

## For GTEC BLC Sessions

### Important Characteristics of American Education (with a bow to wikipedia and MA DESE)

1. Compulsory from ages 5 to 8 to 14 to 18, depending on the state; provided by the public sector, [local](#), [state](#), and [federal](#), in that order. When offered privately, there is a tuition cost to consumers.
2. Generally divided into three levels: elementary K-5 or 6, middle or junior 6 or 7-8 or 9, high schools 9 or 10-12...some school districts have preK opportunities.

Children are divided by age groups into [grades](#), ranging from [kindergarten](#) (followed by [first grade](#)) to elementary to middle and secondary school, ending at [grade 12](#), the final year of [high school](#). The exact age range of students in these grade levels varies slightly from area to area.

3. Also a large number and wide variety of [higher education](#) institutions throughout the country that one can choose to attend, both publicly and privately administered.
4. In local control states such as MA, each town or city runs its own school system paid for by property taxes and some support from the state, based on the Ed Reform law of 1993 and some federal funding. School districts are usually separate from other local jurisdictions, with independent officials and budgets.

In state adoption states such as TX and CA, the education department of the state chooses the materials to be used in the schools.

The Federal Government intercedes on occasion with laws that apply across the board, e.g. [Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#) of 1965 and [No Child Left Behind Act](#) of 2001. There is also a national testing program called NAEP. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the largest continuing and nationally representative assessment of what American students know and can do in core subjects

5. Standards and testing are state mandated but curriculum is usually home grown. There is now a recommended MassCore. The recommended program of studies includes: four years of English, four years of Math, three years of a lab-based Science, three years of history, two years of the same foreign language, one year of an arts program and five additional "core" courses such as business education, health, and/or technology. MassCore also includes additional learning opportunities including AP classes, dual enrollment, a senior project, online courses for high school or college credit, and service or work-based learning.

And at the federal level, The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a U.S. education initiative that seeks to bring diverse state curricula into alignment with each other by following the principles of [standards-based education reform](#). The initiative is sponsored by the [National Governors Association](#) (NGA) and the [Council of Chief State School Officers](#) (CCSSO).