

# U.S. students' view of life is satisfying but other countries are happier

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South Korean student Kim Jae-min (center) and his classmates use tablet PCs to study in a class at Sosu Elementary School in Gwesan, South Korea, July 15, 2011. AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The good news is that American high school students are mostly happy with their lives. But many of their peers in other countries are happier.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD is a group that helps countries work together. On Wednesday, it released its study of student happiness. The group asked high school students to rate their happiness on a scale from 0 to 10. American 15-year-olds gave an average mark of 7.4.

The average score among OECD's 35 member countries was 7.3. But students in some countries are doing much better. In Mexico, the average high schooler rated their happiness at 8.2 out of 10. The Netherlands and Iceland had a level of 7.8 and Finland had 7.9.

## Several Reasons Why Students Feel Happy Or Unhappy

What makes students feel good? The results of the study show that support from teachers and parents is very important. Spending time with friends and being physically active also make it more likely that a student will be happy. On the other hand, worrying about grades and spending too much time online are more likely to make a student unhappy.

Does studying hard mean being miserable? Not always. The study showed that in China, Korea and Japan, students score well on reading and math. But they are less happy with life than their peers. In Turkey, Greece and the United Arab Emirates, students score poorly and are not very happy.

But things are different in the Netherlands, Finland and Switzerland. In these three European countries, students get good grades and have high spirits.

Andreas Schleicher is one of the authors of the study. The results show that doing well in school doesn't mean giving up happiness, he said.

## Boys And Girls View Life Differently

There are some differences between boys and girls. Feeling very happy with one's life is more common for boys, while feeling unhappy is more common for girls across most countries. Why that was the case was unclear from the report.

The 2015 study looked at 540,000 students from 72 countries. The students were randomly selected and completed written tests and surveys.

## Survey Method Has Flaws, Some Say

Tom Loveless is a scientist who studies education. He had doubts about how the study looked at American high school students. At the time of the study, most 15-year-olds would have spent only a little over a year in their current high school. That means their happiness could have been shaped by other causes. It could be the result of things that happened before high school, Loveless said.

Randi Weingarten is the head of a group for teachers. She said she was disappointed that American teenagers were less happy than some teenagers in other countries. More work needs to be done to build supportive classrooms, she said. Weingarten also criticized President Donald Trump and others in the government who work for him. They want to get rid of some after-school programs.

These programs are important, Weingarten said. The best schools try to promote "children's joy in and out of the classroom."

## **Steps To Improve Children's Look On Life**

On the bright side, parents can help. Schleicher said there are a few easy steps they can take to make their children more satisfied with life.

It's as simple as "talking with their children" and "having dinner together," Schleicher said. "These things are really simple for parents to do. They don't require an academic degree, they don't require hours of time."

## Quiz

- 1 According to the article, what effect do parents have on students' happiness?
  - (A) Parents who talk to their children help them to be happier.
  - (B) Parents who make the most money have the happiest children.
  - (C) Parents who let their children do what they want help them to be happier.
  - (D) Parents who encourage outdoor activity have the happiest children.
  
- 2 What is the relationship between good grades and being happy?
  - (A) Students who get the best grades are the most happy.
  - (B) Students who get the best grades are the least happy.
  - (C) Students who get good grades are happy in some countries but not in others.
  - (D) Students who get good grades are more likely to make other people happy.
  
- 3 Which of the following answer choices BEST describes the structure of the article?
  - (A) pro and con
  - (B) before and after
  - (C) cause and effect
  - (D) problem and solution
  
- 4 Fill in the blank in the sentence below.

In the introduction [paragraphs 1-3], the author \_\_\_\_\_.

  - (A) explains problems that are later solved by events in the article
  - (B) describes the effects of unhappy students on countries in the article
  - (C) outlines the reasons why students in the article are unhappy
  - (D) summarizes the results of the study described in the article