

Environment Scan: PISA Canada Report

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The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), assesses the extent to which 15-year-old students, near the end of their compulsory education, have acquired key knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in modern societies. Director for Education and Skills, and Special Advisor on Education Policy to the Secretary-General at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Andreas Schleicher eloquently reviewed the tenets and relevance of the PISA in his 2012 TedGlobal Talk by saying, “A global economy is no longer the benchmark for success. Measuring time in school or degrees is not a good measure to see what someone can do. PISA measures the knowledge of skills of people directly, not if they can reproduce what they learned in school, but if they extrapolate from what they learn to apply that knowledge to unknown problems.” Since its initial administration in 2000, the data gathered has been analyzed to sculpt governmental decisions around educational systems. Reading was the main subject assessed in PISA 2018 (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2019). As seen in Figure 1, Canada’s median score of 520 was higher than the median score of the other 79 countries that participated in the 2018 assessment.

One of the governmental policies that led to Canada’s gains, was the government’s investment of \$7.5 billion over 11 years to support and create more high-quality, affordable child care across the country (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019). PISA data has a plethora of global implications. However, as a citizen of a global economy, the benefits of quality early childhood education have long lasting effects on everyone’s economy. Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang

(China) and Singapore scored significantly higher in reading than all other countries/economies that participated in PISA 2018. Estonia, Canada, Finland, and Ireland were the highest-performing OECD countries in reading (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2019). All aforementioned countries have thriving economies and universal policies around early childhood education and school policies. As such, one could deduce that investments in early childhood education improved reading results, which in turn contributed to their thriving economy, but it is not that cut and dry. For the purposes of this paper, one commonality amongst the high performers in the PISA 2018 Assessment is an intentional investment in early education and the role it plays in their thriving economies, but that is not the only thing. Classroom size, professional development, quality instruction, mindset, and length of school day are all attributes surveyed in the PISA. However, peeling back those data points would take us down new paths.

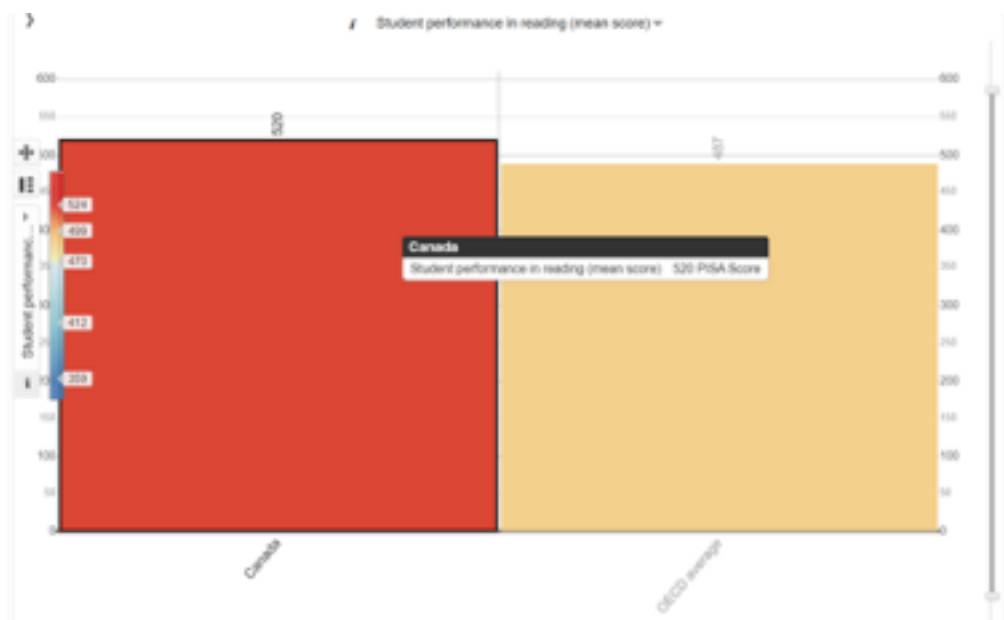


Figure:1

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