

Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) Frequently Asked Questions

PISA 2025 (Spring 2025)

Information for Parents and Guardians

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Between March and May of this year, your teenager's school will be one of about 200 nationwide taking part in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2025. Schools were selected randomly to represent the nation's schools and, within each school, up to 52 students were selected randomly to take part. Your teenager was among those students selected to take part in the study.

What is PISA?

PISA is the world's largest international assessment that measures student learning in reading, mathematics, and science. More than 80 countries and education systems representing nearly 90 percent of the world's economy participate in PISA, which is coordinated through the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). PISA began in 2000 and occurs every 3 years providing information about how students in the U.S. compare in achievement with students in other countries. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the U.S. Department of Education, conducts PISA in the United States as authorized by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543).

Why is PISA important?

The OECD administers PISA in order to help participating school systems and countries understand their strengths and areas for improvement, with the ultimate goal of increasing both the quality and equity of education worldwide. As such, PISA fosters engagement among international education systems, allowing teachers, education professionals, and policy experts to compare shared experiences in the global learning community. Participation in PISA has even led to substantive education policy changes for several countries around the world. Both Germany and Brazil, for example, have raised their standards and made their education systems more inclusive to students from every background as a direct outcome of their PISA results.

PISA provides a unique opportunity for the United States to understand its educational standing in comparison to other nations. Through participating in PISA, schools and students contribute to the improvement of education. PISA can help us identify U.S. students' strengths and weaknesses in these subjects and help us learn about successful policies and practices in other countries.

How did my teenager and their school get selected for PISA?

The schools that participate in PISA in the United States are randomly selected from a list of all schools in the country that enroll students in grade 7 or higher and born in 2009. This is done to ensure that U.S. participants accurately represent the entire population of eligible students in the United States and not just particular types of schools or groups of students.

The only criteria for students to be eligible to be selected for PISA are being born in the specific birth date range and being enrolled in grade 7 or higher. From a list of all eligible students provided by your school, up to 52 students are randomly selected to participate. Every eligible student enrolled in a PISA-selected school has an equal chance of being selected. Students in other countries are selected in exactly the same way to make sure each country is fairly represented and no country is advantaged or disadvantaged because of the types of schools or groups of students selected.

What is done with the information you collect from me?

Each school and student who participates plays an important role in representing other schools and students that are similar to them. It's vital that students in every kind of education system and environment—including public and private schools—contribute to PISA to ensure the U.S. sample is an accurate reflection of educational progress across the country. Only about 6,300 students will have the unique opportunity to participate in PISA in the United States. How often will your teenager have the opportunity to represent our country? Participating is an opportunity to have an impact on the bigger picture of education in the United States and around the globe.

What is involved?

PISA staff will visit the school and administer the assessment. The assessment will take approximately 3½ hours; it includes time for instructions, the assessment, breaks, and a questionnaire that students complete about themselves. To recognize the time and effort put forth to contribute to PISA, schools that participate in PISA will receive \$250, and each student who participates will receive \$25 plus a certificate from the U.S. Department of Education for 4 hours of volunteer service if allowed by school/district policy.

What are the benefits?

PISA is administered worldwide in order to help participating school systems and countries understand their strengths and areas for improvement, with the ultimate goal of increasing both the quality and equity of education worldwide. The nation as a whole benefits from PISA by having a greater understanding of how the knowledge and skills of U.S. students compare with their peers in other countries.

What is done with the information you collect from my teenager?

PISA is not designed to produce individual scores and your teenager's individual performance is not shared with teachers, the school, or the district in any way. Student responses are combined with other student responses and are only used for statistical purposes. All of the information provided by your teenager may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved this data collection under OMB# 1850-0755.

Where can I find out more about PISA?

More information about PISA is available at the PISA website at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/>.

If you have specific questions you can call PISA staff at 1-888-638-2597 or email PISAHelp@westat.com.