Reading literacy achievement: senior secondary schooling

New Zealand is continuing its high performance in reading literacy at the senior secondary level, with only two out of 34 OECD countries achieving significantly higher mean scores than New Zealand.

Indicator Description
Reading literacy of 15 year-old students.

Why This Is Important
Reading literacy achievement at senior secondary level contributes to preparation for successful participation in tertiary education and training. Achievement level is also related to people’s well being and influences their ability to contribute to, and participate in, a changing labour market and increasingly knowledge-based society.

Literacy involves the ability of individuals to use written information to fulfil their goals, and the consequent ability of complex modern societies to use written information to function effectively.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study assessed 15 year-old students’ reading ability on accessing and retrieving information, integrating and interpreting texts, and reflection and evaluation.
How We Are Going

The reading scores from PISA 2000, PISA 2003, PISA 2006 and PISA 2009 can be summarised on a combined reading literacy scale. This enables a comparison to be made between the reading literacy achievements of 15 year-old students in each of these years.

New Zealand is continuing its high performance in reading literacy at the senior secondary level, as measured by the PISA reading tasks.

In 2009, PISA found New Zealand 15 year-old students had a mean reading literacy score significantly above the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) mean across 34 countries. Only two OECD countries (Korea and Finland) achieved significantly higher mean scores than that for New Zealand. Shanghai-China and Hong Kong-China also achieved significantly higher mean scores than New Zealand.

Between 2000 and 2009 there has been no significant change in New Zealand’s average 15 year-old student performance in reading literacy. In contrast, Korea achieved significantly higher results on average than in 2000.

Compared to most other countries more New Zealand 15 year-old students achieved at the top proficiency levels in reading in PISA 2009 with 41% achieving at least Level 4, 16% achieving Level 5 and 3% at the new advanced proficiency level 6. This compares with the OECD averages of 28%, 8% and 1% respectively. Fourteen percent of New Zealand 15 year-old students did not reach beyond the lowest levels of reading literacy (that is, beyond Level 1a or achieving Level 2), and this was statistically similar to that for Australia and Japan, but statistically lower than the average across the OECD countries (19%).

Fifteen year-old New Zealand girls achieved a significantly higher mean reading literacy score than boys, a result common to all of the 65 countries participating in PISA 2009 for reading. There was no change in the mean performance for boys or for girls between 2000 and 2009.

In PISA 2009, European/Pākehā and Asian 15 year-old students achieved significantly higher mean reading...
literacy scores than the OECD average, while Māori and Pasifika were significantly lower than the OECD average. Lower proportions of Māori and Pasifika students achieved at the highest levels of proficiency in reading, and were over-represented at the lower levels when compared with European/Pākehā and Asian students.

Where To Find Out More

This indicator is closely linked to other national assessment programs for reading, as well as achievement indicators for senior secondary school students, such as:

- Reading literacy achievement: primary schooling
- Literacy skills in the adult population
- Mathematics literacy achievement: senior secondary schooling
- Science literacy achievement: senior secondary schooling.

The Ministry of Education has established an Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme to systematically identify, evaluate, analyse, synthesise and make accessible, relevant evidence linked to a range of learner outcomes. Evidence about what works for this indicator can be found in:

- Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis.

References