

School Is So Different for My Kids

Yan Lei

BEFORE YOU READ: What is school like for kids in the U.S. compared to the school you went to when you were a child?

Here, the School Day Is Short and My Kids Are Happy

My kids were born in the United States and now study in an elementary school. Their school hours are from 8:00 am to 2:10 pm. On my clock, it is a short time they spend in school.

I always love to see the happiness that shows on their faces when they come home from school. They always have something to show me that they have done in school. Sometimes, they show me a drawing or some other hand-made artwork. Sometimes, they even have candy or some little toy they got from school. You can imagine how much fun they have in school.

They Don't Have Homework

I always ask them, "Did you have fun at school?" The answer is always yes. And then I ask them, "Do you have any homework to do?" My second grade child always answers no. My kindergarten child sometimes has one page of homework. She doesn't need my help with her homework. It takes her maybe five minutes, and then she is done.

I feel surprised and filled with doubt. Kids go to school to learn, and they don't have any homework to do? It's always no homework! No homework on the weekend. No homework on holidays and vacation.

School Was Different for Me

I remember my own childhood in China. I worked hard at school. School started at 8:00 am, and it was not over until 5:00 pm. I had homework every day. My Chinese and English teachers gave me words to practice. I had to write them down



over and over again. They explained the grammar rules and gave me grammar practice. In math, my teachers taught me how to solve a math problem, and then they gave me homework to keep practicing until I could solve the math problem quickly. Teachers always gave a lot of homework: week night homework, weekend homework, holiday homework, and vacation homework.

If I Could Go Back in Time...

What a different school life my kids are having! If I could go back in time and immigrate to the United States when I was in elementary school, I could have escaped all that homework. I could have had a happy elementary school life, too!

AFTER YOU READ:

1. How does the author's school experience contrast with her children's experience? Be specific.
2. Do you think kids should get homework? Why or why not?

Yan Lei is from China. She is a student in RIFLI Transitions to College Class in Providence, RI. She is the mother of two kids, and she loves to learn. Her motto is: "There is no end to learning. Find a good way to apply what you learn."