



PISA FOR PARENTS

Every three years the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) releases results of testing conducted on 15-year-olds in more than 30 countries and city-states—or what the OECD calls “economies”. Each test, under the banner of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assesses performance in one of reading, math, and science. There’s lots of pressure to score well—so much so that teachers in some jurisdictions are compelled to follow a “PISA curriculum” rather than what makes sense for their students.

The next round of PISA scores will be released on December 3, 2019.



GRIPPED BY “PISA PANIC”?

Stay calm, and consider this:

- ▶ **The tests are written for profit.** Private companies win lucrative contracts with the OECD to create universal tests for students across the globe. Tough job, given the vastly different realities of students in places with diverse curriculums, cultures, and economies.
- ▶ **Translation is tricky.** It’s extremely difficult—some would say impossible—to create a perfect translation of the test in the dozens of languages required.
- ▶ **PISA plays politics.** Fueled by significant world-wide media coverage, “poor” results are often used to justify large-scale educational change. The media spotlight and resulting pressure can lead to misdiagnosing a problem—and the creation of ineffective, short-sighted, and costly responses.
- ▶ **How “bad” is it?** In the last round of PISA testing—conducted in 2015—Canadian students ranked 7th in the world, ahead of those in the United States, Sweden, New Zealand, Germany, Switzerland, France and Denmark, to name a few. Manitoba students ranked in the top third globally, above their cohort in the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, Switzerland, Italy, Iceland, Israel, and a host of other jurisdictions.



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There’s nothing wrong with taking a global view of education. It’s helpful and even wise to develop ways of understanding how other jurisdictions are doing, and for sharing methods that work well. We have much to learn from each other. PISA, however, is not the best way to do it. Manitoba teachers, like those across Canada and around the world, assess student understanding every day using a wide variety of tools.

Want to know more about how your child is progressing? Talk to their teacher. You’ll learn more about how academic and social development is measured, and how that translates into meaningful, measurable results for your child.