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Word Generation - Unit 1.01

Focus Words

analyze | factor | function | interpret | structure



WEEKLY PASSAGE

Why do we go to school? Some people think the primary goal of education is giving knowledge to students. They feel there is specific information that all kids should know. For instance, they want kids to know what happened in the Revolutionary War and how the food chain works. Others **interpret** the main role of school as one of preparing students to earn a living. They are most concerned about students learning particular skills, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Some argue that schools should introduce a set of shared values, including liberty and justice. They believe this will help students understand the **structure** of our democratic government. For example, they feel it is important for students to understand that while each of the three branches of government has a different function, the three work together to make sure we all enjoy certain freedoms and live by the same rules.

Some think schools should teach students to critically **analyze** what they see, hear, and read. They want students to be able to think carefully about different perspectives, to respect and challenge other viewpoints, and to form their own opinions about issues that affect them. Although many people say that they want kids to be able to think for themselves, students do not always have the freedom to do so in the classroom.

What do you think the **function** of school is? What do you consider the most important **factors** in providing a good education? Which ingredients are essential in your recipe for a good school?

What is the purpose of school?

FOCUS WORDS OF THE WEEK

analyze : (verb) to examine; study

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

factor : (noun) something that influences the result of something else

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

function : (noun) purpose; role; use

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

interpret : (verb) to understand or explain something's meaning

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

structure : (noun) way that parts of something relate to each other and work together

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

What is the purpose of school?

PROBLEM OF THE WEEK

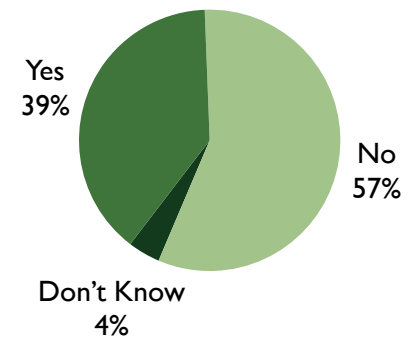
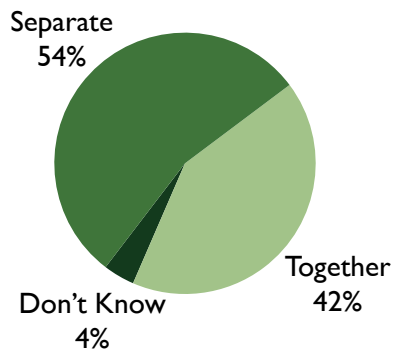
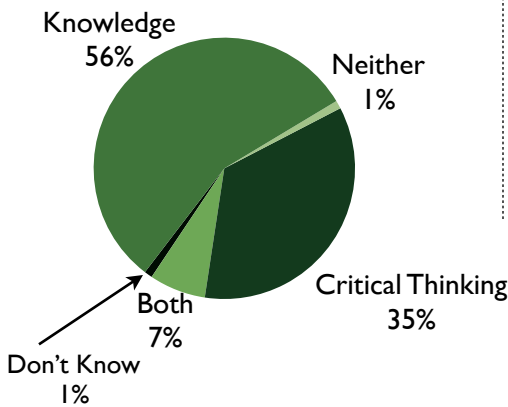


How do Americans view their public schools? **Analyze** the three graphs below. The information comes from a telephone survey taken in 1999.

What is the proper **function** of American schools? Should they focus on giving students knowledge, or should they focus on teaching students to think critically?

What is the best class **structure** for elementary schools? Should top students, average students, and struggling students have separate classes, or should different ability levels be taught together?

Should standardized test scores be a **factor** in determining the level of funding a school receives?



Option 1: Which of the following is the best **interpretation** of the data shown in these three graphs?

- A) Americans disagree or are divided on major educational issues.
- B) Americans agree on major educational issues.
- C) Americans want all students to be equally well educated.
- D) Americans are disappointed with today's schools.

Option 2: Answer Option 1. Then determine:

What is the probability that a person responded YES to both questions: “Schools should focus on giving students knowledge,” AND “Yes” to the question about making standardized test scores a factor in school funding?

Discussion Question: Many teachers believe that classrooms **function** more effectively when students are actively involved. In social studies, students might present an **analysis** of U.S. foreign policy and our relationship to other countries. In Spanish class, students might **interpret** and act out a play written by a Colombian author. Students prepare and present, while the teacher acts as a guide. Is this kind of **structure** realistic for a math class? Or, when you're learning how to multiply or **factor** numbers, is having a teacher give knowledge by explaining the facts the best option?

What Is the Purpose of School?

THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY



The students in Ms. Kahn’s class are learning how to **analyze** substances according to their properties.

“One important property of a substance is its density,” says Ms. Kahn. “Can anyone tell me what density is?”

“Isn’t it sort of like how massive something is?” says Marian. “I mean, that’s not it exactly, but mass is an important **factor** in density... It’s hard to explain. Density is sort of how tightly mass is packed into something.”

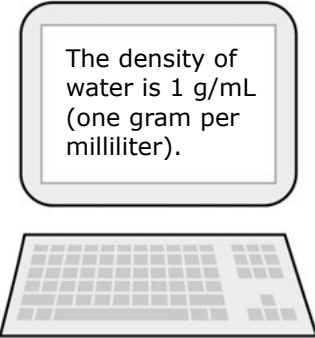
“Yeah,” Jamal adds, “density is how much mass a certain volume of something has. Say you have two things that are the same volume, but one has more mass. Then the one that’s the same size but more massive is more dense.”

“Right,” says Ms. Kahn. “Density is the ratio of mass to volume. We can write it as an equation, like this...” Ms. Kahn writes $d = m/v$ on the board, then says, “Density equals mass divided by volume. Scientists often compare the density of different substances to water, because water has a density of exactly one gram per milliliter. But don’t take my word for it—see if you can figure out the density of water for yourselves.”

➔ Marian and Jamal set out to check the density of water, but each **interprets** Ms. Kahn’s assignment differently.

<p>Marian puts a graduated cylinder marked off in milliliters on a scale and resets the scale to zero so that it will not count the mass of the cylinder.</p>	<p>Then Marian pours some water into the cylinder and records the volume and mass of the water.</p>	<p>Next, Marian adds some more water and records the volume and mass again.</p>	<p>Finally, Marian calculates the density of water based on her measurements.</p>
			$10.13\text{g}/10\text{mL} = 1.013 \text{ g/mL}$
			$17.91\text{g}/17\text{mL} = 1.054 \text{ g/mL}$
			<p>Take the average of the two measurements:</p>
			$(1.013 + 1.054) \div 2 = 1.034.$
			<p>So the density of water is about 1.034 g/mL</p>

Meanwhile, Jamal goes online and finds the following information on three reliable web sites:




TURN AND TALK:

Which student do you think got the most accurate answer, Marian or Jamal? _____

Which student do you think demonstrated the clearest understanding of how science **functions**, Marian or Jamal? Why?

What might be some reasons for the difference in their answers?

What is the purpose of school?



DEBATING THE ISSUE

Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A The primary function of school is to prepare students for the work force. Therefore, knowing what jobs students expect to have is an important factor in determining what they need to know and to be able to do.

B The primary function of school is to teach students how to think for themselves. Therefore, they should spend time in class learning how to learn, analyzing different perspectives, and defending their own positions.

C The primary function of school is to prepare students for democratic citizenship. Therefore, students should learn how to actively participate in the structures of society and government that help to ensure life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

D The primary function of school is to make sure that all students have specific knowledge about history, science, literature, and mathematics. Therefore, students should spend more time learning accepted facts than making their own interpretations.

E _____

Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

I believe that...

I agree with you because...

Can you show me evidence in the text that supports what you said?

You make a good point, but have you considered...

