



NEWS RELEASE

Reforms needed to improve student testing in most provinces

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For Immediate Release

VANCOUVER—Provincewide testing of K-12 students in most provinces could be improved by ensuring the tests are consistent, transparent, and count toward students' grades or academic progression, 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 data that's essential to understand how our education system performs and how to best help students improve," said Paige MacPherson, associate director of education policy at the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Testing Canadian K-12 Students: Regional Variability, Room for Improvement*.

The study finds that provincewide student assessment programs (testing) across Canada could be improved by a) offering regular uniform testing at multiple grade levels and b) making school and district performance results available to the public, which would incentivize educational improvements among schools.

Previous research shows that increasing the significance of these assessments—for example, making them count toward a percentage of final grades—produces more meaningful results.

With the exception of Saskatchewan, every province administers provincewide assessment programs.

For example, in Alberta, students are tested in grades 6 and 9, and with Grade 12 diploma exams that count for 30 per cent of a student's final grade.

In Ontario, students in grades 3, 6, and 9 are tested in reading, writing and math (and a Grade 10 literacy exam). In Quebec, students in grades 10 and 11 complete curriculum-based exams on a variety of subjects.

In British Columbia, where secondary school tests have recently been weakened to no longer count toward students' final grades, students take a literacy and numeracy assessment in Grade 10 and a Grade 12 literacy assessment.

"Solid provincewide student testing – beyond just classroom tests by teachers – can actually improve student achievement and provide direct accountability to parents and taxpayers," said MacPherson. "If provinces wish to strengthen their assessment programs, they can learn from other jurisdictions and other provinces to make their testing more transparent to the public and more meaningful for students."

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