

Lebanon

School Classes

Lebanese students' grades are equally weighted between performance on assignments and exams. It is becoming common to assign homework two to three times per week in Lebanese schools. Lebanese high school students stay in the same classroom all day while teachers will rotate to each room. Most schools are co-ed in Lebanon, but some public and private schools are for boys or girls only.

School Relationships

Lebanese students address their teacher by title before the name, using either the teacher's first or last name; for example, "Mr. Doe," or "Mr. John," or simply "teacher".

Extracurricular Activities

Some private schools offer clubs and activities but, the majority of schools in Lebanon do not. The concept of extracurricular activities is not that common among all Lebanese families. When students do participate in any activities, parents are usually involved to a very high extent. In most cases, the parents choose the activities their child gets to participate in like music and some sports.

School Rules

Lebanese high schools do not allow use of cell phones during classes. If a student is caught using their cell phone, their phone is usually taken away and given back at the end of the day. If students get into a fight, they are sent to the principal's office and their parents are called. They can be suspended for a few days or up to a week depending on the principal's discretion. Most schools have a uniform for students and most Lebanese teenagers dress informally outside of school.

Return

Once the students return to their country, they need to take their U.S. transcripts to the Ministry of Education to receive a certification of equivalence to have the year abroad count towards their educational progress. Most students have to catch up on several subjects that they may not have covered while being in the U.S., such as Arabic and the sciences.

Family Life

Lebanese families tend to live in the same area as their relatives. It is not uncommon for families to live in the same building as their relatives. However, most families live by themselves in their own apartment. It is not uncommon for both parents to be professionals and financially responsible for the family in Lebanon, but many families still have a traditional division of labor where the mother is responsible for the housework and the father supports the family financially. In Lebanese families, the father is seen as the head of the family and the authority figure and all major household decisions are typically made after his approval.

Though having a housekeeper or hired help is not uncommon in Lebanon, most household chores and upkeep are delegated to the mother if there is no hired help. Usually mothers cook the meals and female teens start to learn to cook at a certain age, but not in all families. Male teenagers are not expected to cook for themselves nor for their families. While all efforts are made to have meals eaten all together as a family in Lebanon, from time to time people will eat separately to accommodate a busy schedule.

Teen Life

Siblings usually share clothing, books and accessories. They usually don't ask first before using them unless they think the other might need it. In Lebanon, children are expected to act formally around their grandparents and parents. Lebanese students tend to rely heavily on their parents for support and direction.

Responsibilities

Lebanese families spend a lot of time together and it is rare to spend time by one's self. Some students have felt lonely at times when each member of the host family was having their "own" time. Allowances may be in daily or weekly sums, but teenagers are not typically expected to budget for the clothes they want to buy or for the activities in which they want to participate.



COUNTRY FACTS:

Capital: Beirut

Population: 4,125,247

Area, sq. mi.: 4,015

Real GDP per capita: 13,100

Adult literacy rate: 93% (male); 82% (female)

Ethnic make-up: Arab 95%, Armenian 4%, other 1%
note: many Christian Lebanese do not identify themselves as Arab but rather as descendents of the ancient Canaanites and prefer to be called Phoenicians

Religion: Muslim 59.7% (Shia, Sunni, Druze, Isma'ilite, Alawite or Nusayri), Christian 39% (Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Melkite Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Chaldean, Assyrian, Copt, Protestant), other 1.3%
note: 17 religious sects recognized

Parental Involvement

In Lebanon, children know more than their parents about the internet and its usage, hence most parents do not monitor what their children are doing online. Teens are not accustomed to having their internet usage monitored either with time or website restrictions. Parents in Lebanon are not always in direct contact with their children's schools. Some schools might not even require regular teacher meetings. However, the student's report card needs to be signed by their parents to confirm that they have received it. In addition, in many schools, if the student failed they cannot receive their report card unless his/her parents visit the school.

Pets

In Lebanon, if the family is Muslim, dogs are not allowed in the house while cats might be, but largely not. For Christian families, the decision of having dogs or cats in the house is not based on religious reasons, however they will likely keep animals outside.

Personal Interactions

Mixed Gender Socializing

In Lebanon, teenagers have mixed-gender groups of friends and also socialize one-on-one with the opposite gender. Lebanese students do have friends from school and activities, but a vital support group that all teenagers develop throughout their life is from their extended family and neighborhood friends. People are very sociable and tend to live in the same place for a lifetime so everybody ends up knowing everyone.

Friendships

Friendship means having someone that is always there for you. Lebanese tend to have their "school friends" and their "neighborhood friends." The school friend is there for them during school and the neighborhood friend tends to be a stronger relationship that lasts the whole lifetime. Lebanese teenagers tend to socialize in groups as a tight-knit community. People in general are very sociable and it is not considered rude to talk to someone you don't know.

Lebanese students tend to be generous with their friends. They may buy things or insist on paying, as it is traditional in Lebanese culture. While it may be a polite gesture, it is expected that the other party will either pay for themselves through insisting or that they will pay for the other the next time they go out (also after insisting).

Communication Styles

In Lebanon, the communication style depends upon what is being discussed. For example, students may be very direct when talking about their day and their friends, but if they become involved in a romantic relationship, they will most likely not talk to their parents about it. This can also depend on whether the parents are financially stable and educated.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is important in Lebanon as a way of showing respect.

Cultural Norms

While the cultural norm in Lebanon would be that it is unacceptable to show negative emotions in public or in front of the family, many teenagers still show their emotions. They may do so more with their peers than with their family, but it definitely does happen at home too. Some Lebanese teenagers are accustomed to having their own personal space both in terms of interaction and physical space. Depending on the educational and financial background of the family, parents may interfere in all of the teenagers' activities. On the other hand, some parents are open-minded and give their children more space.

Personal Hygiene

Lebanese teenagers generally take a quick (5-15 minute) shower once a day and sometimes maybe twice if they are involved in physical activities. In general, Lebanese students keep bathrooms clean, however many homes have house help who do this. Muslims who pray 5 times a day perform a ritual ablution each time. It is generally thought to be unclean in Lebanon to wear the same clothes two days in a row. If the clothes are still clean they will wear them twice, but not necessarily two days in a row. Most of the Lebanese teenagers do not change clothes upon returning home.

Religion

Students generally attend regular religious services and it is generally seen as a community activity and done with the entire family. However, attendance at religious ceremonies or services are more often and consistent in rural areas.

Holidays

Ramadan: fasting from dawn to sunset. Families usually invite family and friends to eat together. They also help poor people and orphans during this time. Eid al-Fitr happens after 30 days of fasting during Ramadan. Usually it is for 3 days. It starts with prayers, then visiting of the cemeteries of their relatives and offering flowers. Then family gathering at lunch. Visiting relatives and friends. Also donating to the orphanages and poor. Presents are optional.