



Education in Bosnia

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DESCRIPTION OF BOSNIA:

Bosnia and Herzegovina, officially the republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina IS A country in southeastern Europe. It is part of Balkan Peninsula, and a former constituent republic of Yugoslavia. Bosnia declared its independence in March, 1992. Civil war then broke out among the country's Muslims, Croats, and Serbs.

Bosnia has an area of 51,129 sq km (19741sq mi.). It is a mountainous country. In particular, extensions of the Dinaric Alps, which form Bosnia's western border with Croatia, traverse the western and southern parts of the republic. The highest peak is Mount Maglic (7831 ft). The northern part of the republic is heavily forested, while the south has flatter areas of fertile soil. Those flatter areas are used primarily as farmland.

A Mediterranean climate prevails in the south, with sunny, warm summers and mild, rainy winters. A modified continental climate of warm summers and cold winters dominates the northern inland territory.

Bosnia's major ethnic groups are Muslims, Serbs, and Croats. The primary difference among the largest ethnic groups is religion. The Serbs are traditionally Orthodox Christians and the Croats are Roman Catholics. The Bosnian Muslims, descendants of Slavs who converted to Islam in the 15th centuries, are generally Sunni Muslims.

According to the Bosnian government the country officially has three languages: Serbian, Bosnian, and Croatian. When writing, Serbs use the Cyrillic alphabet, while the Muslims and Croats use the Latin alphabet (A,B,C). **Do they speak different languages or just write using different alphabets.**

Bosnia's diverse population has made the country's cultural life rich.



DESCRIPTION OF EDUCATION IN BOSNIA:

In Bosnia, there is no preschool education, nor kindergarten. Primary education, however, is compulsory and free for all children from ages 7 through 15 and lasts for eight years. Secondary education is also free; it is provided by general and technical secondary schools, where studies last for four years. Most children in Bosnia start school when they are six or seven years old and finish high school when they are eighteen or nineteen.

All forms of secondary schooling include an element of vocational training. Pupils graduating from general secondary schools obtain the *Matura* and can enroll in any *faculty* or *academy* by passing a qualification examination prescribed by the institution. Students graduating from vocational schools obtain a diploma.

According to the primary school curriculum plan, teachers do not more than 25 hours per week. Additional activities might involve additional time. The academic year is 38 weeks or 190 working days, Monday through Friday. The curriculum has many subjects and is highly structured. Teachers are given instruction on what to cover week by week, and day by day. There is more emphasis than in Iowa on some subjects, e.g., math, physics, geography, history, chemistry.

Additional instruction is available primarily for gifted and talented students to allow them to progress faster through the system and to help them further develop their talents. In addition, if school facilities permit and if the parents and children are interested, foreign language study can begin from first to third grade, and it can be structured as an optional subject from fourth to eighth grade. Religious education lessons are optional as well.

There are alternative schools in Bosnia, which are similar to those in Iowa.

In Bosnia, there is special education for students with severe disabilities. The students are educated in separate building, not in the regular school.

School is very important to the Bosnian families. They expect excellent education for their children. They also expect the school system to prepare their children for a future life. Parents encourage their children to graduate from high school and continue higher education.

Generally, parents in Bosnia are not involved in children's schooling as much as in Iowa. There are no parent-teacher organizations, nor do parents volunteer in schools. The philosophy of Bosnia's parents is simple: they send their children to school where they have to learn, behave, and be respectful to adults and peers. Parents expect teachers to be in charge at school, and they have a lot of respect for them.



Parents do like to be contacted if there is a learning or behavioral issue. They expect the teachers to handle the situation, but they want to be made aware of it.

Parents expect to receive the progress report card and they try to attend parent-teacher conferences. If unable to attend, they will try to go some other time. Some parents also attend sports, music, or other events at school.

Schools in Bosnia expect families to help their students with homework and read with them. The schools share the school policy and expectations with the parents. They expect the policies to be followed, and that the parents will raise their children properly, attend parent-teacher conferences, attend other scheduled events, and be in contact with tutors at the school.

OTHER FACTS ABOUT THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN BOSNIA:

In Bosnia, teachers and principals are called Mr./Mrs._____.

At the end of each grading period, a quarter of the school year, teacher send report cards to parts. These cards are similar to what Iowa students receive. Grades are 1 – 5, where 1 is an *F* and 5 is an *A*.

Students spend approximately 4 - 5 hours at school each day. One week they go in the morning, and the following week they go in the afternoon. They get a classroom schedule at the beginning of the school year. They have 45 minutes for each subject, and in between there are 5-minute breaks. The students also have a long break for lunch. The winter, spring, and summer breaks are similar to those in Iowa.

There are some major differences between the educational systems in Bosnia and Iowa.

- There is a heavy emphasis for all students on math, physics, geography, history, and chemistry in Bosnia.
- Students in Bosnia express their knowledge more in oral, rather than written, assessments.
- Students in Bosnia are not allowed to talk back to the teachers.
- Families in Bosnia are rarely involved in their children's schooling.

There are, however, some similarities between the educational systems in Bosnia and Iowa.

- The educational systems in Bosnia are organized much like the school systems in Iowa.
- Disciplinary actions taken when rules are broken are similar.



COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS:

In Iowa, Bosnian parents are often not involved much in their children's education.

There may be several reasons:

- The language barrier makes parents feel uncomfortable going to the school, being a volunteer, or being a member of a committee.
- Most of the Bosnian parents work very hard at two or three jobs, so they do not have much time for many extra activities, including visiting the school often.
- They often believe they are unable to help because they have less experience in the school system than others. It is, therefore, very important to share with them how they can be involved in a meaningful way.

As educators working with Bosnian parents and families, you might consider the following:

- Organize cultural events that honor the Bosnian culture.
- Organize a course for Bosnia children to maintain and expand their native language.
- Provide books in the native language; allow students to share the books with their parents as well as have their parents read the books to all the children at school.
- Help the Bosnian parents enroll their students in activities, including sports, music, theater, and technology.
- Provide interpreters for the parents.
- When parents do something for the school or get involved, send them a thank you in their native language. They will greatly appreciate this kindness.
- Invite parents to the school, whenever they have time. They like to be welcomed.

Be sure to ask the parents of your Bosnian students to . . .

- Talk to their children, telling them stories in their native language, and describing things with detail and order.
- Ask questions of their children, listening to their opinions and answers and discussing things in general.
- Have a special place for books in their home.
- Have their children read to them in English or in their native language.
- Take their children to the library.
- Share how important reading and learning is in their lives.
- Take English classes – to increase their understanding of life in Iowa and to set an example for their children how important learning is.
- Use the interpreters to be sure all their questions are answered and to better communicate with the teachers and principal.