

# The Education System in France



**Kristie Frydryk**

# Some Numbers

- 1/4 of the population is in the education system (15 million)
- 2 million in higher education
- 100,000 go to schools specializing in various disabilities
- 200,000 go to agricultural or vocational schools
- 300,000 that are 16+ have work contracts



# French Education

- Primary education
  - Ages 3-11
- Secondary education
  - Ages 11-18
- Higher education
  - 18+

# Major Holidays and Breaks

- All Saints
  - 1 ½ weeks at the end of October/beginning of November
- Christmas
  - 2 weeks around Christmas Day and New Years Day
- Winter
  - 2 weeks in mid-February
- Spring/Easter
  - 2 weeks starting in mid-April
- Summer
  - 2 months starting in early-July



# Pre-School

- Not mandatory
- Very popular
- Ages 3 to 5
- Also known as nursery classe

# Primary Education

- Mandatory at age 6
- 2 yrs old-preschool
- 3 yrs old-kindergarden
- Learn to write and read the first year after kindergarden

| Maternelle (Kindergarden)          |                                  |              |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Age                                | Grade                            | Abbreviation |
| 3 -> 4                             | Petite section                   | PS           |
| 4 -> 5                             | Moyenne section                  | MS           |
| 5 -> 6                             | Grande section                   | GS           |
| École élémentaire (Primary school) |                                  |              |
| Age                                | Grade                            | Abbreviation |
| 6 -> 7                             | Cours préparatoire               | CP / 11ème   |
| 7 -> 8                             | Cours élémentaire première année | CE1 / 10ème  |
| 8 -> 9                             | Cours élémentaire deuxième année | CE2 / 9ème   |
| 9 -> 10                            | Cours moyen première année       | CM1 / 8ème   |
| 10 -> 11                           | Cours moyen deuxième année       | CM2 / 7ème   |



# Primary Education cont.

- Set up similar to our elementary school
  - 1 or 2 teachers for numerous subjects
- Don't teach religion
- Teach about the Republic instead
- March 2004-government banned all conspicuous religious symbols from school and other public institutions

# Secondary Education

- *Collège* (high school) for the first 4 years right after primary school
  - Ages 11-15
- *Lycée* (high school-preparing for college) for the next 3 years
  - 15-18

| Collège (Junior High) |           |                  |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Age                   | Grade     | Abbreviation     |
| 11 -> 12              | Sixième   | 6 <sup>e</sup>   |
| 12 -> 13              | Cinquième | 5 <sup>e</sup>   |
| 13 -> 14              | Quatrième | 4 <sup>e</sup>   |
| 14 -> 15              | Troisième | 3 <sup>e</sup>   |
| Lycée (High school)   |           |                  |
| Age                   | Grade     | Abbreviation     |
| 15 -> 16              | Seconde   | 2 <sup>nde</sup> |
| 16 -> 17              | Première  | 1 <sup>ere</sup> |
| 17 -> 18              | Terminale | Term or Tle      |



# Brevet

- Brevet-first official diploma
  - Not required to enter high school
  - Consists of the grades from the final year and a final exam
    - Only French, mathematics, history, and geography

# Baccalauréat

- High school diploma
- Needed in order to get into a university or any professional work
- Refers to the diploma and the exams that go along with it
  - Similar to SATs or ACTs



# Secondary Education cont.

- During the final year of collège, students are allowed to pick some of their subjects
- Also get to pick what direction they want their curriculum to take
- For lycée students can either choose to go to a general, technical, or vocational schools
- Prepares students for *baccalauréat* exams taken when 18

# Higher education

- Grandes écoles
  - More prestigious
  - Highly competitive selection system
  - Ex. 12,000 candidates for 400 spots
- Universities



# Higher Education Cont.

- In Paris and suburbs
  - 13 universities that don't specialize in any specific area
  - Large number of institutions that do specialize in specific areas
- Universities are named after the big cities they are located near followed by numbers
  - Paris I to XIII

# More Higher Education

- Also named after famous French people
- Influenced by the European standards
- Difficult to change majors without falling behind a semester or a whole year
- Complex and rigid system



- Low tuition because they are funded by the state
- Grandes écoles are very prestigious
- Responsible for many of France's scientists and executives