



NEWS RELEASE

Education spending increased in BC since 2012/13 to \$14,767 per student, but academic performance substantially declined over same period

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VANCOUVER—The provincial government in British Columbia needs to rethink how children are educated, as student performance in math, reading and science has continued to decline despite higher levels of per-student spending in recent years, finds a new report published today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Just spending more on K-12 education does not lead to better student outcomes,” said Michael Zwaagstra, Fraser Institute senior fellow and author of *K-12 Education Reform in British Columbia*.

The study finds that from 2012/13 to 2021/22, per-student spending (adjusted for inflation) increased in BC from \$13,839 to \$14,767—a 6.7 per cent increase.

But over the same 10-year period, student performance declined. The average scores for BC students on the international *Programme for International Assessment* (PISA) tests in math dropped from 522 in 2012 to 496 in 2022. Scores also declined in reading (535 to 511) and science (544 to 519).

The study highlights a number of reforms to the education system in BC that could help improve student performance:

- Reverse changes made to the provincial curriculum.
- Restore previous course-based standardized exams for Grades 10 and 12, and make them count towards final grades.
- Allow parents and other community members to establish charter schools, as is done in Alberta.
- Consider income-tested school vouchers—as in done in Australia—which increase the amount given to low-income families so that all families can send their children to independent schools if they choose.
- Like Sweden, change the eligibility rules for the current voucher program so that for-profit schools are treated the same as non-profit schools, providing parents more choice.

“Given the current mix of higher spending and declining academic results, the provincial government should consider a broad range of education reforms to achieve better value for money and improved results for both students and taxpayers,” Zwaagstra said.

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