

NEWS RELEASE

Alberta student scores on international tests in reading, math and science are declining despite continuing to lead the country

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For immediate release

TORONTO—15-year-old students in Alberta scored relatively well in the most recent international PISA tests, but the provinces' scores in reading, math and science are falling, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan, Canadian public policy think-tank.

Conducted every three years, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is the most extensive and widely accepted measure of academic proficiency among lower secondary school students around the world.

“Over the past few PISA tests, scores for students in Alberta have declined significantly, and that should be worrying for policymakers, educators and parents in the province,” said Derek J. Allison, professor emeritus at the University of Western Ontario, a Fraser Institute senior fellow and author of *What International Tests (PISA) Tell Us about Education in Canada*.

The study finds that in the 2018 PISA tests—the most recent which results are available—Alberta students scored the highest nationwide in reading and science, and third-highest in math after Quebec (1st) and Ontario (2nd).

But scores in Alberta in all three disciplines have been falling. In fact, from 2000 to 2018, scores in reading dropped 18 points, while scores in science dropped 16 points and a stunning 38 points in math over shorter periods—the math decline being the second worst nationwide after only Manitoba, which dropped 46 points.

Internationally, Canada ranked comparatively high and outperformed all G7 countries in reading, and was second among G7 countries (after Japan) in math and science. But crucially, across all three disciplines, results in each province have declined over the past 15 to 20 years, depending on subject.

“Despite Alberta’s top spots in reading and science nationwide, educators and parents should be troubled by the substantial decline in scores across all three disciplines,” Allison said.

“The PISA tests are an opportunity for policymakers and educators to learn best practices from other more successful jurisdictions and correct course, if necessary, for the benefit of their students.”

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