

NEWS RELEASE

Standardized testing on the wane in Canada, limiting ability to assess classroom performance

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For Immediate Release

VANCOUVER—Standardized testing is on the decline in Canada, which will limit the ability of parents, teachers and principals to measure student performance and the overall health of the education system, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“The decline of standardized testing in Canada has reduced the availability of important student achievement data, which is essential in understanding how our education system performs,” said Michael Zwaagstra, a public high school teacher, senior fellow of the Fraser Institute and author of *The Decline of Standardized Testing in Canada*.

The study highlights three key ways that standardized testing has changed in Canada over the last 20 years.

- More tests now fail to measure “subject-specific” content knowledge, so acquiring critical background knowledge such as specific aspects of Canadian history are less important and thus less emphasized;
- Standardized tests are not given the same value as in the past—in many provinces, these tests often do not count towards students’ final grades, so students and teachers are less likely to take the tests seriously; and
- Standardized tests are now administered less often and at fewer grade levels than they once were (in fact, in Manitoba and Saskatchewan standardized tests have practically disappeared).

Several provinces halted standardized tests during the pandemic. Unfortunately, it’s not clear whether these provinces will restart testing.

“While testing was on the wane before the pandemic, it will be even harder to know when we’re back to normal if we can’t accurately assess progress in the classroom,” Zwaagstra said.

“If provincial governments want to help students improve in school and eventually compete with young people around the world, they should strengthen standardized testing.”

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