

Join the national conversation!



## Focus Words

analyze | factor | function | interpret | structure



## Weekly Passage

Why do we go to school? Some people think the primary goal of education is giving knowledge to students. They feel there is specific information that all kids should know. For instance, they want kids to know what happened in the Revolutionary War and how the food chain works. Others interpret the main role of school as one of preparing students to earn a living. They are most concerned about students learning particular skills, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Some argue that schools should introduce a set of shared values, including liberty and justice. They believe this will help students understand the structure of our democratic government. For example, they feel it is important for students to understand that while each of the three branches of government has a different function, the three work together to make sure we all enjoy certain freedoms and live by the same rules.

Some think schools should teach students to critically analyze what they see, hear, and read. They want students to be able to think carefully about different perspectives, to respect and challenge other viewpoints, and to form their own opinions about issues that affect them. Although many people say that they want kids to be able to think for themselves, students do not always have the freedom to do so in the classroom.

What do you think the function of school is? What do you consider the most important factors in providing a good education? Which ingredients are essential in your recipe for a good school?

**Unit 1.01****What is the purpose of school?**  
**Focus Word Chart**

Word	Meaning	Forms	Examples of Use	Notes
analyze	(v.) – to examine; study			
factor	(n.) – something that influences the result of something else			
function	(n.) – purpose; role; use			
interpret	(v.) – to understand or explain something's meaning			
structure	(n.) – way that parts of something relate to each other and work together			

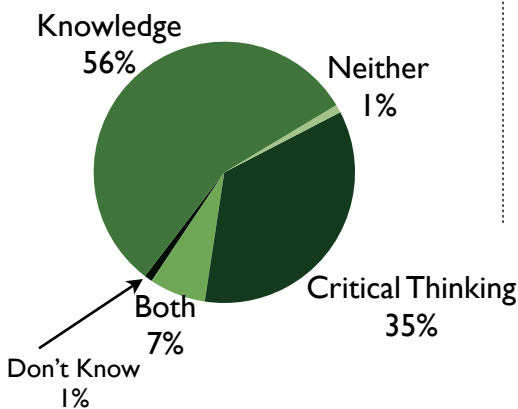
# What is the purpose of school?

## Problem of the Week

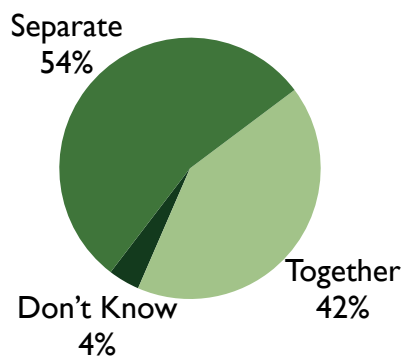


How do Americans view their public schools? **Analyze** the three graphs below. The information comes from a telephone survey taken in 1999.

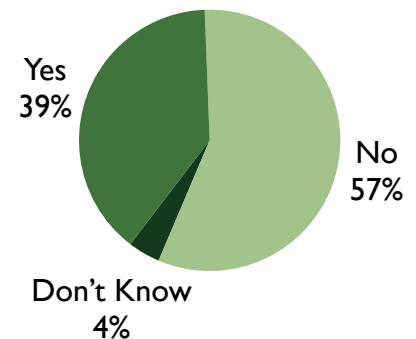
What is the proper **function** of American schools? Should they focus on giving students knowledge, or should they focus on teaching students to think critically?



What is the best class **structure** for elementary schools? Should top students, average students, and struggling students have separate classes, or should different ability levels be taught together?



Should standardized test scores be a **factor** in determining the level of funding a school receives?



**Option 1:** Which of the following is the best **interpretation** of the data shown in these three graphs?

- A) Americans disagree or are divided on major educational issues.
- B) Americans agree on major educational issues.
- C) Americans want all students to be equally well educated.
- D) Americans are disappointed with today's schools.

**Option 2:** Answer Option 1. Then determine:

What is the probability that a person responded YES to both questions: "Schools should focus on giving students knowledge," AND "Yes" to the question about making standardized test scores a factor in school funding?

**Math Discussion Question:** Many teachers believe that classrooms **function** more effectively when students are actively involved. In social studies, students might present an **analysis** of U.S. foreign policy and our relationship to other countries. In Spanish class, students might **interpret** and act out a play written by a Colombian author. Students prepare and present, while the teacher acts as a guide. Is this kind of **structure** realistic for a math class? Or, when you're learning how to multiply or **factor** numbers, is having a teacher give knowledge by explaining the facts the best option?

# What is the purpose of school?

## Debating the Issue



### I. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

# GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

**A** The primary function of school is to prepare students for the work force. Therefore, knowing what jobs students expect to have is an important factor in determining what they need to know and to be able to do.

**B** The primary function of school is to teach students how to think for themselves. Therefore, they should spend time in class learning how to learn, analyzing different perspectives, and defending their own positions.

**C** The primary function of school is to prepare students for democratic citizenship. Therefore, students should learn how to actively participate in the structures of society and government that help to ensure life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

**D** The primary function of school is to make sure that all students have specific knowledge about history, science, literature, and mathematics. Therefore, students should spend more time learning accepted facts than making their own interpretations.

**E** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*I believe that...*

*I agree with you because. . .*

*You make a good point, but have you considered...*

*Can you show me evidence in the text that supports what you said?*

### 2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes.

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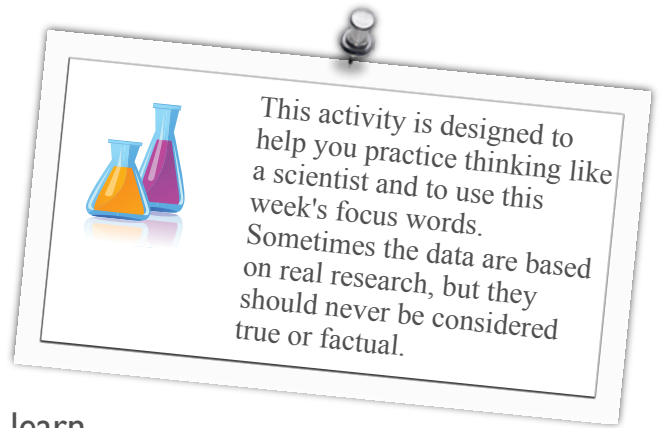
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## Unit 1.01

# What is the purpose of school?

## Science Activity



Professor Kahn's 12-year-old daughter goes to a Montessori middle school. Montessori schools have a unique **structure**. Students choose what to learn.

The teacher's **function** is to observe students as they work. Professor Kahn chose this school for her daughter because students there seemed happy. Happiness, Professor Kahn knows, is an important **factor** in school success.

But now that her daughter is getting older, Professor Kahn is beginning to worry. Do Montessori students really learn as much as traditional students?

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### Question:

How will 12-year-old Montessori students compare with 12-year-olds from a more traditional classroom, like Professor Kahn's?

### Hypothesis:

The students from Professor Kahn's traditional classroom will score at least 5 points higher on a math test than the Montessori students.

### Materials:

- ▶ 30 12-year-old Montessori students
- ▶ 30 12-year-old students from Professor Kahn's class
- ▶ Math test

**Procedure:**

1. Give the math test to all 60 students.
2. **Analyze** the test results. How can you describe the data?
3. **Interpret** the data. What does it mean?

**Data:**

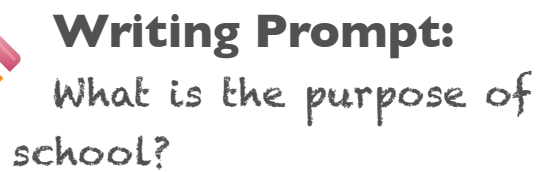
	Average Test Score (out of 100)
Montessori Students	82.7
Traditional Students	82.9

**Conclusion:**

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

What evidence supports your conclusion?

How would you make this a better experiment?



## Focus Words

	Exemplary
<input type="checkbox"/> Included 1-2 focus words	<input type="checkbox"/> Stated my own position clearly
<input type="checkbox"/> Included 1-2 arguments	<input type="checkbox"/> Included 1-2 arguments
<input type="checkbox"/> Included 1 counterargument	<input type="checkbox"/> Included 1 counterargument
<input type="checkbox"/> Used 2-5 focus words	<input type="checkbox"/> Used 2-5 focus words

Check off what you accomplished:

- ☐ Stated my own position
- ☐ Included 1 focus word

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1-2 focus words

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
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[illegible]