

Do parents have a say in schooling?

- Many OECD countries require some parent involvement on school governing boards.
- With just four exceptions, all countries reported having regulations providing a formal complaints process for public schools.

Significance

This indicator looks at “parent voice” – or the extent to which parents can influence schools and how they may do so. It focuses on three formal types of parent voice: actual participation in governance; providing advice but not directly participating in governance; and the ability to make complaints or register grievances. Like school choice, parent voice can play an important role in signalling problems in the education system.

Findings

There are a number of ways in OECD countries in which parents can make their voices heard, ranging from direct involvement in school governance to the right to make complaints:

Parent involvement on school governing boards: This is required for public schools in 18 out of 30 OECD countries for which data are available and in 13 out of 23 OECD countries for government-dependent private schools. But for independent private schools, it's only required in Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Korea, Luxembourg and Estonia.

Parent associations: These are common in most countries and can perform a number of functions. They play a direct or formal role in providing advice to governments in 10 of 26 OECD countries. Their role in advising government is indirect or more informal in 24 of 27 OECD countries. Only in England and Korea do they play neither a formal nor an informal role.

Parent associations are typically organised at the school level, but national or regional groups can also exist. Just over 70% of OECD countries reported parent associations for public and private schools operating at the national level, more than half reported that they also exist at the regional level and around 40% have them at the local level.

Complaints and appeals mechanisms: With the exceptions of Japan, Korea, Mexico and Brazil, all countries reported having regulations providing a formal complaints process regarding public schools.

Such regulations were just as common for government-dependent private schools, but only 12 out of 20 OECD countries reported having them for independent private schools. An ombudsman or agency to receive complaints related to public schools exists in 18 out of 30 OECD countries.

Appeals processes: Most countries reported that parents were able to appeal decisions by public, government-dependent private and independent private schools. In all countries but Denmark, Japan and Korea, parents could appeal decisions made by public schools. This was the case for government-dependent private schools in 21 out of 23 OECD countries and for independent private schools in 15 out of 19 OECD countries.

Definitions

Data are from the 2009 OECD-INES Survey on School Choice and Parent Voice and refer to the school year 2007-08. For definitions of school types (both public and private) see previous spread. To a greater or lesser extent, parent voice and appeals to overturn decisions made by schools can exist or be made at multiple levels of government. Data presented here distinguish between the following six levels of governance (ranked in order from national level to the body with most immediate oversight): central government; state governments (in federal systems); provincial/regional authorities or governments (the second level of government in non-federal systems); sub-regional or inter-municipal authorities or governments (the third level of government in non-federal systems); local authorities or governments; school, school board or committee.

Information on data for Israel:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

Going further

For additional material, notes and a full explanation of sourcing and methodologies, see *Education at a Glance 2010* (Indicator D6).

- Requirement for parental involvement in governing boards, public and private sector.

Table S.3. Opportunities for parents to exercise voice at school level in public schools, 2008

This table shows the range of ways in which parents can influence schooling and launch appeals against school decisions.

- ✓ Yes
- 0 No, although they might exist
- x No

	Austria	Belgium (Fl.)	Belgium (Fr.)	Czech Rep.	England	Estonia	France	Greece	Iceland	Luxembourg	Netherlands	New Zealand	Portugal	Slovenia	Hungary	Israel/	Norway	Poland	Sweden	Chile	Denmark	Germany	Ireland	Italy	Korea	Slovak Rep.	Spain	Finland	Switzerland	United States	Scotland	Brazil/	Mexico	Japan	OECD Percent (Yes)
Schools have a governing board in which parents can take part	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0	0	✓	0	x	0	70%	
Parent associations exist that can advise or influence decision making	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	90%	
Regulations provide a formal process that parents can use to file complaints	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	90%		
There exists a designated ombudsman or agency that receives complaints	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	60%		

Source: OECD (2010), Education at a Glance 2010, Chart D6.1, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932310567>.

Table S.4. Requirement for schools to have a governing board in which parents can take part, 2008

This table shows the extent to which parents are required to be represented on public school governing boards and the potential role they may play.

Public Schools

- ✓ Yes, and some parent representation is required.
- ✓* Yes, but parent representation is optional.
- x* No, boards are not required, although they may exist.
- x No such boards exist.

	Austria	Belgium (Fl.)	Belgium (Fr.)	Brazil	Chile	Czech Rep.	Denmark	England	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany	Greece	Hungary	Iceland	Ireland	Israel/	Italy	Japan	Korea	Luxembourg	Mexico	Netherlands	New Zealand	Norway	Poland	Portugal	Scotland	Slovak Rep.	Slovenia	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	United States
Primary	✓	✓	✓*	x*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x*	✓	✓	✓	x*	✓	✓	x*	✓	x*	✓	✓*	x	✓*	✓	x*	x*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x*	x*	x*
Lower secondary	✓	✓	✓*	x*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x*	✓	✓	✓	x*	✓	✓	x*	✓	x*	✓	✓	x	✓*	✓	x*	x*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x*	x*	x*

Source: OECD (2010), Education at a Glance 2010, Table D6.1, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932310567>.



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