

PISA 2009 Second Report - Executive Summary



This report is the second of two providing initial results from the PISA 2009 assessment for Canada and the provinces. The first report focused on the initial results in the three domains assessed by PISA and showed that Canadian students continue to perform well in reading in a global context, scoring in the top quarter on the combined reading scale. This second report complements the first one by looking at contextual variables associated with reading achievement.

Part 1 of the report present the results of analyses of reading performance based on the individual and family characteristics of Canadian students, notably immigrant status, educational attainment of students' parents, and parental occupational and socioeconomic status. The results show that Canadian students tend to come from more advantaged backgrounds than those of students in other countries. Their parents also tend to have higher levels of education, and they report higher levels of household possessions, which may foster a more positive learning environment. In addition, student characteristics that are usually associated with differences in student performance in other countries, such as immigrant status and socioeconomic status, have very little effect in Canada. This comparison speaks well to the level of equity achieved in Canada, especially in light of its federated educational systems.

Part 2 examines the variation in performance among and within Canadian schools, and looks at school-related factors, such as teacher-student relations, disciplinary climate, student- and teacher-related behaviours, school responsibilities and leadership, library use, extracurricular activities, and factors hindering instruction (i.e., teacher shortages and school educational resources). Compared to other OECD countries, variance among schools in Canada is relatively small, and the effects of school factors are also quite limited. Canadian students reported lower levels of classroom disciplinary problems and more positive teacher-students relations, feeling that teachers were stimulating their reading engagement more than in other countries. Canadian principals felt that their schools offered more extracurricular activities and were less hindered by student-related factors and a lack of qualified teaching staff and educational resources than schools in other OECD countries. However, the principals felt that their schools had less school autonomy for allocating resources and less responsibility for curriculum and assessment, compared to other countries.

Part 3 examines variables related to student engagement in reading, student attitudes, and approaches to learning. These factors become increasingly important as youth move beyond the formal environment of mandatory schooling and take a more active role in determining their individual learning trajectories. Compared to students in other OECD countries, Canadian students have above-average enjoyment of reading, and this enjoyment has a strong association with proficiency for individual students. Factors such as diversity in reading materials and time spent reading for enjoyment are also both positively associated with reading proficiency. However, consistent with findings from previous PISA studies in Canada, there is no advantage to reading beyond two hours per day. Learning strategies related to memorization and elaboration have little to

no relationship with reading proficiency. In contrast, control strategies, along with awareness of effective metacognitive strategies for summarizing, understanding, and remembering, all have quite strong associations with reading proficiency. In addition, interprovincial differences in awareness of effective metacognitive strategies reflect interprovincial differences in average proficiency. Finally, substantial gender differences exist, with females favouring memorization, control, as well as metacognitive strategies, and males tending to favour elaboration strategies.