5th Adolescents – Test Unit 1

Reading Comprehension

Alternative schools – a different approach

If you ask teenagers around the world to tell you about their educational experience, they will probably describe something similar; classrooms with 30 or more students, rows of tables and chairs and a teacher at the front. They study eight or nine subjects when the timetable tells them to. However, some children will describe a different type of education. These children have experienced alternative schools.

Alternative and traditional schools are different in a number of ways. (**1**) _____ This means that the children are responsible for deciding what they need to learn and the teacher is there to help them achieve their learning goals. 'I was always interested in geology, the study of rocks, but you can't usually study it at school,' says Tyler, 14. 'Here we can choose what we study so when I told my teacher I was interested in rocks, she helped me start a project and showed me how to get the information I needed. It's fantastic being able to study something that interests me.'

Most traditional schools are only interested in students learning from books and not teaching them practical skills.
(**2**) _____ Abigail, 13, explains, 'I was always quite intelligent and I loved maths problems but I wasn't very good at physical activities. My teachers noticed that and they encouraged me to spend more time climbing trees and riding bikes. I think that really helped me because now I'm much more confident doing those things.'

In most schools, the rules and responsibilities are decided by the teachers. However, in these alternative schools, it is both the students and teachers who decide. (**3**) _____ Students and teachers usually decide the rules together in regular meetings where they also talk about why it is important to have certain rules. These meetings are usually attended by the whole school and anyone is free to speak, which also helps students develop their communication skills.

Another reason some people choose alternative schools is because the teachers help the students develop their talents. In large schools, teachers have limited time for each student and they may not notice any hidden talents.
(**4**) _____ 'I've always liked drawing,' says Esther, 16. 'My teachers let me draw as much as I wanted and now I'm pretty good. In fact, I recently came second in a national art competition. Their support and encouragement helped me achieve that.'

It is important for us not to forget that traditional schools do important work and that there are disadvantages to alternative schools. (**5**) _____ Some parents may also worry that their children won't make enough academic progress. However, children who go to alternative schools seem confident and grown-up and the schools themselves seem calm and productive. Perhaps they have some useful lessons for the more traditional schools.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1. Look at these sentences from an article about different types of schools. Read the article and decide what the bold words refer to. Choose the correct answer.

1 **They** study eight or nine subjects … (paragraph 1)

a) students in traditional schools **b)** students in alternative schools

2 … you can't usually study **it** at school … (paragraph 2)

a) geology **b)** learning goals

3 … I'm much more confident doing **those things**. (paragraph 3)

a) maths problems **b)** physical activities

4 … develop **their** talents … (paragraph 5)

a) teachers' **b)** students'

5 Perhaps **they** have some useful lessons ... (paragraph 6)

a) alternative schools **b)** private schools

2. Read the article about different types of schools. Choose the correct sentences to complete the article. There is one extra sentence that you do not need.

A The reason is that if the students decide the rules, they will understand them better and be more responsible for their own behaviour.

B For example, they tend to be private schools, so many families cannot afford them.

C One is the belief that education should be learner-centred.

D She thinks it's important to have clear rules and instructions.

E However, alternative schools often have fewer students so it is easier for teachers to see what their students are good at.

F However, alternative schools try to help students develop physically and emotionally and learn things that are useful for life in general.

LIVEWORKSHEETS