

NEWS RELEASE

B.C. had smaller high school class sizes yet lagged behind Quebec, Alberta in key subjects

Oct. 3, 2019

For Immediate Release

VANCOUVER—Despite popular misconceptions about class size and student performance, provinces with larger secondary school class sizes outperform British Columbia in key academic subjects, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“There’s no evidence to suggest that larger class sizes in secondary schools hurt student performance—in fact, other provinces with larger class sizes outperformed B.C.,” said Derek J. Allison, professor emeritus of education at the University of Western Ontario, Fraser Institute senior fellow and author of *Secondary school class sizes and student performance in Canada*.

The study, which compared average provincial class sizes and test scores from the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), found that in 2015 (the latest year of comparable data) B.C. had the second-smallest average secondary school class size (25.4 students) among the four largest provinces yet lagged behind Quebec (30.1 students) in math test scores and Alberta (28.5 students) in science scores.

Ontario, which had the smallest class size (24.8 students) among the four big provinces, had the lowest test scores in all three PISA subjects—reading, math and science.

Because it’s more expensive for any province to maintain smaller class sizes, the money might be better spent on other educational initiatives aimed at improving student performance.

“Many factors contribute to student performance, but larger class sizes do not appear to have a negative effect, something policymakers should understand when making decisions about education in British Columbia,” Allison said.

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