

## Primary school in America

I'm a grandmother of a girl of 6. Last year she first went to school in America. And whether I liked it or not, I began to compare the two systems of primary school education considering if she is fortunate to study there, not in Russia. I don't have an answer now, we'll live and see. The second thought was: when I see something interesting and really useful, why not to try to do things like this myself? I thought I would be able to adopt some of their ways and copy their style if I liked smth a lot. So I started to watch closely, trying to understand what their school is made of.

The name of the school is Glennville Primary School of Greenwich, CT. It's an impressive building, standing separately on a hill with a huge campus around and with lots of facilities such as a fully equipped playground, a stadium, a gym, a library, a canteen and many more. There's a special place for parking, for staff separately, so there're no traffic jams around school in the morning and after school.

Most children travel by bus, a yellow school bus, and, by the way, when it is on the road, no car is allowed to take it over. It moves slowly along the road, stops at every corner, where parents meet their kids, and there's a line of cars moving slowly and patiently behind it. Notice that not a single child of Primary school goes home all by his own without supervising.

And for me it is obviously one of the examples of respect and love and care people of America feel towards their kids.

The entrance of the school. The doors and walls are made of glass and of course there're video cameras everywhere, but you come in freely and sign in a special book for visitors. It's an amazing feeling that you are really welcome there. The girl from reception knows almost all parents and all the students of the school.

And the first thing that your eyes catch is a big screen on the wall which says:

Be responsible

Be respectful

Be ready to learn.

These are three principles of the school.

Glennville Primary school has what they call The Vision of Gratitude. These are the statements:

- Greenwich public school is committed to prepare students to function effectively in an independent global community, therefore all students will develop their individual capacities to :
  - Pose and purpose substantive questions
  - Create opportunities that tap their unique interests, passions and curiosities.
  - Explore, define and solve complex problems
  - Generate innovative, creative ideas and products
  - Advocate for ideas, causes and actions
  - Communicate effectively for a given purpose
  - Conduct them in an ethical and responsible manner
  - Respond to failures and successes with reflection and resilience
  - Collaborate and respect other cultural contexts and points of view.

Glennville Primary school has its own Stop Light Behaviour System, which I find very effective.

This System is meant to reinforce the behavioral expectations of being Respectful, Responsible and Ready.

It's a program that will assist students with making good choices and monitoring their behaviors. Every student will begin their school day on green, which signifies that they are being Responsible, respectful and Ready. If the student is not following the rules and requires a warning, his name will be placed on yellow. This signals a need for the student to slow down and think about the choices he or she has made. If the student requires additional warnings, the color will change to red. Once on red, the parent will be notified by either a phone call, a letter or email. If the student's behavior improves, the card can go back to green.

This behavior plan has proven to be successful with managing students' behavior. With this system in place the teachers are constantly defining, teaching, reinforcing and monitoring positive behaviors.

Now I'd like to show you The Anti-Bullying Pledge.

- \* Bullying is... deliberately hurting other people with words and actions.
- \* I make a commitment and will be ready to take a stand against bullying.
- \* I will treat everyone with Respect and Kindness.
- \* It's my responsibility to help others being bullied and to report bullying.

There on the wall you can see childrens' hands with their names on them. Therefore they promise to obey the rules of the school. They put their hands there in September when they are newcomers and their hands are there on the wall till they leave primary school.

So as you can see good behavior is expected from all students.

Now about learning. There're a lot of sets for young kids in every toy shop. You know, letters of the Alfabet, short words , numbers. There're four the most popular sets: letters, words and numbers and... can you guess what is in the fourth set? The most popular set contains cards with presidents of the US.

Patriotic upbringing and education is considered the most important for young citizens. I don't remember exactly when the birthday of Martin Luther King is, but it's a great date and usually that day all kids come home and tell their parents:- Do you know that ML King had a dream? All of them know his famous speech "I have a dream" by heart. And of course they learn The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

I pledge allegiance to the American Flag of the United states of America and to the Republic for which it stands: one nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.

After the first grade at school actually called a kindergarten , every child can read, write, count, add, distract and even multiply, they are taught to draw, sing, play sport games. They can write short letters, invitations, thank-you letters, short compositions. They read a lot. American literature is amazing but unfortunately we know very little about it. There's a huge library at school where you can see American, European, Asian authors. There're books by Russian writers as well. For example, Kashtanka... This book is in great respect among the students. Children are encouraged to read more.

By the end of the year the children seem to be very educated. They know planets, of the Solar System, maps, continents, countries, capitals and flags. Animlas, their habitats, endangered animals. Of course, the problems of the environment, Earth Pollution, recycling. The slogan "Keep the Earth clean" is not just words for American children.

Some words about holidays.

Here you can see a list of them.

So during the year they have a lot of parties, fancy-dress balls and parades, parties for parents in restaurants ( cocktail dresses and ties are essential). All parents of the class are acquainted with one another. Play dates are very common. In this photo you can see a fancy-dress parade around the school, Halloween, where all kids and children are wearing fancy dresses. Here's the principal of the school Mr D.Amico, wearing a costume of a surgeon and one of the teachers as a Snowwhite. Look how much they are enjoying themselves!

So as you can see, school life is fun!

Some words about fire drills. Fire drills are held at regular intervals as required by State Law. Students must follow the exit directions posted in each classroom. The school will host a fire drill each month. Students are so used to fire drills that they can do it with their eyes shut.

Teachers and their responsibilities.

School begins at 8.30 and at 12.00 they have a lunch break. Some of the students can buy smth from school canteen. They have special plastic cards with all necessary information such as health problems and allergies. So parents are sure that their kids will never be sold smth that can cause health problems. It's a big room with round tables and chairs, each class has their own tables, they never stand while eating. They open their lunch bags, but what do their teachers do at that time? Their teachers have lunch in a separate room, they have a rest, and there're no teachers in the canteen. Special workers, so called assistants, look after kids, open bottles, watch if all is OK.

Every teacher has an assistant. They prepare all stuff for drawing, writing, help with documents. So the teachers are fresh and relaxed After a break .School finishes at 3.00.

Teachers and parents. Of course there're meetings where parents are told about school, class, subjects, plans, extra activities and so on. But there's one strict rule. During the meeting the teacher never ever tells about students. I mean it's forbidden to give any characteristics in public ,neither negative nor positive ones. If the teacher wants to discuss child's behavior or his achievements or smth, she speaks to parents in private. They usually begin with emails. Especially if there're problems. The letter can be a document afterwards, if there's some misunderstanding. Teachers want to be on the safe side, we all know that parents might be inadequate, all over the world. Teachers and parents may call one another and come to school as well.

Here is an example of an email which was sent by a primary teacher Courtney Rosenberg to one of the parents.

Dear Mrs McCauley

I just wanted to drop you a note to let you know that Your daughter has been a very exciting child to have in my class since school started. She is a bright and hard worker. She also has boundless amount of energy and a thirst for knowledge that I don't always see in children so young. It has been a pleasure to work with her so far this year.

I'm looking forward to seeing you at open house.

Thanks

Courtney Rosenberg