Mix-and-Match

Differences and Similarities between Latin American and United States Public Education Systems
Question

When you were in the 5th year of school (wherever that took place), how was that grade level classified? (primary, elementary, intermediate, primaria, elemental...)
Structure of education in Spanish-speaking Latin America

• Content and levels are regulated by the Ministry or Department of Education

• Consistent across the country

• Include allowances for special circumstances (rural, disabled, homebound, etc.)

• Most have been fundamentally changed within the last 25 years
## Structure of Education Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>(PK) / K</th>
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<td>Básica (3 ciclos)</td>
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<td>Media (diversificada y funcional)</td>
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Let's go back to that question:

If your child were in the 5th year at the same school today, would the classification be the same?
Structure of education in the United States of America

• Federal government determines basic rights (language access, special education, disability access, etc.), provides some funding

• State government determines content, provides some funding

• Individual district (with some varying guidance from the state education agency) determines delivery, environment, extracurricular activities*, provides some funding. In some states, districts may also have some Regional level of oversight.

* Extracurricular competitions are governed by a variety of entities, depending on the type of competition
Districts

• Determine number and type of schools
• Hire teachers and paraprofessionals
• Determine how grade levels will be divided (elementary, intermediate, junior high, etc.)
• Determine what extracurricular activities will be sponsored, subject to state and federal laws
• Determine the school year terms and grading cycles (6 weeks, 9 weeks, trimester/semester, etc.)
More about Districts...

• Governed by a Superintendent and a Board of Trustees (School Board)
• Trustees (Directors) are elected officials
• Superintendent is hired by the Board
• Set dress codes and rules for student conduct, subject to state and federal laws
• Establish punishments, subject to federal and state law
• Make safety decisions (such as having police officers on staff)
Wait..................we're not done!

• Contract special services when necessary
• Coordinate with external organizations to provide Special Education services (eg., local services for the blind)
• May provide classes for parents, particularly for those whose children have special needs
• Etc.

....ok now we’re done!
But keep in mind:

The specific levels of service, the choice to offer certain services, and the manner in which they are delivered vary:

*From State to State*

*From County to County*

*From District to District*
Which means that no matter how much you know, there’s probably more you don’t know about an school client until you establish a relationship.
In the United States education system, what does a student have to complete to become a Junior?
Common grade level divisions

- PreK (federal rules apply if free)
- Elementary: grades K-3, sometimes K-4...or 5...or 6
- Intermediate: grades 3-5, 4-6 or 5-6
- Middle: grades 6-8
- Junior High: grades 6-8, 7-8, 7-9
- High School: grades 7-12 or 9-12 or 10-12
- Senior High School: grades 10-12 or 11-12
Where do Freshman, Sophomore, Junior & Senior fit in?
Freshman: has completed 30 credit hours
Sophomore: has completed 60 credit hours
Junior: has completed 90 credit hours
Senior: from 91 credit hours through graduation

(So someone who is 10th grade might or might not be a sophomore; if they have enough credits, they might be a junior.)
Let’s talk Special Education

Question

A student is placed in Special Education because he or she has a low IQ – True or False?
False !!!

• Special Ed (aka Special Education, aka SPED) covers any special service due to:
  • intellectual,
  • cognitive,
  • learning,
  • physical,
  • emotional,
  • language,
  • or other challenges
A few things about Special Ed

• Subject to federal regulations

• Access to federal funding, including Medicaid, to pay for therapy, language access services, equipment and more for low-income families

• Contracts outside services when necessary, such as when the district does not have the necessary personnel (speech therapists, autism specialists, braille instructors, psychologists, etc.

• Coordinates services with outside agencies
What does IEP stand for?

1) Individual, Educator & Parent
2) Interim Exploratory Plan
3) Internal Education Proposal
4) Individualized Education Program ✔

Question
IEPs
(established by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)

• Federally mandated
• Produced by committee (teachers, parent, etc.)
• Parent participation - must agree to the plan
• Meetings and services must be documented
• If an entity receives federal funds, it must make reasonable efforts to provide language access to LEPs.
LEPs?
Weren’t we talking about IEPs?

Yes, we were. But now let’s talk about LEPs:
Limited English Proficient Individuals.

www.lep.gov

Offers important information about government rules on language access for non-English speakers.
Like this whole series:
My favorite:
Why so much focus on Special Education?

Because SPED can require significant support from translators and interpreters.
Any SPED service might involve documents from an immigrant child's home country (medical records, psychological history, test results, etc.)

Other ways schools need us

• Medical records when a child becomes ill while traveling
• Academic records when a child enters the district
• Letters from parents or guardians
• Interpreters are needed for IEP meetings, parent conferences, parent education sessions, disciplinary hearings, PTA meetings, interactions with the school board, etc.
A few terms & buzzwords

• Endorsements or specializations - an increasing trend in U.S. schools, making students more competitive for trades or universities.

• Magnet or specialized schools/programs - focus on specific areas, such as Engineering or Dance.

• Vocational vs. college-prep tracks

• AP, Dual Credit - college credit while in High School
Truancy - a legal concept that includes cumulative absence from school without permission, that cannot be excused for medical or other approved reasons, in a manner that violates the law.

**Title I** - low-income (No Child Left Behind)

**Title VI** - language access (Civil Rights Act)

**Section 504** - disability (Rehabilitation Act)
A very few Spanish>English pitfalls

• Preparatoria
• Secundaria
• Colegio
• Profesor
• Tesis, especialización, técnico en...
• Escuela, academia, colegio, liceo, instituto...
• Bachiller
Spanish Resources

• Ministry or Department of Education website for the source country

• School websites in the source district or region (check 2 or 3)

• Domain-restricted Google searches

• A simple starting (but not ending) place: Universia (search “universia” “estructura sistema educativo” and the name of the country)
English Resources

• Department of Education
• State Departments of Education or Education Agencies
• Title I - low-income (No Child Left Behind)
• Title VI - language access (Civil Rights Act)
• Section 504 - disability (Rehabilitation Act)
To wrap this up...

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<tr>
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<th>United States</th>
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<td><strong>Rights</strong></td>
<td>National law</td>
<td>Federal &amp; state law</td>
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<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>State &amp; district</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>State &amp; district</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Special Ed</strong></td>
<td>Most</td>
<td>All</td>
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<td>District</td>
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<td>Yes, with push toward occupational as alternate to college</td>
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Thank you!

Carol Shaw

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