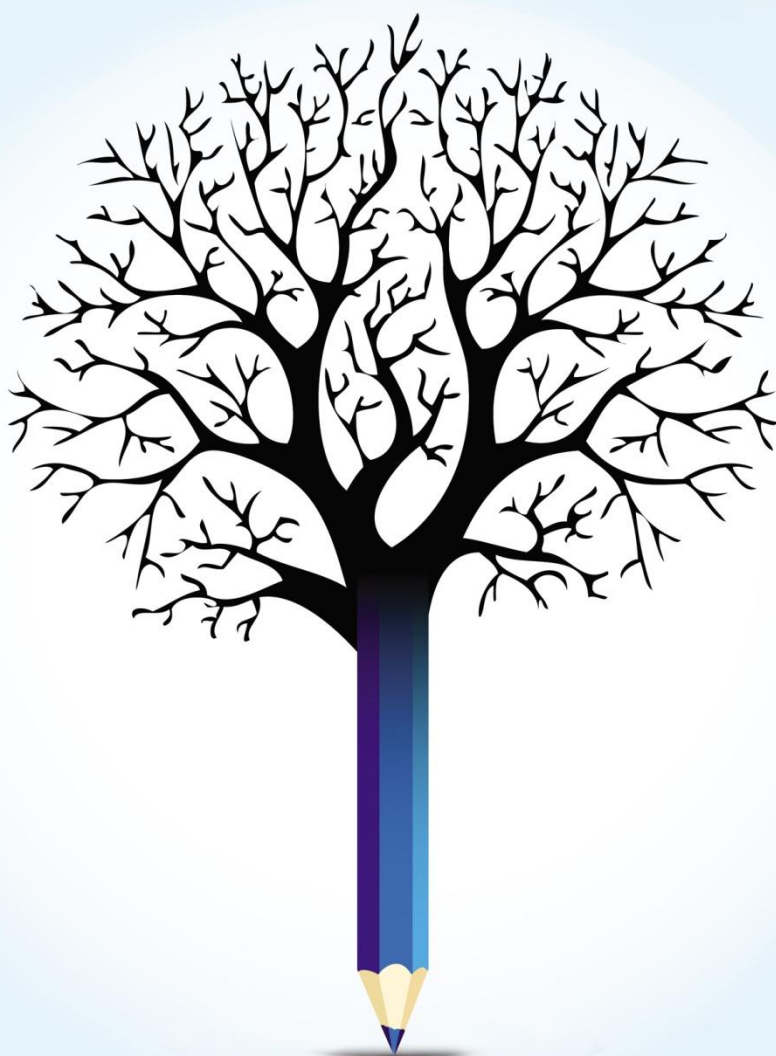




EDUCATION POLICY OUTLOOK **CANADA**



EDUCATION POLICY OUTLOOK

This **policy profile on education** in Canada is part of the *Education Policy Outlook* series, which presents comparative analysis of education policies and reforms across OECD countries. Building on the substantial comparative and sectorial policy knowledge base available within the OECD, the series also includes a biennial publication (first volume in 2015). It offers a comparative outlook on education policy by providing: a) analysis of individual countries' educational context, challenges and policies (education policy profiles) and of international trends and b) comparative insight on policies and reforms on selected topics.

Designed **for policy makers, analysts and practitioners** who seek information and analysis of education policy taking into account the importance of national context, the country policy profiles offer constructive analysis of education policy in a comparative format. Each profile reviews the current context and situation of the country's education system and examines its challenges and policy responses, according to six policy levers that support improvement:

- **Students:** How to raise outcomes for all in terms of 1) equity and quality and 2) preparing students for the future
- **Institutions:** How to raise quality through 3) school improvement and 4) evaluation and assessment
- **System:** How the system is organised to deliver education policy in terms of 5) governance and 6) funding.

Some country policy profiles will contain spotlight boxes on selected policy issues. They are meant to draw attention to specific policies that are promising or showing positive results and may be relevant for other countries.

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Sources: This country profile draws on OECD indicators from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Survey of Adult Skills of the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), and the annual publication *Education at a Glance*, and refers to country and thematic studies such as OECD work on early childhood education and care, teachers, school leadership, evaluation and assessment for improving school outcomes, equity and quality in education, governing complex education systems, vocational education and training, and tertiary education. Much of this information and documentation can be accessed through the Education GPS <http://gpseducation.oecd.org>.

Most of the figures quoted in the different sections refer to Annex B, which presents a table of the main indicators for the different sources used throughout the country profile. Hyperlinks to the reference publications are included throughout the text for ease of reading, and also in the References and further reading section, which lists both OECD and non-OECD sources.

More information is available from the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills (www.oecd.org/edu) and its web pages on Education Policy Outlook (www.oecd.org/edu/policyoutlook.htm).



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HIGHLIGHTS

Canada's educational context

Students: Canada continues to be among the top performers in PISA 2012, with fair and inclusive policies that can contribute to high levels of equity, although performance in mathematics, reading and science has decreased across PISA cycles. The impact of socio-economic status on student mathematics performance is lower than the OECD average, and performance of students from an immigrant background is similar to that of their peers. All provinces and territories provide pre-primary education for 5-year-olds. School is compulsory until age 16 or 18, depending on the province or territory, and grade repetition is below the OECD average. Attainment in upper-secondary education is above the OECD average. Due to the structure of education systems in most Canadian provinces and territories, the proportion of students enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) programmes at upper secondary level is among the smallest in the OECD. Attainment is higher in technical post-secondary education, and Canada has the highest attainment rate in tertiary education among OECD countries. Compared to the other countries participating in the Survey of Adult Skills, adults (16-65 years-old) performed at the average in literacy and below the average in numeracy. Unemployment is below the OECD average.

Institutions: Canada has positive learning environments compared to the OECD average. Schools have less autonomy than the OECD average in both resource allocation and responsibility for curriculum and assessment. Teachers have at least a bachelor's degree and one year of pre-service teacher training, which includes teaching practicums. Teachers have heavier teaching workloads than in other OECD countries, with more teaching time at both primary and secondary levels. Evaluation and assessment arrangements are a key component of every provincial and territorial education system and a key area for collaboration through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC).

System: Education is decentralised in Canada. In each of the 13 jurisdictions, one or two ministries or departments are responsible for organisation, delivery and assessment of the education system. Canada's ministers of education and advanced education collaborate on pan-Canadian educational priorities under CMEC. Decision-making is entrusted to school boards or school districts, and the level of authority delegated is at the discretion of the provincial/territorial government. Education is mostly delivered by publicly funded institutions maintained by the jurisdictions while the federal government provides some funding towards post-secondary education and provides programmes that support skills development. Education on First Nations reserves is delivered by First Nations themselves, with funding assistance from the federal government. Investment in educational institutions is slightly above the OECD average. The share of private expenditure is above the OECD average and is especially large at the tertiary level.

Key policy issues

Improving the performance of minority-language and Aboriginal students would contribute to better equity and quality of education in Canada. It would also be important to strengthen the apprenticeship system, by increasing the attractiveness of apprenticeships and skilled trades' programmes for youth, improving completion rates and boosting participation of employers. Canada also faces the dual challenge of having the appropriate number of well trained teachers where they are most needed, and of providing support and guidance to schools. It will be important to continue efforts to set priorities that build on and are aligned to the decentralised system approach and to continue improving access and efficiency of funding in tertiary education.

Selected policy responses

The [CMEC Early Learning and Development Framework](#) (2014) presents a pan-Canadian vision for early learning, to be adapted to the needs of each province and territory, to support development of policies and initiatives to enhance quality and continuity of the learning experience in the early years and beyond.

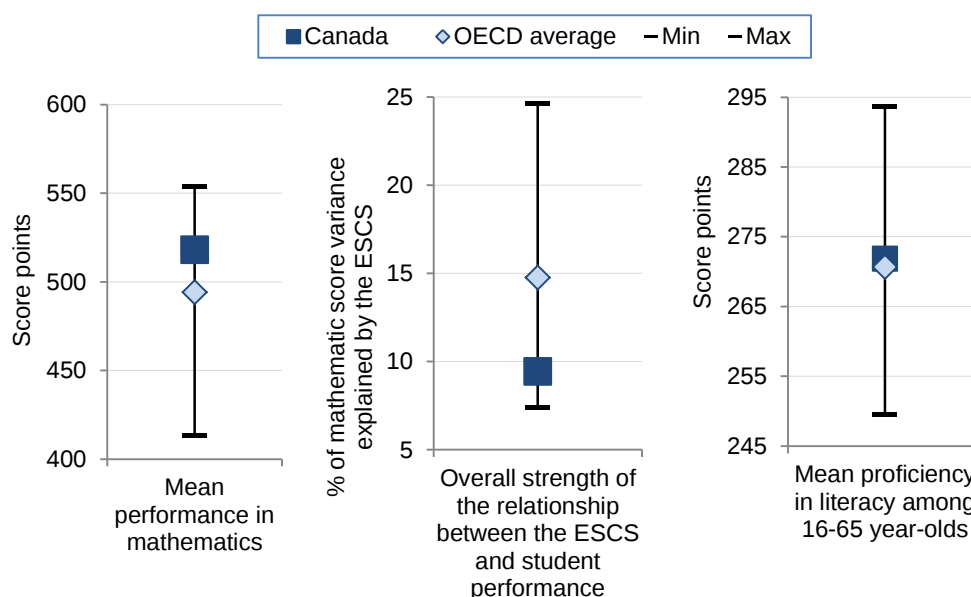
To strengthen links between education and the labour market, for example, New Brunswick launched the [Labour Force and Skills Development Strategy](#) (2013) to strengthen student pathways, support learning and skills development and retain or attract skilled individuals to participate in the New Brunswick labour market. In part, the strategy aims to align kindergarten to Grade 12 and post-secondary education with labour market needs so that students can gain the knowledge and skills needed for an easier transition into the workforce.

Improving and adapting teacher education is a common policy priority for several Canadian jurisdictions. For instance, Prince Edward Island's [Professional Learning Report 2013](#) defined areas of improvement in teachers' learning, and the Ontario government recently announced a [modernisation of teacher education in the province](#).



Canada is among the top performers in reading, mathematics and science in PISA 2012, although the performance of 15-year-olds has decreased across PISA cycles. The impact of socio-economic status on student performance (9.4%) is lower than the OECD average (14%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Performance of 15-year-olds in mathematics, relationship between student performance and economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) (PISA 2012) and performance of adults in literacy (PIAAC)

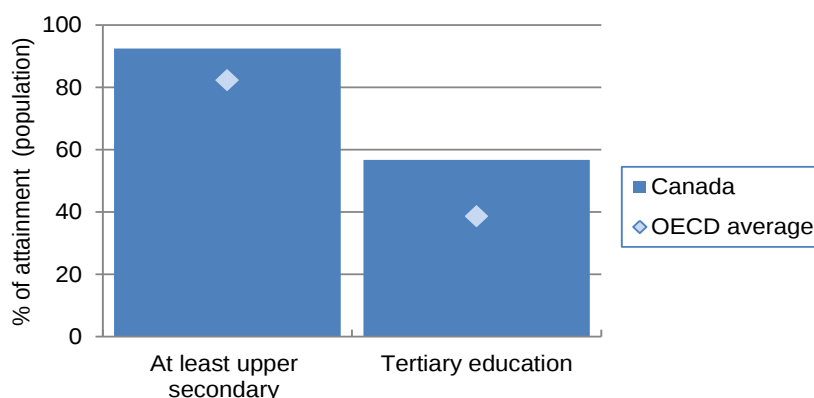


Note: "Min"/"Max" refer to OECD countries with the lowest/highest values.

Source: *PISA 2012 Results: What Students Know and Can Do (Volume I, Revised edition, February 2014): Student Performance in Mathematics, Reading, and Science*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264208780-en>; OECD (2013), *OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264204256-en>.

Secondary and tertiary education attainment in Canada are higher than the OECD average: in 2012, 92% of 25-34 year-olds have attained at least upper secondary education (compared to the OECD average of 82%), and 57% have attained tertiary education (compared to the OECD average of 39%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Upper secondary and tertiary attainment for 25-34 year-olds (2012)



Source: OECD (2014), *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2014-en>.



EQUITY AND QUALITY: HIGH EDUCATION PERFORMANCE AND EQUITABLE ACCESS

Canada has had positive **indicators on equity** and above-average performance in mathematics, reading and science over the years. In PISA 2012, student performance in mathematics showed some variations across provinces. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick show smaller differences between high and low performers compared to the national average, while Alberta and Quebec have the largest differences. The impact of socio-economic status on student mathematics performance in Canada (9.4%) is below the OECD average (14%) (Figure 3).

Access to **early childhood education and care (ECEC)** in Canada varies depending on the jurisdiction. Every province and territory has publicly funded pre-primary education for 5-year-olds, and Ontario has full pre-primary education provision for both 4-year-olds and 5-year-olds. ECEC before kindergarten in Canada is mostly private. A national child benefit provides supplementary income for eligible low-income families in all provinces and territories, except in Quebec, where access is higher and eligible low-income families have free access to regulated ECEC. A national Universal Child Care Benefit program issues a taxable \$100 monthly payment to families for each child under the age of six to help cover the cost of child care.

Canada has **fair and inclusive policies** that contribute to an equitable education system. Public primary and secondary education is provided free of charge to students who meet age and residence requirements, and some provinces and territories have extended the length of compulsory education from age 16 to age 18. About 8% of 15-year-old students reported having repeated at least one grade (compared to the average of 12.4% in OECD countries). Retention is generally restricted to the specific classes that the student failed and usually complemented with additional opportunities to learn and be assessed.

Canada is a **multi-cultural society**, with about 19.6% of foreign-born population and around 4.3% having an [Aboriginal identity](#). As a bilingual country, Canada aims to support English and French minority populations. Provinces and territories provide minority-language education where there is a sufficient number of qualifying students (French or English depending on the jurisdiction). In PISA 2012, students in majority-language schools outperformed their peers in minority-language schools in at least one test topic in six of the seven Canadian provinces with sufficiently large minority-language populations ([Measuring Up: Canadian Results of the OECD PISA Study](#)). Native-born students and students with an immigrant background in Canada showed no significant difference in mathematics performance in PISA 2012. Among Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64, 28.9% had no certificate, diploma or degree, compared to 12.1% for non-Aboriginal people in the same age group. As outlined in the Canadian Constitution, legal responsibility for First Nation children living on reserve falls under the exclusive responsibility of the federal government, with provinces and territories responsible for the education of all Aboriginal children off reserve.

The challenge: Making ECEC more accessible from early ages and improving outcomes for minority-language and Aboriginal students.

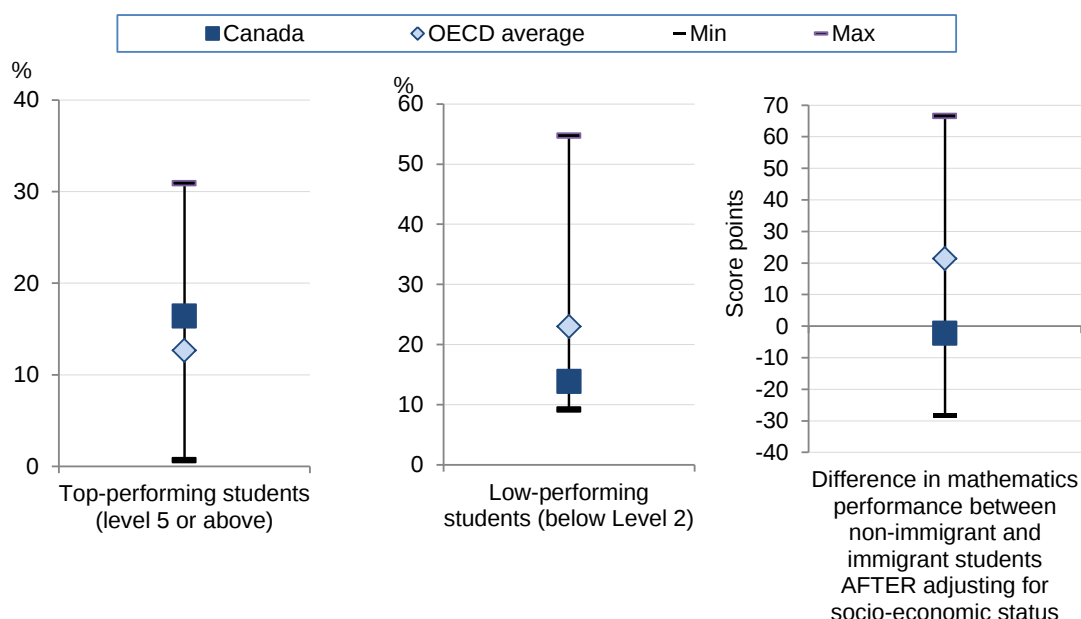
Recent policies and practices

In 2014, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), through its CMEC Early Childhood Learning and Development Working Group, released the [CMEC Early Learning and Development Framework](#). The framework presents a pan-Canadian vision for early learning to be adapted to the needs of each province and territory. It is designed to serve as a resource to support the development of policies and initiatives by ministries and departments of education and their partners to enhance the quality and continuity of the learning experience in the early years and beyond.

Through intergovernmental agreements, the Government of Canada supports the work of provinces and territories to improve outcomes for official-language minorities by supporting initiatives in areas such as the provision of programmes, student performance, enriching the school environment and support to educational staff. A multilateral multi-year [Protocol for Agreements for Minority Language and Second-Language Education](#) with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (1983, re-structured in 2013) sets the parameters for this intergovernmental collaboration.



Figure 3. Percentage of top and low performers and difference in mathematics performance between non-immigrant and immigrant students, PISA 2012



Note: "Min"/"Max" refer to OECD countries with the lowest/highest values.

Source: OECD (2014), *PISA 2012 Results: What Students Know and Can Do (Volume I, Revised edition, February 2014): Student Performance in Mathematics, Reading and Science*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264208780-en>.

Spotlight 1. Improving equity by supporting schools

[*Nova Scotia's SchoolsPlus program*](#) (2011) is a collaborative inter-agency approach supporting children and their families, with the school as the centre of service delivery. Students and their caregivers get help more quickly, through referral to a wide range of specialist and community services, including crisis intervention, youth mental health, after-school programming, parent and family supports, sexual health, and child care.

Ontario's [*Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*](#) (2009, updated in 2014) aims to help the education community identify and remove discriminatory and systemic barriers to support the achievement and well-being of all students, regardless of background or circumstance. The strategy aims to support students who may be at risk of not succeeding and not reaching their full potential. A key focus is to support schools and school boards to include the principles of equity and inclusive education in all policies, programmes, operations and learning environments. The Ministry supports effective implementation of the strategy through board-led implementation networks and diverse education and community stakeholders working to deliver evidence-informed tools, resources and professional learning opportunities. Parent and community engagement are essential components of the strategy. The principles of equity and inclusive education are also being embedded across ministry initiatives through interdivisional collaboration.



PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE: A HIGHLY-EDUCATED WORKFORCE

The capacity of education systems to effectively develop **skills and labour market perspectives** can play an important role in the educational decisions of young people. In the 2012 [Survey of Adult Skills](#), Canadian 16-65 year-olds performed at the average in literacy and below the average in numeracy compared to other participating countries. Compared to their peers in other countries, young adults (16-24 years-old) have below-average literacy skills and average numeracy skills. Canada has one of the lowest proportions of workers experiencing a mismatch between their literacy skills and the tasks they perform at work among countries participating in the Survey of Adult Skills. Canada's unemployment rates were below the OECD average in 2012 and have been decreasing since 2008, although 2012 unemployment rates are higher for 25-34 year-olds than for all adults (25-64 year-olds).

At **upper secondary** level, a challenge shared by many countries is to provide relevant education that will prepare young adults for work and, at the same time, develop capacity for further learning. Depending on the province or territory in Canada, students attend four to six years of compulsory upper secondary education. In Canada, 92% of 25-34 year-olds have attained at least upper secondary qualifications (OECD average of 82%).

Vocational education and training (VET) is primarily offered at the post-secondary level in public or private technical and vocational institutes or colleges. At upper secondary level, only a small proportion of students – primarily in Quebec – are enrolled in pre-vocational/vocational programmes (6% compared to 44% on average in OECD countries in 2012). This rate reflects the structure of Canadian secondary systems which, in virtually all provinces and territories, do not have a prominent vocational track. The apprenticeship system plays an important role in Canada's post-secondary education system as a source of workplace training. Provinces and territories are responsible for apprenticeship training and trade certification. The Government of Canada works with the provinces and territories to manage the [Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program](#) to promote mobility of qualified tradespersons across the country. Canada also provides temporary financial assistance to apprentices attending in-class technical training through Employment Insurance (EI) benefits. Apprenticeship completion rates are lower than those of other countries where information on apprenticeships is widely available. Increasing the appeal of apprenticeships and skilled trades to youth (in 2012, the median age of entry of new registrants was 25, which suggests that apprenticeship is not a first educational choice of youth) and boosting the participation of employers are considered important to strengthening the apprenticeship system in Canada.

Canada has the highest proportion of 25-64 year-olds with **tertiary education** among OECD countries (53% in 2012), and the proportion is even higher for 25-34 year-olds (57%). In addition to high attainment rates in more technical tertiary programmes (tertiary-type 5B), Canada's proportion of adults with [tertiary-type 5A and 6](#) education (25% in 2012) is also above the OECD average (24%). According to the [National Household Survey](#), Aboriginal adults have lower overall post-secondary attainment than non-Aboriginals (48% compared to 65% for non-Aboriginal people among 25-64 year-olds in 2011). The proportion of Aboriginal adults who completed a college diploma is on par with non-Aboriginal adults (21%), and a slightly higher proportion of Aboriginal adults (14%) completed a trade or apprenticeship certificate than non-Aboriginal adults (12%).

The challenge: Supporting students' opportunities to transition to higher education or the labour market.

Recent policies and practices

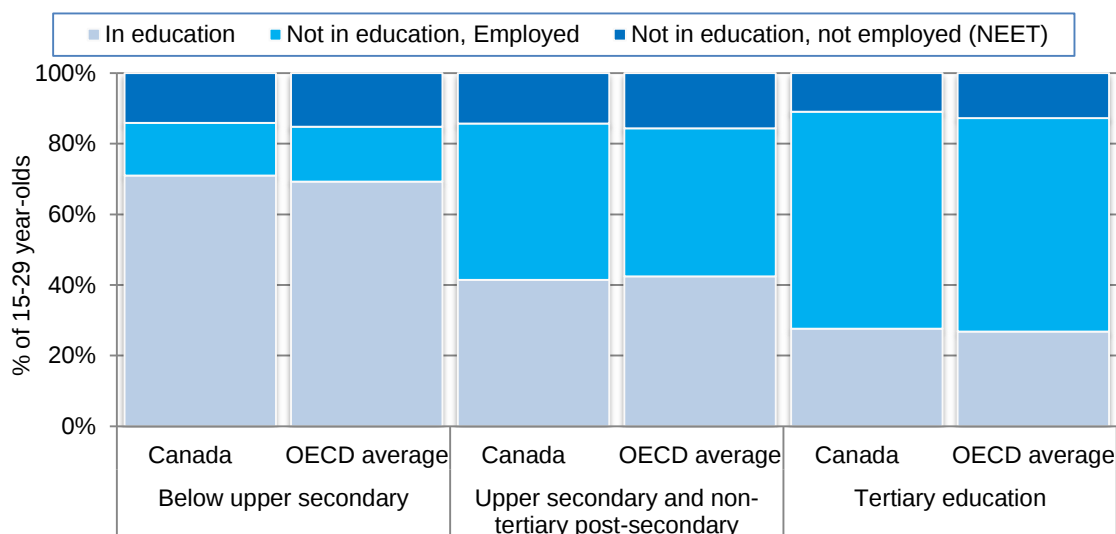
The [Industrial Research and Development Internship programme](#) (IDRI, 2007) matches talented graduates with businesses in the field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics to help transitions into the labour market. The Government of Canada also invested resources in the [Youth Employment Strategy](#) (YES, 2003) to help youth from age 15-30 to transition into the job market and gain experience.

The [Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy](#) (ASETS), funded at CAD 1.68 billion over five years (2010-15), is the Government of Canada's broad-based labour market programme for Aboriginal people across Canada. ASETS works in conjuncture with the [Skills and Partnership Fund](#), funded at \$210 million over five years (SPF, 2010-15) to support training-to-employment programmes for specific job opportunities identified by employers. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) launched its [Aboriginal Bursaries Search Tool](#) (2012), to help First Nation students to search for bursaries, scholarships and incentives available across Canada (estimated at more than CAD 10 million), which are offered by governments, universities and colleges, private and public companies, other organisations and individual Canadians.

Apprentices in Red Seal trades can apply for grants ([Apprenticeship Incentive Grants, 2007](#); [Apprenticeship Completion Grants, 2009](#)) up to CAD 4 000 to cover their expenses. Other financial supports include the [Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit](#) (2006) for employers (up to CAD 2 000 per year for each apprentice), the [Tradesperson's Tools Deduction](#) (2007) and tax eligibility of examination fees for trade certification.



Figure 4. Percentage of 15-29 year-olds in education and not in education, by educational attainment and work status (2012)



NEET: Neither Employed, nor in Education and Training

Source: OECD (2014), *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2014-en>.

Spotlight 2. Promoting apprenticeships across Canada

The Government of Canada works with provinces and territories to harmonise requirements for apprentices and examine the use of practical tests as a method of assessment to encourage mobility and help apprentices to complete their training. In 2014, the Government of Canada announced new measures to support apprenticeship: the [Apprentice Loan](#) (2015) to provide apprentices with interest free loans of up to CAD 4 000 per period of technical training and the [Flexibility and Innovation in Apprenticeship Technical Training pilot](#) (2015) to expand the use of innovative approaches to technical training. Provinces and territories also provide a variety of supports for apprenticeship training.

New Brunswick launched the [Labour Force and Skills Development Strategy](#) (2013-16) to strengthen student pathways, support learning and skills development, and retain or attract skilled individuals to participate in the New Brunswick labour market. In part, the strategy aims to align K-12 and post-secondary education systems with labour market needs so that students can transition more easily into the workforce. The strategy brings together a network of stakeholders from academia, business and labour as well as students to look for relevant initiatives that support education and skills development and lead to labour market participation. In particular, the strategy aims to enhance the education and preparation of students for the labour force, for example by providing them with labour market information, connecting them with employment counsellors at an earlier age, expanding teen apprenticeship programmes, working with high school students to create transition plans to post-secondary education and/or the labour market, partnering with post-secondary institutions and employers to increase opportunities for experiential learning, and facilitating credit transfers between post-secondary institutions.

In Nova Scotia, the Options and Opportunities programme ([O2](#), 2006) targets high school students who may be disengaged from school and are not achieving their academic potential, offering them alternative options to traditional learning. The programme aims to provide students with the opportunity to pursue hands-on learning experiences with a career focus and prepare students for successful transitions from high school to a career path.

In Ontario, the [Specialist High Skills Major](#) programme (2006) is designed to help 42 000 senior secondary students (2013/14) meet high-school graduation requirements while focusing their learning on one of nineteen economic sectors with courses, certifications and workplace experience. The Dual Credit programme intends to support 22 000 students (2013/14) who may face challenges in graduating to earn credits toward both secondary graduation and a post-secondary diploma or apprenticeship certification. Also, the [Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program](#) (OYAP, 1995) is a school-to-work transition programme offered through Ontario secondary schools. Full-time students in Grades 11 and 12 earn co-operative education credits through work placements in skilled trades.



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The key to raising achievement in schools is developing the conditions for school leaders and teachers to succeed. Students in Canada report experiencing **positive learning environments**. In PISA 2012, Canadian 15-year-olds viewed teacher-student relations as better than the OECD average and the disciplinary climate at the OECD average (Figure 5). The annual number of hours students are taught in primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary schools is higher than the OECD average, while fewer students attend after-school lessons than the OECD average.

In PISA 2012, **school leaders** in Canada reported a higher level of instructional leadership than the OECD average. At the same time, school leaders reported that their schools have less autonomy than the OECD average for allocating resources (e.g. appointing and dismissing teachers, establishing teachers' starting salaries and salary raises, formulating school budgets and allocating them within the school). They also reported less autonomy than the OECD average for curriculum and assessment (e.g. establishing student assessment policies, choosing which textbooks are used, determining course content, and deciding which courses are offered), as these are often school board responsibilities.

Teachers in Canada have at least a bachelor's degree and at least one year of pre-service teacher training, including teaching practicums. Teachers have more teaching time than in other OECD countries. Their salaries are higher than the OECD average across all levels of education in 2012, and also higher than those of workers with similar qualifications in other sectors in Canada. Responsibility for the professional development of teachers is shared among provincial/territorial authorities, school boards, universities, and teachers' associations and unions. Selected [evidence](#) suggests a teacher recruitment imbalance in Canada overall, with oversupply in some provinces while other provinces have difficulty recruiting qualified teachers in rural areas and in some specialities (mainly scientific disciplines).

The challenge: Addressing the teacher supply imbalance and promoting greater decision-making capacity for school improvement.

Recent policies and practices

New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec have adopted measures to prevent bullying and support intervention on this issue. New Brunswick introduced [resources](#) (2012) to address behavioural problems, set stricter rules for bullies and provide support for victims. Quebec's law against bullying ([Loi visant à prévenir et à combattre l'intimidation et la violence à l'école](#), 2012) defines bullying and establishes additional human and financial resources to fight violence in schools. Ontario's [Accepting Schools Act](#) (2012) strengthens requirements for school boards to provide safe, inclusive and accepting learning environments for all students; take preventive measures and steps to address bullying; and support students who want to engage in activities to promote understanding and respect.

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada promotes [teacher mobility](#) (2009) across Canada so that certified teachers can move between jurisdictions and have access to employment opportunities where there are needs.

The Prince Edward Island [Professional Learning Report](#) (2013) defined areas for improvement in teachers' learning. The report recommends: 1) restructuring the school calendar to include professional learning days; 2) revamping the curriculum to make it easier for teachers to use and manage; and 3) promoting school-based professional learning and teachers' self-evaluation plans.

The [Nova Scotia Instructional Leadership Academy Program](#) (NSILA, 2010) is a standards-based programme that provides public school principals and other leaders with postgraduate-level training. It aims to improve the capacity for school-based instructional leadership in order to increase student learning and achievement in Nova Scotia public schools. Achieving the Diploma in Instructional Leadership demonstrates a high level of commitment to the field of practice, increases and validates skills and knowledge, and recognises professionals who have met this high standard of achievement.

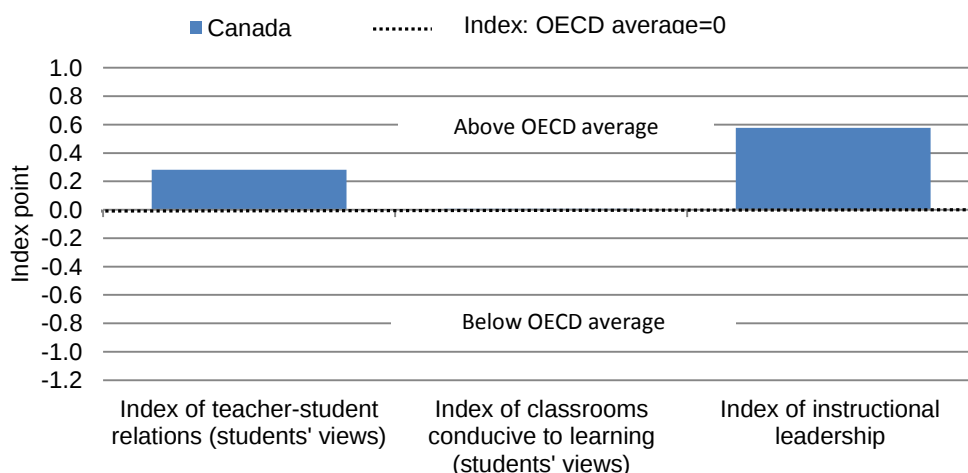
As part of the Alberta School Act (2007), all accredited school authorities are required to prepare a [Three-Year Education Plan and an Annual Education Results Report](#).

To increase completion of secondary education, Ontario established the [Student Success Strategy](#) (2003) to prevent dropout (Spotlight 3).

In Quebec, the I care about school! strategy ([L'École, j'y tiens!](#), strategy (2009) aims to reach a secondary school graduation rate of 80% in 2020 by for example reducing class size, providing after-school care and reintegrating early school leavers.



Figure 5. The learning environment, PISA 2012



Source: OECD (2013), *PISA 2012 Results: What Makes a School Successful (Volume IV): Resources, Policies and Practices*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264201156-en>.

Spotlight 3. Targeting school improvement in Ontario

In 2003, the Ontario Ministry of Education implemented the [Student Success / Learning to 18 Strategy](#) to increase graduation rates and provide all Ontario students with the tools to successfully complete their secondary schooling and reach their post-secondary goals. The strategy was introduced in phases, beginning with leadership capacity to promote strong leadership in schools and school boards and to change school culture to achieve long-term systemic improvement. At the school-board level, it created a new senior leadership role, the Student Success Leader, and at the school level, it created the Student Success Teacher to provide support to students at risk of dropping out. In addition, secondary schools established Student Success Teams, consisting of school leaders, Student Success Teachers and staff. The teams tracked and addressed the needs of students who were disengaged, and also worked to establish quality learning experiences for all students. According to the Final Report of the [Evaluation of the Ontario Ministry of Education's Student Success / Learning to 18 Strategy](#), developing good leadership at all levels – Ministry, school board, and school level – coupled with extensive capacity building were key to the success of the reform. In 2011/12, Ontario had a high-school graduation rate of 83%, a 15 percentage point improvement since 2003/04. Over these eight years of the Student Success Strategy, approximately 115 500 more students graduated than would have if the rate had remained at its 2003/04 level.

Additionally, as part of the Ontario [School Effectiveness Framework](#) (2013), schools set up an [improvement-planning process](#) and decide how and when they will achieve the goals they select. The objective is to improve student achievement levels by enhancing the way curriculum is delivered, creating positive environments for learning, and increasing the degree to which parents are involved in children's learning.

The Ontario government has also announced a [modernisation of teacher education in the province](#), starting in 2015, to respond to their teacher oversupply. The length of teacher training has been increased from one to two years (post bachelor's degree) and enrolment has been cut in half to 4 500 spaces per year. In an effort to increase teacher quality, the minimum number of days of classroom placement has been doubled from 40 to 80, and the teacher education curriculum will be updated to provide new teachers with expertise in teaching methods for diverse students and students with mental health issues.

Ontario released the [Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework Implementation Plan](#) (2014) to build on its Aboriginal Education Strategy. The plan builds on progress in implementation of the *Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (2007) and guides the work of the ministry and school boards through 2016. The next phase of implementation will sustain the critical activities established in the first six years to support system-wide integration of Aboriginal perspectives into the provincial education system. It will also aim to strengthen collaborative relationships with First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities, organisations and education partners to ensure the co-operation needed to close the achievement gap for Aboriginal learners.



EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES: STRENGTHENING A CULTURE OF ASSESSMENT

Although there is no single agency or institution responsible for **evaluation and assessment** of the education system as a whole in Canada, assessment is a key component of each provincial and territorial education system and a key area of collaboration through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). CMEC is involved in the design, implementation, and analysis of both pan-Canadian and international assessment programs, as well as other large-scale studies to examine educational environments and their outcomes.

In most Canadian provinces and territories, **system evaluation** is aligned with **school evaluation**. School or district boards have responsibility for evaluating their jurisdiction and reporting results to the provincial or territorial minister of education on an annual basis. The [Pan-Canadian Assessment Program](#) (a cyclical assessment in mathematics, science, and reading given to Grade 8 students since 2007) is used as a tool for provincial and territorial ministers to evaluate their curriculum and other aspects of their school systems, as well as to improve local assessment tools. The Northwest Territories and Nunavut do not currently participate in this programme. Generally, school principals use student assessment data for making decisions about students, monitoring their school's progress, or identifying aspects of instruction or curriculum that could be improved. Student achievement results are not generally used for evaluating performance of the principal or teachers (Figure 6).

Teacher appraisal processes in Canada vary across jurisdictions. They are typically used for summative purposes (at the end of probationary periods and for new hires) and for regular appraisal (performance management for experienced teachers to identify and address performance concerns, as well as for appraisal to support professional development). There is no national framework for teaching standards or competences, as education is a provincial/territorial responsibility. CMEC is working with the registrars for teacher certification across Canada to establish mechanisms for cross-jurisdictional teacher registration and recognition of teaching certificates.

Schools tend to have freedom in establishing their own policies for **student assessment**. Certain basic requirements are set in provincial and territorial policy frameworks, and the [Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education](#) in Canada contains a set of principles and related guidelines indicative of fair assessment practice. With some variation across the provinces and territories, students in Canada take provincial or territorial standardised summative examinations at key stages of their education, especially at the end of secondary education.

The challenge: Continue developing and aligning assessment practices and developing standards of practice.

Recent policies and practices

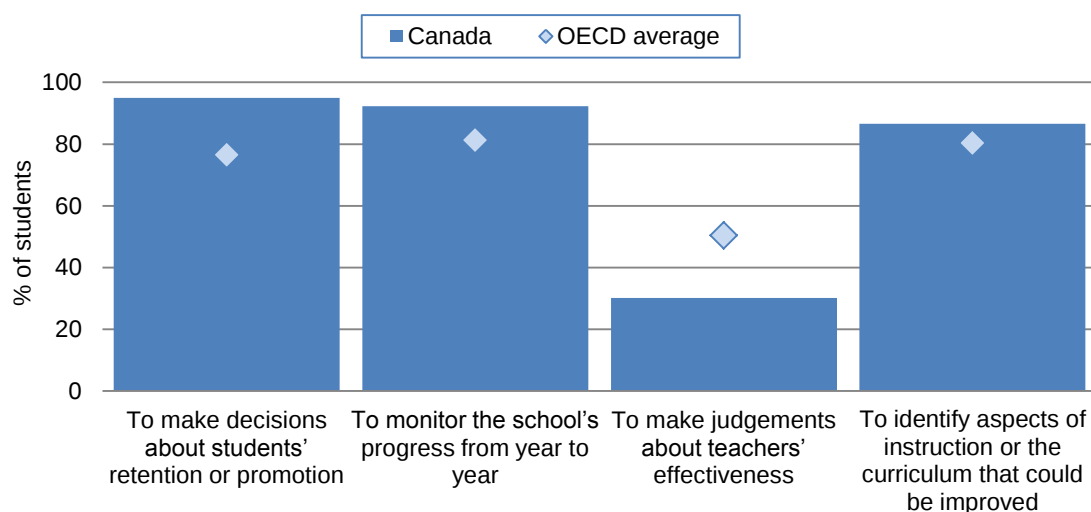
[A Framework for Statistics on Learning and Education in Canada](#) (2010), aligned with the Learn Canada 2020 framework, was introduced to enable a strategic approach to data collection for monitoring, evaluation, and accountability in a decentralised education system.

The [Pan-Canadian Assessment Program](#) (PCAP) was developed by the provinces and territories, through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), building on the [School Achievement Indicators Program](#) (SAIP, 1993). It assesses the performance of 13- and 16-year-old students in science, mathematics, and reading on a cyclical basis, and has released the results of its most recent cycle ([PCAP 2013](#)).

[Statistics Canada](#) provides Canadian education systems with data collection and analysis for policy purposes through instruments such as the [National Graduates Survey](#) (NGS), the [Postsecondary Student Information System](#) (PSIS), the [Registered Apprenticeship Information System](#) (RAIS), and the [Tuition and Living Accommodation Costs for Full-time Students at Canadian Degree-granting Institutions Survey](#) (TLAC).



Figure 6. Percentage of students in schools where the principal reported the following uses for student assessment, PISA 2012



Source: OECD (2013), *PISA 2012 Results: What Makes Schools Successful (Volume IV): Resources, Policies and Practices*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264201156-en>.

Spotlight 4. Student Learning Assessment in Alberta

The ministry of education of the province of Alberta introduced the [Student Learning Assessments](#) (2013) to replace the existing [Provincial Achievement Tests](#). Grade 3 students will be the first to write the new assessments, with pilots from September 2014 and implementation by 2015. Pilots are scheduled to begin for Grade 6 in 2015 and Grade 9 in 2016. The assessments aim to provide students, teachers, and parents with information at the beginning of the school year to be used as a reference to plan and support student learning during the year. They will focus on literacy and numeracy, but will also include interactive approaches to help educators and parents understand how well students can apply what they have learned and demonstrate competencies such as creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving.

The Government of Alberta intends to use the information from the Student Learning Assessments to generate a report detailing each student's strengths and areas requiring improvement relative to provincial standards. It also aims to provide information on how each student's performance compares to other students in the province. The goal is to give students, parents, and teachers the data, time, and information required to plan student programming and support more personalised learning for the rest of the school year.



GOVERNANCE: A COMPREHENSIVE AND DIVERSIFIED SYSTEM

Education in Canada is decentralised to its 13 provinces and territories. These jurisdictions may have one or two ministries or departments involved with education, one responsible for primary and secondary education and the other for post-secondary education. Canada's ministers of education and advanced education collaborate on pan-Canadian educational priorities under the [Council of Ministers of Education, Canada](#) (CMEC), an intergovernmental body to discuss policy issues, undertake policy activities, liaise with the federal government, and represent Canadian education internationally on matters of common interest. Other key actors include:

- [Employment and Social Development Canada](#) provides information and support for post-secondary and VET education and for improving the [literacy and essential skills](#) of adults in Canada.
- The [Canadian Education Statistics Council](#) is a partnership between CMEC and Statistics Canada that governs the Canadian Education Statistics Programme and produces a data framework to assist in policy making.
- [Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada](#) supports First Nations on reserve, or designated organisations, to provide eligible elementary and secondary education services and promote access and success for eligible First Nation and Inuit students in post-secondary education programmes.
- Industry Canada is responsible for Canada's three granting councils (i.e., the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and the Canadian Institute of Health Research), which provide funding for innovation and research.
- Canadian Heritage negotiates the [Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction between the Government of Canada and the CMEC](#) to provide funding to support language education policy objectives.
- Other stakeholders include the [Canadian Teachers' Federation](#), the [Canadian Association of Principals](#), the [Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada](#), the [National Association of Career Colleges, Colleges and Institutes Canada](#), Polytechnics Canada, the [Canadian Alliance of Student Associations](#), the [Canadian Federation of Students](#), and non-governmental organisations such as the [Canadian Bureau for International Education](#) and the [Canadian Education Association](#).

At the public primary and secondary level, **school boards or school districts have authority** delegated at the discretion of the provincial/territorial government. Regulation and policies in early childhood education and care, including kindergarten, rest with the provincial and territorial governments.

Schools in Canada have **lower autonomy** than schools in other OECD countries with greater responsibility for school boards/districts. About 49% of decision-making takes place at the board/district level, 31% at provincial/territorial level, and 19% at school level (Figure 7). Local boards/districts are responsible for operation and administration (including financial) of their schools, curriculum development and implementation, personnel management and enrolment of students, and schools have responsibility for organisation of instruction (e.g. student careers, instruction time, choice of textbooks, grouping of students, teaching methods and day-to-day student assessment).

In **post-secondary education**, publicly funded universities are largely autonomous regarding admissions, degree requirements and programme offerings, whereas publicly funded colleges may have government involvement on admissions policies, programme approval and curricula. VET is offered at secondary level, at the post-secondary level through colleges or institutes, or in the workplace through apprenticeship programmes.

The challenge: Setting priorities that build on and are aligned to the decentralised system.

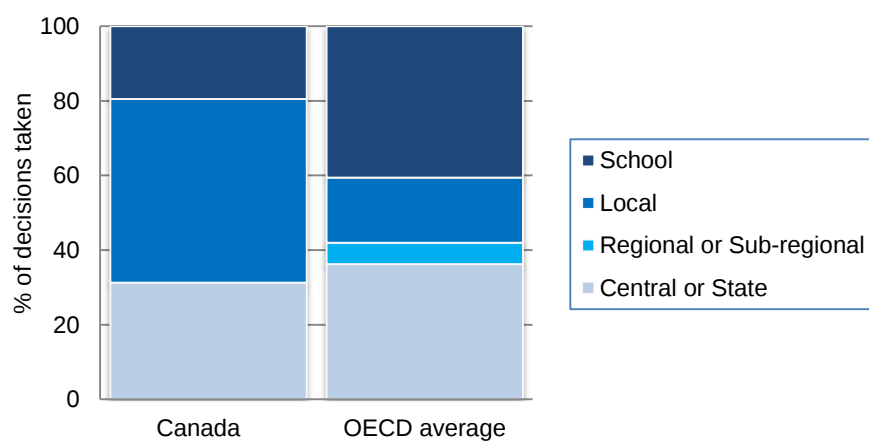
Recent policies and practices

The [Learn Canada 2020 framework](#) (2008) is a joint declaration by provincial and territorial ministers of education for enhancing Canada's education systems, learning opportunities, and overall education outcomes. The framework is built on what are considered the four pillars of lifelong learning: Early Childhood Learning and Development, Elementary to High School Systems; Post-secondary Education; and Adult Learning and Skills Development.

In 2013, ministers of education across Canada agreed that numeracy was a [key priority](#) and that "provinces and territories would work together to identify and share best practices on innovative teaching and learning strategies to raise student achievement in this area."



Figure 7. Percentage of decisions taken in public lower secondary schools at each level of government (2011)



Source: OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2012-en>.



FUNDING: IMPROVEMENTS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION ARE A PRIORITY

Canada's **investment in educational institutions** is slightly above the OECD average. After a period of decreased spending in education relative to GDP between 1995 (6.7%) and 2000 (5.9%), in 2010 Canada returned to a level of spending similar to 1995 (6.8%) (Figure 8). As in most OECD countries, a large proportion of the expenditure on educational institutions is from public sources (76.4% in 2010, compared to the OECD average of 83.9%).

In Canada, annual expenditure per student is higher at the tertiary level than at lower levels of education. Canada allocated an average of USD 10 420 of **annual expenditure per student** across primary and secondary levels of education in 2010, compared to the OECD average of USD 8 788. Annual expenditure per student for tertiary education (including research and development) reached USD 17 006, considerably higher than the OECD average of USD 9 635 and the second-highest amount among OECD countries.

Funding for public schools at primary and secondary levels is provided by the provincial or territorial government. Funding comes directly from the government or through a mix of transfers and local taxes collected by the local government or by school boards/districts with taxing powers. Provincial and territorial regulations provide the grant structure that sets the level of funding for each board/district, based on factors such as the number of students, special needs, and location, which are revised annually. For instance, [school-board funding in Ontario](#) is a combination of base grants per student and per school with a series of special-purpose grants that respond to local needs. The funding design is reviewed each year. Funding for private schools varies among jurisdictions, although most jurisdictions provide some funding for private schools. About 93% of students in Canada attend publicly funded schools.

The provinces and territories and the federal government provide **financial support for higher education**. The federal government provides indirect funding through transfer payments to the provinces and territories (the [Canada Social Transfer](#)); provinces and territories combine this federal funding with their own support for post-secondary education. About 42.6% of expenditure for tertiary education in 2010 comes from private sources (compared to the OECD average of 30.8%), including 20% from household expenditures (such as tuition fees). All jurisdictions and the federal government offer a combination of loans, bursaries, scholarships, grants and debt relief to support access and affordability. This support reduces the overall net private contribution to tertiary education. Funding for VET is complex and varies depending on the jurisdiction. Employment and Social Development Canada offers grants and other financial support directly to apprentices and funding for the Red Seal program, which allows for the development of interprovincial standards and examinations for the assessment and certification of tradespeople. In all jurisdictions, post-secondary institutions charge tuition fees. The average cost of tuition fees for tertiary-type A programs at public institutions in 2011 was USD 4 288.

An [OECD Economic Review of Canada](#) (2012), provided priority recommendations to **improve access to tertiary education** through targeted need-based financial assistance to encourage access for disadvantaged socio-economic groups, and reduce barriers for risk-averse and/or debt-averse disadvantaged students.

The challenge: Improving access and efficiency of funding in tertiary education.

Recent policies and practices

Canada's [student financial assistance programme](#) includes Canada Student Grants and Canada Student Loans (CSL). Student grants provide up-front non-repayable grants for tertiary education to students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In 2011/12, about 336 000 students received federal grants. Students can also be eligible for federal loans. In 2011/12, about 447 000 full-time students received loans. With financial support from the federal government, Quebec, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut administer their own student financial assistance programmes. Other provinces and territories have student financial assistance programmes linked with the CSL programme.

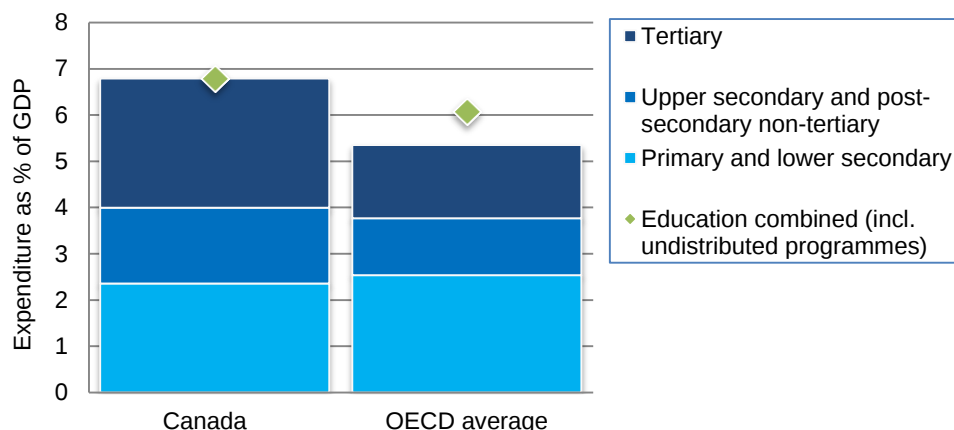
A [Repayment Assistance Plan](#) (RAP, 2008) provides CSL recipients with flexibility in debt repayment and helps students with disabilities. In 2011/12, through RAP, the Financial Student Assistance Programme helped 185 000 borrowers with difficulties repaying their loans. The Government of Canada also provides a [Registered Education Saving Plan](#) (RESP) to help parents save for their children's education.

The [CanLearn website](#) (www.canlearn.ca) (1999) provides information and tools to help prospective students choose where and what to study, and on how to pay for their post-secondary education.

Canada provides funding for innovation and research through 1) scholarships for master's, doctoral, and postdoctoral students through the [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council](#) among other institutions 2) scholarships and fellowships for undergraduate, postgraduate, and postdoctoral students through the [National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada](#).



Figure 8. Expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP, by level of education (2012)



Source: OECD (2014), *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2014-en>.

Spotlight 5. Improving administrative efficiencies in British Columbia

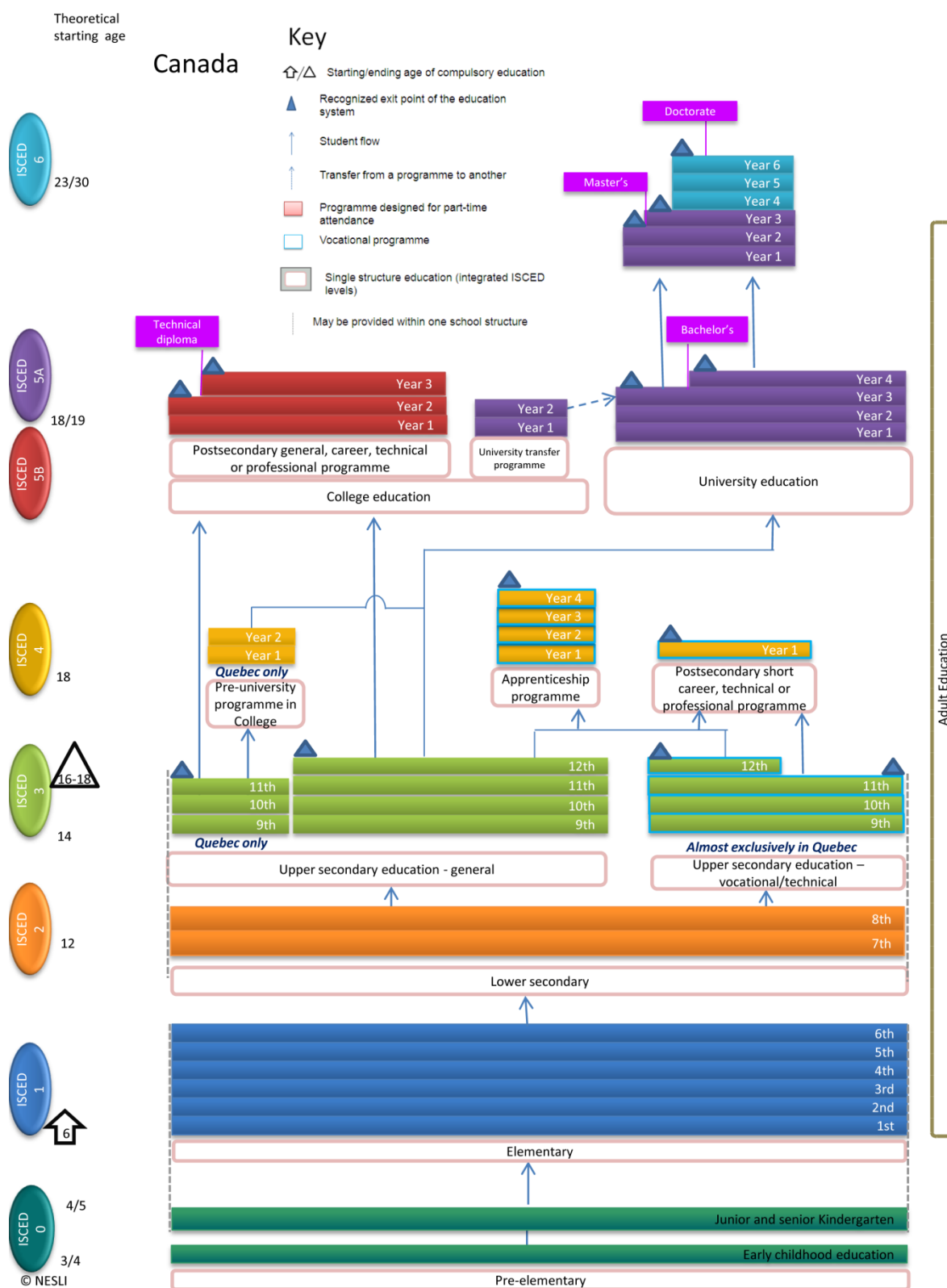
In British Columbia, as part of the *Public Post-Secondary Administrative Service Delivery Transformation* (ASDT, 2012), the ministry and all public post-secondary institutions are working collaboratively to implement administrative efficiencies, including shared procurement. The initiative is led by the 25 public post-secondary institutions, in partnership with British Columbia's Ministry of Advanced Education. The ASDT is focused on saving costs, achieving administrative efficiencies, sharing best practices, and enhancing the quality of services across the sector, while protecting and maximising investments in students' education.

After an assessment of likely costs, benefits, and implications (2012/13), opportunities were identified for implementation focused on improvements in service delivery, and in 2013, the ASDT Collaboration Office was established to support the sector's work. The public post-secondary sector recorded savings and cost avoidance of more than CAD 5 million in fiscal year 2013/14, primarily through collective purchasing of hardware, software, and IT services, implementation of the rural college recruitment portal, and streamlining payment practices.

In 2014, the sector launched the joint procurement consortium, which includes all 25 public post-secondary institutions. The consortium will leverage the benefits of joint purchasing, working to ensure best value for taxpayer funds, and that business opportunities are open to all qualified suppliers through a process that is fair, transparent and impartial.

Throughout 2014, joint opportunities by the public post-secondary sector through the ASDT initiative include joint procurement of natural gas, electrical supplies, office supplies, travel, and vending machine services. In addition to joint procurement, the sector is also pursuing financial services opportunities, which include streamlining payment practices, reducing merchant fees for credit cards, and leveraging Provincial Treasury Banking Services where it makes sense. Other areas of focus pursued are shared IT services, shared copyright permission service, and a shared digital resources and institutional repository network.

ANNEX A: STRUCTURE OF CANADA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM





ANNEX B: STATISTICS

#	List of key indicators	Canada	Average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
Background information					
<i>Political context</i>					
1	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, 2011 (EAG 2014)	5.1%	5.8%	3.8%	8.7%
<i>Economy</i>					
2	GDP per capita, 2011, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs (EAG 2014)	37 480	n/a	17 125	88 668
3	GDP growth 2013 (OECD National Accounts)	2%	1.3%	-3.9%	4.1%
<i>Society</i>					
4	Population density, inhab/km ² , 2010 (OECD Statistics)	3.8	138	2.9	492
5	Population aged less than 15 as a percentage of total population, 2010 (OECD Factbook 2014)	16.5%	18.6%	13.1%	29.6%
6	Foreign-born population as a percentage of total population, 2011 or latest available year (OECD Factbook 2014)	20.1%	0%	0.3%	42.1%
Education outcomes					
7	Mean performance in mathematics (PISA 2012)	518	494	413	554
8	Annualised change in mathematics performance across PISA assessments (PISA 2012) ^{4,5}	-1.4	-0.3	-3.3	4.2
9	Annualised change in reading performance across PISA assessments (PISA 2012) ^{4,5}	-0.9	0.3	-2.8	4.1
10	Annualised change in science performance across PISA assessments (PISA 2012) ^{4,5}	-1.5	0.5	-3.1	6.4
11	Enrolment rates of 3-4 year-olds in early childhood education and primary education as a percentage of the population of the same age group, 2012 (EAG 2014)	m	76%	12%	99%
12	% of 25-64 year-olds whose highest level of attainment is lower secondary education or below, 2012 (EAG 2014)	11%	24%	7%	66%
13	% of 25-34 year-olds whose highest level of attainment is at least upper secondary education, 2012 (EAG 2014)	92%	82%	46%	98%
14	% of 25-34 year-olds whose highest level of attainment is tertiary education, 2012 (EAG 2014)	57%	39%	21%	66%
15	% of 25-64 year-olds whose highest level of attainment is vocational upper-secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education, 2012 (EAG 2014)	11.5%	32.6%	8.2%	73.0%
Unemployment rates of 25-64 year-olds by educational attainment, 2012 (EAG 2014)					
16	Below upper secondary	10.8%	13.6%	2.6%	41.5%
	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	6.6%	7.8%	2.3%	24.4%
	Tertiary education	5.0%	5.0%	1.6%	17.0%
Students: Raising outcomes					
<i>Policy lever 1: Equity and quality</i>					
17	First age of selection in the education system (PISA 2012)	16	14	10	16
Students performing at the highest or lowest levels in mathematics (%), (PISA 2012)					
18	Students performing below Level 2	13.8%	23%	9.1%	54.7%
	Students performing at Level 5 or above	16.4%	12.6%	0.6%	30.9%
Variance in mathematics performance between schools and within schools as a percentage of the OECD average variance in mathematics performance (PISA 2012)					
19	Between-schools percentage of variance	18%	37%	6%	65%
	Within-schools percentage of variance	75%	63%	34%	90%
20	% of students reporting that they have repeated at least a grade in primary, lower secondary or upper secondary schools (PISA 2012)	8%	12.4%	0.0%	36.1%



#	List of key indicators	Canada	average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
21	Percentage of variance in mathematics performance in PISA test explained by ESCS (PISA 2012) ⁴	9.4%	14.8%	7.4%	24.6%
22	Score difference in mathematics performance in PISA between non-immigrant and immigrant students AFTER adjusting for socio-economic status (PISA 2012) ⁴	-2	21	-29	66
23	Score differences between boys and girls in mathematics (PISA 2012) ⁴	10	11	-6	25
<i>Policy lever 2: Preparing students for the future</i>					
Adjusted mean proficiency in literacy among adults on a scale of 500 (Survey of Adult Skills, 2012)					
24	Among 16-65 year-olds (adjusted)	271.8	270.7	249.4	293.6
	Among 16-24 year-olds (adjusted)	274.4	278.0	260.0	297.0
Upper secondary graduation rates in % by programme of orientation, 2011 (EAG 2014)					
25	General programmes	84%	52%	18%	85%
	Pre-vocational/ vocational programmes	4%	48%	4%	97%
26	Average annual growth rate of upper secondary graduation between 1995-2012 (EAG 2014)	m	m	0%	0%
First-time graduation rates by programme of orientation, 2011 (EAG 2014)					
27	Graduation rate tertiary-type A (general programme)	34%	39%	9%	60%
	Graduation rate tertiary-type B (technical programme)	18%	11%	0%	30%
28	% of 15-29 year-olds not in education, employment or training, 2012 (EAG 2014)	13.2%	15.1%	6.7%	29.2%
Institutions: Improving schools					
<i>Policy lever 3: School improvement</i>					
29	Mean index of teacher-student relations based on students' reports (PISA 2012)	0.28	0.00	-0.42	0.47
30	Mean index of disciplinary climate based on students' reports (PISA 2012)	0.01	0.00	-0.33	0.67
% of teachers above the age of 50 by education level, 2012 (EAG 2014)					
31	Primary education	26%	31%	16%	52%
	Lower secondary education	m	34%	19%	58%
	Upper secondary education	26%	38%	25%	65%
Number of teaching hours per year in public institutions by education level, 2012 (EAG 2014)					
32	Primary education	802	782	569	1 131
	Lower secondary education	747	694	415	1 103
	Upper secondary education	751	655	369	1 103
Ratio of teachers' salaries to earnings for full-time, full-year adult workers with tertiary education, 2011 (EAG 2014)					
33	Primary education	1.05	0.85	0.43	1.36
	Lower secondary education	1.05	0.88	0.43	1.36
	Upper secondary education	1.06	0.92	0.43	1.36
34	Growth rate of teachers' salaries between 2005 and 2012 in lower secondary education, 2012 (EAG 2014)	m	2%	-29%	31%
35	% of lower secondary education teachers who report a "moderate" or "large" positive change on their knowledge and understanding of their main subject field(s) (TALIS 2013)	NP	53.5%	26.7%	86.2%



#	List of key indicators	Canada	average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
Policy lever 4: Evaluation and assessment to improve student outcomes					
36	Percentage of lower secondary education principals who report that they use student performance and student evaluation results (including national/international assessments) to develop the school's educational goals and programmes	NP	88.8%	58.5%	99.5%
% of students whose school principals reported that assessments are used for the following purposes (PISA 2012)					
37	To make decisions about students' retention or promotion	95%	77%	1%	98%
	To monitor the school's progress from year to year	92%	81%	48%	100%
	To make judgements about teachers' effectiveness	30%	50%	14%	88%
	To identify aspects of instruction or the curriculum that could be improved	87%	80%	49%	99%
% of lower secondary education teachers reporting appraisal/feedback from the school principal on their work with this frequency (TALIS 2013)					
38	Once every two years or less	NP	33.9%	3.2%	88.8%
	Once per year	NP	41.5%	9.5%	82.1%
	Twice or more per year	NP	24.7%	1.0%	49.6%
Systems: Organising the system					
Policy lever 5: Governance					
% of decisions taken at each level of government in public lower secondary education, 2011 (EAG 2012)					
39	Central or state government	31%	36%	0%	87%
	Regional or sub-regional government	m	6%	0%	36%
	Local government	49%	17%	4%	100%
	School government	19%	41%	5%	86%
Policy lever 6: Funding					
Annual expenditure per student by educational institutions, for all services, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for GDP, 2010 (EAG 2014)					
40	Pre-primary education	m	7 428	2 412	25 074
	Primary education	9 232	8 296	2 218	23 871
	Secondary education	m	9 280	2 736	16 182
	Tertiary education	23 226	13 958	7 868	26 021
Relative proportions of public and private expenditure on educational institutions, 2010 (EAG 2014)					
41	Public sources	76.4%	83.9%	59.9%	97.6%
	All private sources	23.6%	16.1%	2.4%	40.1%
	Index of change in expenditure on educational institutions, public sources, (constant prices, 2005=100)	118	118	87	186
	Index of change in expenditure on educational institutions, all private sources, (constant prices, 2005=100)	112	119	76	170
Notes 1. The average, total, minimums and maximums refer to OECD countries except in TALIS and the Survey of Adult Skills, where they refer to participating countries. 2. "m": included when data is not available. 3. "NP": included if the country is not participating in the study. 4. Statistically significant values of the indicator are shown in bold (PISA 2012 only) 5. The annualised change is the average annual change in PISA score points from a country's/economy's earliest participation in PISA to PISA 2012. It is calculated taking into account all of a country's/economy's participation in PISA. See www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-overview.pdf . 6. "n/a": included when the category is not applicable.					



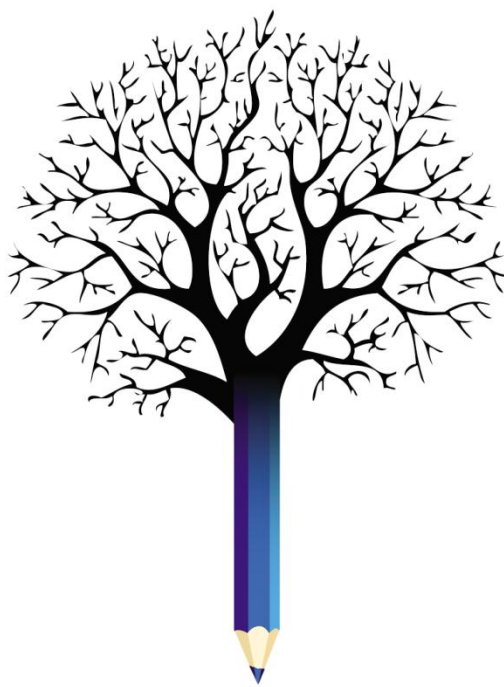
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