

Fun Facts: Back to School



TEACHING GUIDE

About Fun Facts

Fun Facts are student-friendly handouts that tie statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau to holidays, anniversaries, and other observances. These fact sheets—originally created for teachers to use in the classrooms—can easily be used at home to keep kids entertained and learning. They can be used by students in different grade levels and subjects.

Using Back to School Fun Facts in the Classroom or at Home

Our Back to School Fun Facts handout includes many activities for students to do with their teacher in class or their parents/caregivers at home. Give students time to read and digest the information in the handout before discussing it. Here are some ideas for using the fact sheet with students at different grade levels.

Any Grade Level

Discussion: Potential discussion questions include:

- What surprises you about the information on this page?
- What questions do you have about the information on this page?

Job market analysis: Students can make a list of potential jobs for each education level mentioned on the handout: college graduates, high school graduates and GED recipients, and those with an education below ninth grade. Students can then share their lists with another person. To guide younger students, teachers, parents or caregivers can identify at least one job in each category (college graduate: teacher; high school graduates/GED recipients: office assistant; education below ninth grade: truck driver). Explain that a GED is a set of tests that can be taken to certify that a student has met high school requirements—in lieu of a traditional high school diploma. Older students can discuss why more education correlates with higher earnings or whether they think paying for college is a good return on investment.



Elementary School Level

Bar graph practice: Students can work together or individually to create a bar graph using the data from the “Gearing Up for School” section, which shows the numbers of different types of stores in the United States. To help students build the bar graph, teachers, parents or caregivers can instruct them to look at the biggest number first (number of shoe stores) and then base their y-axis scale off that number. Students can discuss which stores in their community might be counted in the data.

Discussion on how much school actually costs: Students can brainstorm a list of things they use at school or at home that cost money (paper, air conditioning, books, etc.); teachers, parents or caregivers should write those things on the board or piece of paper as students say them. Then, the student(s) can discuss how education funding is spent, particularly noting the dollar amount spent per pupil in public schools.

Middle School Level

Quick math calculations: To determine approximately how much money their school spends on needed things, students can multiply the number of students in their class, in their grade, and in their school by the dollar amount spent per pupil, identified on the fact sheet. Then they can discuss what the money is likely spent on.

Partner exercise: Should kindergarten be mandatory in all 50 states? Teachers, parents or caregivers can ask students to look at the data in the “Roll Call” section to help them answer this question. Explain to students that some states do not require kindergarten— and ask them to brainstorm reasons why. Then students should take 5 minutes to discuss what they think with a partner.

High School Level

Considering college: Referring to the salaries in the “Education Pays Off” section, teachers, parents or caregivers can ask students to engage in a discussion about why some people might not pursue a college education—such as when a job that an individual is interested in does not require a college education. Ask students if they can identify alternative ways to gain employable skills if a person chooses not to go to college.

Virtual college tour and comparison: Using the “Education Pays Off” section as a starting point, students can decide as a class or individually on two colleges in their area that they would like to explore online and compare. Teachers, parents or caregivers should explore each college with student(s), taking about 5 minutes per school to look at photos of the campus, majors offered, etc. The student(s) should also be sure to look at the price of admission for each school.