

Philippines

School Classes

In the Philippines, high school students generally take 10 subjects per school year which are mandated by the National Department of Education for all high schools. Elective subjects are not the norm in public schools. Typical school days are from 7:30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Classrooms average about 50 students (boys and girls together) and students remain in one classroom and teachers come in to teach different subjects.

In the Philippines, students are rarely asked how they personally feel about a topic or requested to expand learning and investigate on their own. Students are not familiar with receiving immediate feedback and one-to-one consultations about academic performance; they usually wait for comments on the report card at the end of the grading quarter. Student-teacher consultations are rare and parent-teacher consultations are the norm.

School Relationships

Students must address elders, teachers and other persons of authority as Miss, Ma'am, Sir, or Teacher X, and it is considered disrespectful not to use an honorary title for an elder person even in informal and very casual situations. Students will stand to greet a teacher who enters the room and again when he or she leaves the room. Students must greet a teacher in the hallway and offer to help if they see a need such as helping the teacher carry items.

Extracurricular Activities

Many students are not familiar with school-based extracurricular activities as they come from communities with little access to, or few facilities and equipment, for sports and music. Students must ask permission for all activities including school-related extracurricular activity or going out with friends. Parents are involved with their children's extracurricular activities, however, students are more mobile and do not need to be transported to and from extracurricular activities as cheap public transportation is widely available.

School Rules

Cell phones are not allowed in class in the Philippines and phones should be turned off, not on silent or vibrate mode.

Return

Upon return, Filipino students are required to take their 4th year of high school. They must take university exams. Students may come from families with limited resources and may they worry about finances and possible scholarships that would enable them to continue on to the next level of education. While there are no requirements for supplemental classes outside of high school, there are review classes or centers for students who are preparing to take university entrance exams.

Family Life

The common household in the Philippines is a one or two parent family with extended family members living in the same house. Same-gender parent families, while not uncommon, are also not the norm. A student's natural parents may not both be professionals and households may have one-parent income. Fathers generally are the head of the family in terms of being the financial provider and in life-changing decision making for the entire family. However, mothers exert great influence in discipline and daily behavior of children. Filipino students may be hesitant to engage parents in open dialogue about decisions concerning themselves. They may be seen as indecisive as they are not used to making personal choices.

Teen Life

In terms of life-changing decision making that will impact the future of students, parents make the decisions. In terms of decision making related to money, students are totally dependent on their parents. In regards to school involvement, students have greater independence. Students are not used to deciding without consulting parents so, explain that it is okay to participate in school and other social activities as long as host family is informed about when, where, how, why, and who.



COUNTRY FACTS:

Capital: Manila

Population: 99,900,177

Area, sq. mi.: 115,830

Real GDP per capita: 3,300

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

Ethnic make-up: Tagalog 28.1%, Cebuano 13.1%, Ilocano 9%, Bisaya/Binisaya 7.6%, Hiligaynon Ilonggo 7.5%, Bikol 6%, Waray 3.4%, other 25.3%

Religion: Roman Catholic 80.9%, Muslim 5%, Evangelical 2.8%, Iglesia ni Kristo 2.3%, Aglipayan 2%, other Christian 4.5%, other 1.8%, unspecified 0.6%, none 0.1%

Responsibilities

Traditionally in the Philippines, mothers or elder female extended family members take on the household chores. Many families, even lower class families often have household help. Many students do not have their own bedroom or bathroom to clean. Chores such as common bathroom cleaning, washing dishes and laundering and pressing clothes is usually done by the household help. The older siblings in the family may know how to cook, but if they have domestic help at home, they may not have cooking skills. If they cook, cleaning up is usually done by the help. They are unlikely to have a microwave oven, dishwasher or washing machine.

Parental Involvement

Regarding computer use and online monitoring, most Filipino students will not have a PC at home so students have not been monitored by their parents. However, students are knowledgeable of the internet and gaming through internet cafes outside of the home. In the Philippines, students share rooms, school items and often clothing with siblings. Asking for permission is needed but sometimes it is taken for granted. In general, students do not have time for part-time work. All allowances and spending money for school, transportation, projects, snacks, socializing and personal items in the Philippines are requested from the parents.

Some parents are very involved in their child's school life, while others are not. In general, natural parents will be more concerned with how well students are doing in school and with school-related projects. Filipino students may call elder family members with honorary titles such as Ate (Big Sister), Kuya (Big Brother), Aunt, Uncle, Lola (Grandma), Lolo (Grandpa) etc. and maintain a more formal relationship.

Pets

Dogs in the Philippines are kept in a kennel located outside of the house. Students often request and prefer to have pet-free bedrooms.

Personal Interactions

Mixed Gender Socializing

One-on-one exclusive friendship with the opposite sex is generally frowned upon while still in high school, but it depends on whether the student is open about the relationship with his or her parents as well as parental acceptance, tolerance and open-mindedness in general. Parents are more accepting of barkada the usual group of close friends and schoolmates that their child socializes with.

Friendships

The majority of friends are made in school, not through extracurricular activities. Filipinos consider friendships by measured degrees of closeness: best friend (share secrets), close friend, (good and trusted friend), 'barkada' usual group mates (good friends, most of the time seen together at school and even out of school), classmate (friend in class), schoolmate (seen in hallways and school activities). Students may loan money to help close friends and payment of the loan is expected.

Eye contact

In classroom and normal school situations, eye contact is expected. In regular family conversations, eye contact is not always expected. However, students are not expected to make eye contact in cases of disciplinary conversations when maintaining eye contact with elders and persons of authority will be seen as disrespectful and challenging authority.

Communication Styles

Communication is generally indirect in the Philippines. It is not the norm to express negative feelings or perceptions immediately nor openly as this is seen to be unbecoming and rude behavior. Filipinos rely on non-verbal physical cues as part of communication. Students may withdraw and generally display unsocial behavior rather than say what they feel. In general, parents and elders do not ask about feelings and emotions so students are not used to being expressive and may not have the breadth and depth of vocabulary to say what they really feel and mean.

Cultural Norms

In general, the concept of personal space in Filipino culture is small, crowded or limited and so students feel more accepted if personal space is closer (closer than Americans are typically comfortable with). If the space is distant, and probably just appropriate by American concepts, this may be interpreted as rejection or distrust. Filipinos demonstrate acceptance and connection by touch that might seem excessive to Americans, such as hugging, back tapping, and literally rubbing shoulders and elbows often with family and close or trusted friends.

The cultural concept of time is that it is not acceptable to be late in school or in business. However, the Filipino concept of tardiness is not seen to be as highly disrespectful as it is in the U.S. Being late by 10-20 minutes without reason may be acceptable, but after half an hour, a good reason should accompany the apology. Filipinos will generally be tardy by as much as an hour in social appointments.

In the Philippines, greeting someone you see every day is generally expected, but the greetings themselves are not necessarily invitations to a larger conversation. Another, traditional, greeting comes at the end of the day when the child says 'mano po' then touches an elder's right hand knuckles to his/her own forehead, but this practice is quickly being replaced by 'beso' kiss on the cheek.

Personal Hygiene

It is normal to shower twice daily; once before leaving the house and second before bedtime. It is generally thought to be unclean to wear the same clothes two days in a row or to wear the same clothes twice without washing them. Most students are used to school uniforms and change from school uniform to house clothes (t-shirt & shorts) upon arriving at home.

Bathrooms in the Philippines are tiled and water is left to air dry. Towels are hung in the bedrooms or outside the house to dry in the sun. Each family member has his or her own towel to use for the face and body and this may be laundered weekly. Hygiene products are seldom put away as some may be shared among family members. Students may be used to using a pail and dipper for bathing, as it is rare in a Filipino home to have hot water from a shower or bathtub.

Food and Culture

Diet

For Muslims in the Philippines, halal (religiously appropriate) meat and chicken is hard to find except in communities with large populations of Muslim residents where halal food supplies can be obtained. Large food manufacturers are now producing halal-certified foods that are widely available in supermarkets and grocery shops.

In the Philippines the three main meals are generally cooked from scratch and students are unfamiliar with prepared meals. There is usually a viand, protein and veggies, with rice.

Gifts

In the Philippines, on major holidays like Christmas or birthdays, teenagers are expected to give gifts to family members and close friends, but not necessarily to all of their friends. There may also be a tradition of 'bunutan' gift giving where the name of the gift recipient will be drawn by a family member sometime before Christmas Day and this family member will keep it a secret from the rest of the family including the Christmas gift recipient. The secret will be revealed when everyone exchanges gifts on Christmas Day.

Religion

Holidays

Ramadan, or Hari Raya Puasa as it is known in the Philippines, Eid al-Fitr (at the end of Ramadan), and Eid al-Adha (after the Hajj or pilgrimage) are all nationally celebrated and recognized as significant Islamic holidays in the Philippines. Muslim families eagerly prepare for the celebrations and students enjoy iftar (dinner meal for the breaking of fast) with their families.

Other major holidays and observances include: Christmas season which unofficially begins in September and ends on the first Saturday of January of the following year and is celebrated nationally; Chinese New Year is celebrated nationally; Lent and Holy Week (Ash Wednesday up to Easter Sunday) are celebrated nationally; Mother's Day is the second Sunday of May; Father's Day is the third Sunday of June.