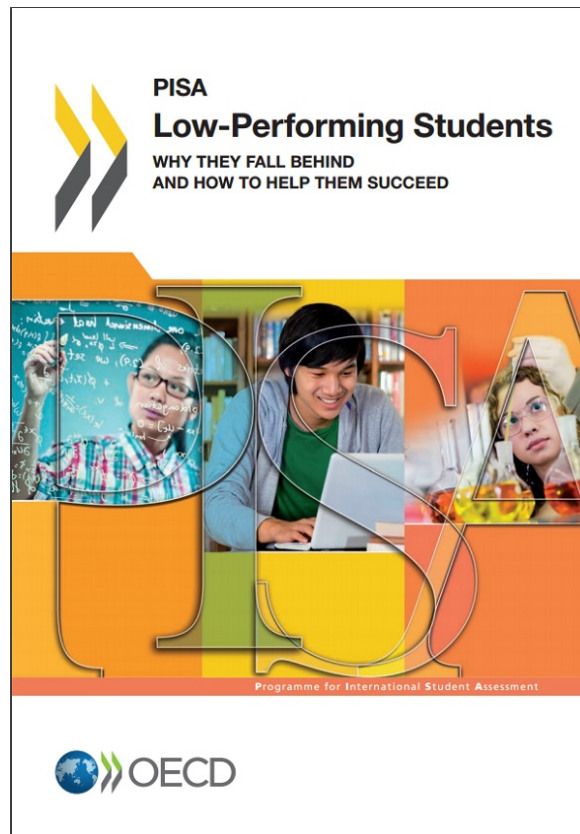


Helping struggling students to succeed

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More than a quarter of 15-year-old school students in OECD countries fail to achieve the most basic level of proficiency in mathematics, reading and science. In other countries, the share is often much larger. Such poor performance at school has severe consequences for individuals: low performing students tend to have less motivation and self-confidence, will skip classes and perhaps miss days at school. In the long run, this affects their lives and compromises a country's economic and social prospects.

To address this, *Low-performing Students: Why they Fall Behind and How to Help them Succeed* looks at family background, education career and attitudes towards school. Low performing-pupils are defined as students who fail to reach level 2 in the OECD's worldwide PISA survey of competence among 15-yearolds, which

means they typically struggle to understand instructions on, say, an aspirin bottle. In countries where educational resources are distributed more evenly across schools, there is less incidence of low performance in mathematics, the report finds. Not surprisingly, teachers count, too: students whose teachers have low expectations of them or are often out are more likely to struggle at school.

Though a few countries, such as Italy and Mexico, have managed to reduce their share of low performers in mathematics, overall improvements are rare.

Good policies can have an effect, however, such as offering special programmes for vulnerable groups, such as migrants—in France, 30% of struggling students have an immigrant background,—or by gender. In Chile, for instance, 58% of low performers at school are girls.

Involving parents formally in school management, for example through school boards, has proven its worth, with countries such as Japan showing the benefits.

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See www.oecd.org/pisa/

References

Low-Performing Students <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264250246-en>