

Education Boards Comparison

Difference between ICSE, CBSE, IB and State Boards in India



Education Boards: What are CBSE, ICSE, IB and State Boards in India?

(A) CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education):

1. It comes under the Union Government of India. It is a board of education for public and private schools. It was formed in 1962. CBSE is the most popular board in India; more than 9000 schools in India follow CBSE.
2. Started by 'NCERT' to operate central schools like Kendriya Vidhyalayas and was later adopted by many private schools.
3. Most of the schools across the country are affiliated to CBSE, the board recognized by the Government. Students studying in schools affiliated to CBSE gather good exposure to knowledge of their subjects.
4. The board conducts final examinations every spring for 'All India Senior School Certificate Examination' (AISSCE) for Class 10 and 12.
5. The board also annually conducts the AIEEE exam for admission to undergraduate courses in Engineering and Architecture in numerous colleges spread over India. It also conducts AIPMT (All India Pre Medical Test) for admission to major medical colleges in India.

(B) ICSE (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education):

1. It is an examination conducted by CISCE, a private, non-governmental board of school education in India. ICSE board is popular for its vast and more comprehensive and complete pattern.
2. Focuses on the overall development of the students. Students develop practical knowledge of the subjects they learn. Beneficial for students who wish to go abroad for higher studies as it is recognized by many universities and countries across the globe.
3. ICSE was first established by the 'Local Examinations Syndicate' of the University of Cambridge that existed during the British regime.
4. Syllabus followed by ICSE schools differs vastly from that followed in CBSE schools in terms of content and volume.
5. The board conducts an ICSE examination towards the end of tenth grade and an Indian School Certificate (ISC) examination towards the end of twelfth grade.

(C) IB (International Baccalaureate):

1. Students get to learn more about their personal self and ethics such as team work and leadership as they undertake projects regularly.
2. Students also get to learn additional languages which are very beneficial for them in the long run.
3. International Baccalaureate (IB) is an 'International Educational Foundation' headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. As the name suggests, it is more internationally accepted and follows a different teaching methodology.
4. It was founded in 1968 and works with more than a million students, 3696 schools and in 147 countries.
5. IB board provides an opportunity to a student to engage in an in-depth study of a topic of interest within a chosen subject.

(D) State:

1. State Boards are Boards undertaken by individual State Governments in the states of India. Each state follows its own syllabus and grading strategy.
2. Study of the regional language and culture is encouraged and practiced. State board examinations are referred to as Madhayamik for Secondary State Certificate and Higher Secondary Certificate examinations.
3. Easier than other boards and does not focus on competency for entrance examinations of medical and engineering.
4. Each state board has some variance from NCERT syllabus and focuses on local state education.

Recognition of Education Boards?

CBSE: Recognized by Indian government and by most of the Universities and Colleges in India.

ICSE: The Delhi Education Act, 1973, passed by Parliament, in Chapter 1 under Definitions Section 2 (s), recognizes the council as a body conducting public examinations in India.

IB: Recognized by the 'Association of Indian Universities' as an entry qualification (equivalent to + 2 qualification of an Indian Board) to all the Universities.

State: Recognized by State Government as well as Government of India.

Differences in education approach between the boards:

(A) CBSE:

1. CBSE's main aim is to prepare students for Engineering and Medical exams. Therefore they focus more on science and less on languages. Their approach is more of theoretical than practical.

2. CBSE content is very science and math focused with lot of attention paid to application of knowledge.
3. Emphasis is more on good quality of education that promotes intellectual and social spirits in students, rather than practical education.
4. Entire syllabus is divided into units and every unit is allotted a period, required to cover it in the year. Syllabus is also spread in the weightage of marks it will carry in the examination.

(B) ICSE:

1. ICSE has equal focus on science, arts and language, especially English. It encourages students to choose across diverse topics/subjects for their Class-12 exam.
2. Syllabus followed is more comprehensive and complete, which gives all the fields an equal importance like – science, math, language, arts, home science etc.
3. It has more balanced Syllabus for child's overall growth by providing students with more practical knowledge and better analytical skills.
4. Prepares the students for studies abroad due to similarities of its course structure with many international curriculums.

(C) IB:

1. It focuses on holistic learning, intercultural awareness and enhancement of communication skills. More importance is given to languages, arts and humanities at a higher level.
2. It has international curriculum where subjects are taught in an integrated way in order to avoid a fragmented approach. IB has a different approach where there are no or few textbooks. Students are free to explore the world.
3. It's main focus is on 'how to learn' rather than 'what to learn'. Students under IB have slight advantage in exams like CAT, SAT and GRE because of their better analytical skills.
4. The examinations test student's knowledge and not their memory and speed.

(D) State:

1. State board syllabus is designed by the 'Department of Education' of the concerned State Government.
2. Every state board has its own educational approach which implies that the syllabus varies for every state in India.
3. Emphasis is more on state level topics and content of local relevance.
4. State boards are very much theoretical and due to their focus on local relevance, they help students in preparing for state level entrance exams.

Complexity/How difficult are these boards?

(A) CBSE Board Difficulty level: Relatively Easy

1. CBSE syllabus is easier, compared to other boards but still needs hard work.
2. Due to fewer subjects, it is least burdening among all the boards.

(B) ICSE Board Difficulty level: Tough

1. Relatively tougher than CBSE and other boards.
2. On an average, a person scoring 85% in ICSE is equivalent to a person scoring 90% in CBSE. Some universities even follow this 5% differential approach.

(C) IB Board Difficulty level: Tough

1. The IB curriculum is more challenging than educational boards like the CBSE and ICSE.
2. There are regular quizzes and assignments which keep the students busy throughout.

(D) State Board Difficulty Level: Easy

1. The complexities of state board depend from state to state.
2. Usually state boards are tougher and stricter than CBSE.

What classes are these boards applicable to?

(A) CBSE:

1. It is applicable from Nursery to class-XII (age 4-17).
2. It conducts two board examinations for classes 10th and 12th.
3. It also covers the curriculum for pre-school (age 3-5 years).

(B) ICSE:

1. Applicable from Nursery to class-XII (age 4-17).
2. It conducts two special board examinations, Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) examination for class 10th and Indian School Certificate (ISC) examination for class 12th.
3. Just like CBSE, it also covers the curriculum for pre-school (age 3-5 years).

(C) IB:

1. All classes that fall under the age group of 3-19 are covered in this board.
2. They offer 3 programmes:
 - a) Primary Years Program (Age 3-11)
 - b) Middle Years Program (Age 11-16)
 - c) Diploma Programme (Age 16-19)

(D) State:

1. It is also applicable from Nursery to class-XII (age 4-17)
2. Some state boards, however take a special board exam in 8th grade apart from the usual 10th and 12th grades.

3. Each state has its own board of education that conducts certificate examination for class 10 and class 12. Some state boards, such as Rajasthan board conducts exams in class 8 also.

Education Boards: What subjects are included in Class 10?

(A) CBSE:

1. Total compulsory subjects: 5, Additional subject: 1
2. The compulsory subjects: Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, English and 1 other language.
3. Options for other language: Hindi, Sanskrit, French, Computer, German, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Kashmiri, Marathi, Malayalam, Manipuri, Oriya, Punjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, Telgu, Urdu, Limbhu, Bhutia, Arabic, Persian, Portugese, Russian, Spanish, Nepali, Tibetan, Mizo, Bodo and Tangkhul.
4. Additional subject: Any of languages mentioned up or Information Education, Home Science or Physical Education.

(B) ICSE:

1. Compulsory subjects: 5, Additional subjects: 3
2. Compulsory subjects: English, History, Civics & Geography, and an Indian Language.
3. Choices for first two additional subjects: Mathematics, Science, Environmental Science, Computer Science, Agricultural Science, Commercial Studies, Technical Drawing, Foreign Language, Classical Language and Economics.
4. Choices for third additional subject: Computer Applications, Economic Applications, Commercial Applications, Art, Performing Arts, Home Science, Cookery, Fashion Designing, Physical Education, Technical Drawing Applications, Yoga and Environmental Applications.

(C) IB:

1. Number of subjects: 6.
2. Five compulsory subjects: 1st language, 2nd language, Arts, Physical Education and Technology.
3. Options for the 6th subject: Humanities (Geography and History), Science (Biology, Chemistry & Physics) and Mathematics (Number, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Statistics, Discrete Mathematics and Arithmetic).

(D) State:

Every state board has different subjects; we have taken an example of Uttar Pradesh Educational Board.

1. Number of subjects: 5, Hindi is compulsory.
2. Four other subjects are chosen from the following Choices: Instrumental music, Commerce, Science, Vocal music,

Social Science, Computers, Gujarati, English, Urdu, Punjabi, Assami, Bangla, Kannada, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Sanskrit, Arabic, Mathematics, Agriculture and Home Science.

Education Boards: What subjects are included in Class 10 - Detailed?

(A) CBSE:

1. Compulsory: English
2. Students can choose different subjects which are grouped together.
3. Medical Group: English, Biology, Physics, Chemistry and one optional subject.
4. Non-Medical Group: English, Math, Physics, Chemistry and one optional subject.
5. Commerce Group: English, Accountancy, Business Studies, Economics, theory and Practice of Management and one optional subject.
6. Arts Group: English, Political Science/Psychology, History/Economics, Geography/Math/Home Science/Sociology/Computer App./Hindi/Sanskrit etc. in the offered combination by the school and one optional subject.
7. Optional subjects: Physical Education, Fine arts, Music Vocal/Instrumental/Classical/dance, Information Practices etc.

(B) ICSE:

1. Compulsory subjects: English, Environmental Education and SUPW (Socially Useful Productive Work).
2. Students have to choose 3 to 5 subjects from a wide range of subjects.
3. These include: An Indian Language, 1 Modern Foreign Language, 1 Classical Language, Literature in English, History, Political Science, Geography, Sociology, Psychology, Economics, Commerce, Accounts, Business Studies, Mathematics Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Home Science, Fashion Designing, Electricity & Electronics, Engineering Science, Computer Science, Geometrical & Mechanical Drawing, Geometrical & Building Drawing, Art, Music (Indian or Western), Physical Education, Environmental Science and Biotechnology.

(C) IB:

1. Compulsory subjects: First Language (English), Theory of Knowledge, Creativity, Action and Service, Extended Essay
2. A student has to choose one subject from each of the following groups:
 - a) Second Language (French, Hindi, Sanskrit etc.)
 - b) Individuals and Societies (History, Economics and Civics etc.)
 - c) Sciences (Botany, Zoology, Physics, Chemistry and Environmental Systems).
 - d) Mathematics and Computer Science.

- e) Electives (it can be either Visual Arts or any subject from the above three options).

(D) State:

1. Students have choose subjects from the following options: English, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Assami, Bangla, Kannada, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Accountancy, Business and correspondence Economics, Physics, Chemistry, Math, Kannada, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Accountancy, Business and correspondence Economics, Physics, Chemistry, Math, Biology, Political Science, History, Economics, Geography, Vocal music, Instrumental music and dance, painting, stitching, Agriculture and Home science.

What are the advantages of each education board?

(A) CBSE:

1. Easy to find new schools in any area, even abroad, due to wide prevalence of the CBSE board which makes it preferable for people with transferable jobs.
2. Syllabus prepared by CBSE is slightly more suitable for qualifying for various entrance examinations after 12th in India.
3. Most competitive exams in India follow CBSE syllabus. These include major exams like the Joint Entrance Exam (IITJEE), All India Engineering Entrance Examination(AIEEE) and All India Pre Medical Test(AIPMT).

(B) ICSE:

1. There are a more subjects to choose from, in class-12 as compared to CBSE. ICSE is more tuned for giving practical knowledge and teaching better analytical skills.
2. The syllabus followed by the ICSE board is relatively more comprehensive and complete, encompassing all the fields with equal importance.
3. Certification under the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education board is recognized around the world, particularly by foreign schools and universities when compared to the central board's local margin.

(C) IB:

1. IB syllabus is accepted world-wide which gives a definite edge to a student, aspiring to go abroad for higher studies.
2. There are relatively few students in each batch, hence ensures quality focus on each child.
3. IB schools focus more on practical application of concepts than just theoretical knowledge. Students also get an opportunity to study their '(international) mother tongue' as well as an additional language.

(D) State:

1. They try to accommodate even those students with lower IQ to complete their schooling successfully.
2. In the state based boards, local language of a particular state is taught as a part of the syllabus.
3. State level competitive exams follow syllabus of the state board.

What are the disadvantages of each education board?

(A) CBSE:

1. The CBSE is using CCE System as a grading system. Students scoring 90 marks and 99 marks respectively will both attain 'A1' grade, so it could be described as unfair for a student scoring higher marks.
2. Not much focus is laid on inculcating practical knowledge in students. The subjects in CBSE syllabus are approached in a theoretical manner and true emphasis is not laid on real-life concepts behind the science.

(B) ICSE:

1. ICSE syllabus is in English only. Syllabus is more detailed and requires a student to learn and remember a lot.
2. Students may find the syllabus to be too extensive for their liking, as an average student practicing under an ICSE board will face more subjects/examinations compared to CBSE affiliated school student.

(C) IB:

1. IB syllabus is not much aligned to entrance examinations (after 12th) in India. Very few Indian colleges accept IB.
2. IB schools are extremely expensive also, not available in most of the locations in India. Mostly all the colleges in India close their application well before, the declaration of IB results.

(D) State:

1. Quality of textbooks in state board is relatively not good. Infrastructure and teaching method in these schools is generally very poor and redundant.
2. The SSC/HSE systems are severely lagging behind in imparting communication skills and confidence in the students. No choice for language is given, as in case of CBSE and ICSE. One has to study a state language.
3. In case of transfer of a student from one state to the other, state board proves to be 'not' very helpful.

How to choose an education board for school admission?

Every board has its own 'pros & cons' and choice of the board totally depends on a student as to what he/she needs.

(A) CBSE:

1. If focusing mainly on entrance examinations after class 12th like IIT, AIEEE etc., then go for CBSE. It gives a student enough time and knowledge to appear for the entrance examinations after class 12th, as most entrance examinations are based on CBSE pattern.
2. Overall, it comes a close second after ICSE, but many prefer this board because it is easily available in India. For students whose parents are in transferable jobs should choose CBSE over state boards as CBSE offers continuity of curriculum across India.

(B) ICSE:

1. If looking for an overall grooming and development, then ICSE should be the first choice. But, because of its extensive syllabus, it falls behind CBSE, if classes 11th and 12th are specifically taken into consideration.
2. If looking for more application based syllabus that equips students with the ability to think out of the box then ICSE is a better option.

(C) IB:

1. IB board is not preferred due to the scarcity of schools following it in India. Focuses on the overall development of the students, but it does not fit with the other Indian Boards and therefore if not very useful in India because neither its syllabus nor its result match with any of national entrance exam in India.
2. This is an option for those who wish to study abroad or whose parents are transferred globally.

(D) State:

1. The syllabus is comparatively simpler, hence, making it easier for students to get ahead. But state boards need to focus more on the practical aspect of the subjects that are taught.
2. If one aims for a specific state level competition exam, then state board may be opted.

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