1 **H**ow does the high-school experience in Latin America compare with that in the United States? There are many similarities, but there are also some noticeable differences.
- 2 A normal course load for a United States high-school student is usually between five and eight subjects a year, but in Latin America students are more likely to take between ten and twelve. These classes do not, however, meet every day. A class might meet only two or three times a week, which is more similar to schedules in U.S. colleges and universities. As a result, there is more variation in students' day-to-day schedules. In addition, although physical education is taught, team sports are not part of the curriculum. On the other hand, English is mandatory in many schools. Foreign language study is much more common in Latin American schools, and many students speak one or two languages besides Spanish by the time they graduate from high school.
- 3 Classes in Latin American schools are also structured very differently than those in the United States. Lecturing is the preferred format and there tends to be less student

participation. Although extracurricular activities are offered, they are far less common than they are in U.S. schools.

- 4 It is unusual for Latin American schools to have the amenities, such as lockers, that students in the United States take for granted. As a result, students must carry

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their backpacks and book bags with them throughout the school day. Latin American students also tend to have much more homework than their U.S. counterparts, so they need these accessories in order to take their books home.

- 5 While letter grades are routinely used in the United States, they are rarely used in Latin America. Although

the grading scale varies from country to country, numerical grades, such as 1-10 or 1-20, are the norm.

- 6 Private schools are common in Latin America and a large number of these are operated by the Roman Catholic Church. Although parochial schools are not usually coeducational, there are many coed private schools that are not affiliated with any church. Because many of these schools are associated with certain ethnic or cultural traditions, students must study the appropriate foreign language, usually American English, German, British English, Italian, or French.
- 7 One of the most noticeable differences between the U.S. school system and the Latin American one is that students in Latin America are frequently required to wear uniforms. While the uniform is sometimes the same throughout the country, it is more likely identified with a certain school. The girls' uniform is usually a jumper, a blouse, and a tie, or a pleated skirt, a blouse, and a vest or blazer. Boys wear slacks, a shirt and tie, and sometimes a sweater or blazer as well.

Answer questions 1–5. Base your answers on the reading “The High-School Experience in Latin America.”

- 1 How does the average number of classes per year compare for U.S. and Latin American students?
- A Latin American students take more classes than U.S. students.
 - B Latin American students take fewer classes than U.S. students.
 - C Latin American and U.S. students take the same number of classes.
 - D Latin American and U.S. students take the same number of classes, but in Latin America classes only meet three days a week.
- 2 Based on the reading, why are backpacks and book bags so important for Latin American students?
- F They are expensive and would cost a lot to replace.
 - G They are a status symbol.
 - H Latin American students don't have lockers for their books.
 - J Latin American students don't have shelves for their books.
- 3 How do church-affiliated schools in Latin America differ from private schools?
- A They are usually coeducational.
 - B They are not usually coeducational.
 - C They require that students study another language.
 - D They are not common in Latin America.
- 4 How does the grading system in Latin America differ from that used in the United States?
- F Numerical grades are rarely used.
 - G Numerical grades are regularly used.
 - H Letter grades are usually used.
 - J Letter grades are never used.
- 5 **READ
THINK
EXPLAIN** Why do you think English is mandatory in Latin American schools? Use details and information from the reading to support your answer.

write 3-5 sentences in English
to answer this question

on a separate
piece of paper! (or somewhere on
this paper.)