

4. WHAT MAKES A SCHOOL SUCCESSFUL?

Do students perform better in more disciplined schools?

- In many countries, students do better in schools with a stronger disciplinary climate, good teacher-student relations and positive teacher attitudes and behaviour, even after accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic backgrounds.
- In nearly half of the countries that participated in PISA, students do better in schools whose principals reported high levels of parental pressure for higher academic standards and achievement; but in most cases, this effect is wholly explained by the fact that it is usually more socio-economically advantaged parents who exert this pressure.

What it means

Educational policies and practices can only be effective if they are implemented in a climate conducive to learning. PISA results show which aspects of the learning environment are strongly related to better student performance.

Findings

In many countries, students perform better in schools with a better disciplinary climate. To some extent, this is because students in these schools are more likely to come from more socio-economically advantaged backgrounds. However, even after accounting for this effect, the relationship remains significant in 16 OECD countries and 22 partner countries and economies. It is particularly strong in the Netherlands and the partner countries and economies Azerbaijan; Hong Kong, China; Macao, China and Romania. In these countries, schools attain higher scores in reading where there is the least classroom disruption, regardless of the schools' socio-economic background.

In some countries, students perform better in reading in those schools where students reported that they have good relations with teachers. This link is strongest in Ireland, Japan and the partner country Jordan, after accounting for socio-economic background. While the highest-performing schools do not necessarily have the strongest teacher-student relations, in most countries, individual students who perceive these relations to be strong are more likely to do well in reading.

In 29 countries, students perform noticeably better in those schools whose principals reported that parents expect high academic standards and exert pressure

for these standards to be achieved. However, this is largely linked to the fact that parents with higher socio-economic status are more likely to bring such pressure to bear, and their children could be expected to perform better anyway. Once the link with socio-economic status has been accounted for, there is no effect, on average, across OECD countries, although in some countries the relationship remains apparent.

Teacher-related factors that affect school climate, such as teacher absenteeism and low expectations for students, also show a strong association with student performance in a number of countries.

Definitions

These aspects of the environment at school are based on reports by students and by school principals:

- For student-teacher relations and disciplinary climate, students were asked about their experiences in school.
- Teachers' stimulation of students' engagement in reading was measured through students' reports on their interactions with teachers, such as how often they are asked to explain the meaning of a text.
- Teacher-related factors affecting school climate were measured through principals' reports on how teachers' behaviour and attitudes, such as their expectations of students, affect learning.
- Parents' expectations of high academic standards and achievement and the pressure they put on schools to meet these expectations were evaluated by questioning school principals.

Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

Going further

Further analysis is presented in Chapter 4 of *PISA 2009 Results Volume IV, What Makes a School Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices*. Data on the effects in individual countries and economies are shown in Table IV.2.13 at the back of that volume.

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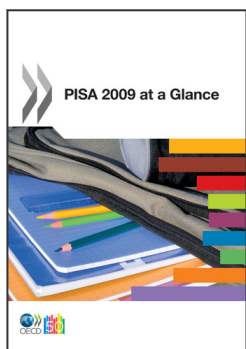
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Table 4.6. **Countries/Economies where the learning environment at school is related to reading performance**
This figure divides countries into groups with similar characteristics according to the learning environment.

	Without accounting for the socio-economic and demographic background of students and schools		With accounting for the socio-economic and demographic background of students and schools	
	...students perform worse in reading.	...students perform better in reading.	...students perform worse in reading.	...students perform better in reading.
In schools with better teacher-student relations...	Austria, Germany, Spain, Switzerland Argentina, Colombia, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Panama, Serbia, Uruguay	Australia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Mexico Hong Kong, China; Jordan; Qatar; Shanghai, China; Tunisia	Austria Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan	Australia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Portugal Bulgaria; Brazil; Hong Kong, China; Jordan; Peru; Qatar; Tunisia
In schools with better disciplinary climates...		Australia, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey Azerbaijan; Croatia; Dubai (UAE); Hong Kong, China; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Lithuania; Macao, China; Montenegro; Panama; Qatar; Romania; Russian Federation; Singapore; Serbia; Shanghai, China; Trinidad and Tobago; Uruguay		Australia, Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain Azerbaijan; Brazil; Colombia; Croatia; Dubai (UAE); Hong Kong, China; Jordan; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Lithuania; Latvia; Macao, China; Panama; Peru; Qatar; Romania; Russian Federation; Shanghai, China; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Trinidad and Tobago; Uruguay
In schools where teachers' attitudes and behaviours positively affect student learning...		Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Slovak Republic, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States Argentina; Bulgaria; Brazil; Croatia; Dubai (UAE); Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Singapore; Trinidad and Tobago; Uruguay	Chinese Taipei	Austria, Belgium, Chile, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, Spain Argentina, Brazil, Croatia, Romania, Thailand, Uruguay
In schools where more parents expect the school to set and achieve high academic standards...	Azerbaijan	Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom Albania, Brazil, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Latvia, Russian Federation, Singapore, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay	Azerbaijan	Canada, Italy, New Zealand, Norway Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Latvia, Trinidad and Tobago

Note: Only those school systems where there is a statistically significant relationship between the learning environment and reading performance are listed.

Source: OECD (2010), PISA 2009 Results, Volume IV, *What Makes a School Successful?: Resources, Policies and Practices*, Figure IV.2.12, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932343380>.



From:
PISA 2009 at a Glance

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264095298-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2011), "Do students perform better in more disciplined schools?", in *PISA 2009 at a Glance*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264095250-39-en>

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