

Education in Ancient Greece

The way children were educated was different in each city state.

In Sparta, reading and writing was unimportant. Boys learned to be good fighters.

In Athens citizens had to be educated to take part in voting in the Assembly. Athenian boys also went to 'wrestling school' each day, to learn many sports, not just wrestling. They had to be fit, to fight in the army.

Schools

Greek schools were small. They had only one teacher and about ten or twenty boys. The schools were not free and so only the rich could really afford to send their children to school.

The children did not need much school equipment as they had to learn everything off by heart. When they needed to, they wrote on wooden boards covered with layers of wax. They used a wooden pen called a stylus with a sharp end for writing and a flat end for 'rubbing out'. The wax was melted and reapplied from time to time.

Boys and Girls

Education was also different for boys and girls. Boys were educated to become good citizens and take part in the public life of the city state. Girls were educated in housekeeping and how to look after the family.

Most Greek children, especially the girls, never went to school. Greek girls were not allowed to go to school and were often educated at home.

The School Day

The boys started school at 7 years old, and stayed until they were about 14. In the mornings they learned to read, write and do simple maths. They worked in one room, which had stools or

benches, but no desks. Pupils read aloud and learned poetry by heart. Rich boys also learned about philosophy. Philosophy is thinking and writing about thinking.

In the afternoons they went to wrestling schools.

At the age of 14, children of tradesmen began to learn a trade. The children of rich Athenians went to the Assembly, the market place and the gymnasium to watch, listen to and learn from the older men.

