The American system of school education differs from the systems in other countries.

There are state public schools, private elementary schools and private secondary schools. Public schools are free and private schools are feepaying. Each state has its own system of public schools.

Elementary education begins at the age of six or seven, when a child goes to the first grade (form). At the age of sixteen schoolchildren leave the elementary school and may continue their education at one of the secondary schools or high schools, as they call them.

The programme of studies in the school includes English, Arithmetic, Geography, History of the USA, Natural Sciences and, besides, Physical Training, Singing, Drawing, Wood or Metal Work, etc. Sometimes they learn a foreign language and general history. Beside giving general education some high schools teach subjects useful to those who hope to find jobs in industry and agriculture or who want to enter colleges or universities.

After graduating from secondary schools a growing number of Americans go on to higher education. The students do not take the same courses. During the first two years they follow a basic programme. It means that every student must select at least one course from each of the basic fields of study: English, Natural Sciences, Modern Languages, History or Physical Training. After the first two years every student can select subjects according to his professional interest.

The National Government gives no direct financial aid to the institutions of higher education. Students must pay a tuition fee. This creates a financial hardship for some people. Many students have to work to pay their expenses. The Americans place a high value on education. That’s why Kennedy said, “Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education”.