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*Discovering America:
Real People, Real Stories.
Part II. Education in the USA*



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UNIT I: EDUCATION IN THE USA

Focus I. Pre-School Years

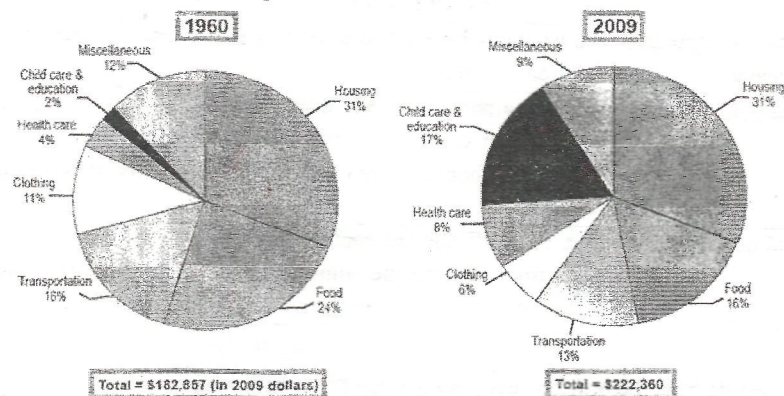


ACTIVE LISTENING

Before Listening Activities

Activity I: Orientation

1. Who takes care of young children (up to the age of five) in Russia? Do you know how much parents have to pay for childcare?
2. Look at the pie charts comparing the expenses on children (from birth through age 17) in 1960 and 2009. Describe the charts using the vocabulary below. Summarize the trends. Can you explain them?



(<http://www.wealthinformatics.com/2010/09/27/cost-of-raising-a-child/>)

Vocabulary: Describing the changes

Verbs and adverbs: to increase/rise by, to decrease/fall by, to increase/go up/climb/rise to, to decrease/fall/decline/drop/go down/reduce to, to maintain the same level, to remain steady/stable (at), to fluctuate around, to grow (rise, fall, etc) dramatically/ sharply/considerably/significantly/slightly

Nouns and adjectives: a slight/dramatic/sharp/gradual/steady/substantial/significant increase (rise, growth, decrease, decline, fall, etc)

Activity II: Helpful Vocabulary

1. Look at the list of words used to describe various childcare providers in the USA. Match the words to their definitions.

1) au pair	a) a school or class to prepare children aged five for school
2) babysitter	b) care provided by an individual or a few individuals in their private home
3) daycare center	c) a school for children between the ages of about two and five
4) home daycare	d) a place when babies or young children are looked after during the day, especially while their family members are at work
5) Head Start center	e) a facility where care for a parent's baby or toddler is provided either directly at her/his place of employment or directly adjacent to it
6) kindergarten	f) a person who takes care of babies or children while their parents are away from home and is usually paid to do this
7) nanny	g) a parent who stays at home to take care of their children instead of going out to work
8) on-site (corporate) daycare center	i) a woman whose job is to take care of young children in the children's own home
9) preschool (nursery school)	j) a young person, usually a woman, who lives with a family in a foreign country in order to learn the language. She/he helps in the house, takes care of children and receives a small wage
10) stay-at-home mother/father	k) a federally-funded center for children aged three to five years from low-income families. Its aim is to prepare children for success in school through an early learning program.

2. Put the words from the previous exercise into the following categories:

center-based care (facilities which provide care for children in groups)

family childcare (providers who offer care for children in their own home)

in-home care (care occurs in the child's own home)

3. Guess the meaning of the underlined words and phrases from the context:

1. The daycare dilemma is always on my mind. It's just always there. It's pervasive.
2. When my friends needed to make the decision whether or not to go back to work, they sat down and calculated out to the nth expense.
3. Many daycare centers are expensive, they are places where parents are overcharged.
4. I grew up in an area where all my relatives lived. It was a built-in unit.
5. If one of the parents was busy, you were dropped at aunt's house, uncle's house.
6. You cannot underestimate having a grandmother. It's one of the greatest inventions ever.

- A
7. Who did you think might take care of your child, and how does it match up with what actually happened?
 8. When I found out I was pregnant, I definitely went through sticker shock.

Listening Comprehension Activities

1. You are going to hear a discussion which takes place in a radio station studio. The radio host Michelle Norris is talking with a group of parents from Washington, D.C. about childcare costs in the USA. The participants of the discussion are:

- Stacy Ferguson, who has had different kinds of childcare for her three kids
- Sharon Johnson, a retired woman who takes care of her three-year-old grandson while his parents work
- Adam Graham, a former stay-at-home dad who has two daughters
- Kelly Hruska, a stay-at-home mother of two small girls
- Angela Tilghman, a single mother who works long hours while a lifelong friend cares for her special needs son

Listen to the discussion and write T (true) or F (false) in front of each of the sentences below. Correct the false statements.

1. The participants of the discussion believe that childcare providers make a lot of money as daycare expenses are quite big.
 2. Adam says that he paid for his daughter's Montessori school more than for his own college education.
 3. Sharon insisted that her daughter and her son-in-law pay her for taking care of their child because she needed additional income.
 4. Sharon would like to open a center to provide affordable childcare.
 5. Nannies in D.C. cost about thirty - forty thousand dollars per year.
 6. Stacy regrets that she stayed at home for the first years of her child's life instead of going back to work and making a career.
 7. Angela was at a loss when she found out that she was pregnant.
2. Listen again and answer the following questions:
1. What does Kelly say about the process of making the decision whether to go back to work or become a stay-at-home parent?
 2. How does Sharon describe her experience as a nanny for her grandson? What is it like? How much money does she get paid?
 3. What does Adam say about problems his wife and he faced when they had their children? Who helped them to raise their kids?
 4. What does Stacy advise young mothers and mothers-to-be?
 5. In Adam's opinion, what personal quality is essential for parents?

After Listening Activities

Activity I: *Discussing the Issues*

1. Study the following chart which compares costs of different types of childcare in the USA. Which is the most affordable option for parents? Which is the most expensive?

Type of childcare	Average cost for full-time care
Daycare center	\$380 to \$1564 a month for babies and toddlers (average \$972)
Home daycare	\$300 to \$1000 a month for babies and toddlers (average \$650), \$315 to \$956 a month for preschoolers (average \$636)
Nanny	\$500 to \$700 a week (\$2,167 to \$3,033 a month); live-in nannies usually receive a bit less
Relative care	Often free, but if parents choose to pay, it is usually minimum wage or more. They can also offer to do chores, give gift certificates, or pay an occasional bill for a relative caregiver.
Stay-at-home parent	No extra cost — but income drops if you were working before
Au pair	an average cost of about \$350 a week for full-time live-in care
Babysitter	an average of \$10 per hour

Note: Costs are based on the latest figures from the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) (<http://www.babycenter.com/childcare-options>)

2. Can you think of pros and cons of using types of childcare given in the chart above? Choose one type and discuss your ideas with a partner, then present them to your class. You can use the following stories for some ideas (one story about each type):

1) *These young girls can only work 45 hours a week. They must go to school while they're here. And the host family must pay for them to go to school: \$500. So if you're working full time, you need more help than 45 hours a week. And they don't really want to work on the weekends. If you need help on the weekends, they're not going to work on the weekends* (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/>).

2) *Well, if we talk about nannies, it's not inexpensive. It is not for everybody. Of course, I think it's the best option. You have one-on-one care. You have to have references here that we can call. Everybody's legal. Everybody drives. You are paying more, but you get a lot more bang for your buck* (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14151163>).

3) *My parents have always taken care of my son. I have phobia against bringing anyone into the house that I don't know and that's not related to me, who may hurt him, like take advantage of him, even. I mean, just every headline that makes it onto CNN and fills our tabloids is exactly what sits in my head* (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14151163>).

4) *I had a daycare center experience. And I guess the pro of that it's affordable. But it's not for somebody who has very flexible hours. Well, I mean, you have to pick up that child by 6 o'clock, come hell or high water. So if you have to work late, that's just way too bad* (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/>).

5) *While I loved the in-home provider and she was much cheaper, either she or her kids were constantly sick, so she was constantly closing. It became a huge problem for me and my husband. She*