

Things to remember about the Fraser Institute's Report

The Fraser Institute's *Report Card on Ontario's Elementary Schools* uses grade 3 and grade 6 Education Quality & Accountability Office (EQAO) test results to calculate each school's overall rating out of 10. As presented, the ratings in the report provide an incomplete and distorted picture of school effectiveness. There is no evidence to show that ranking schools improves student learning.

EQAO test results provide useful information to improve schools' learning programs—for example, school improvement goals on reading, writing or math—but it's unfair and misleading to compare schools based only on these scores. It's just one piece of the whole picture about a school.

As with board-wide or province-wide results, school scores should not be seen as absolutes—they are indicators of where students need extra help to improve their reading, writing and math. Tests are only useful if they are used to improve student learning. They can be used effectively to improve student learning through initiatives such as:

- schools developing literacy and numeracy improvement plans
- boards providing extra resources to meet the needs of students
- giving parents tips and strategies to help their children at home

The ranking of schools undermines valid evaluation and testing measures, discourages and demoralizes teachers, and belittles the efforts of students.

Judgments of school quality should be based on the complete picture of all the programs and features of a school. Peel schools deliver a curriculum that encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, academic excellence and citizenship.

Fraser Institute's ranking methodology based on faulty assumptions

There are many issues with the methodology that the Fraser Institute has used to develop its ranking. Here are just a few:

- The ranking does not take into account many important demographic factors, such as English as a Second Language population, students' special education needs or the social risk index. If schools had been ranked taking into account these contextual factors, the pattern of results would have been dramatically different.
- Schools with improved EQAO results may actually fall in the Fraser Institute ranking. To rise in the ranking, the school had to have shown improvement that was higher than the average.
- The formulas are complex and based on faulty assumptions. For example, one indicator is based on improvement in grade 6 over grade 3 scores, which is only valid if you know that it's the same students taking the test in grade 6 as in grade 3. For many schools with high student turnover, that is not the case.
- The ranking makes the differences between schools appear much larger than they really are.
- Very few private schools are included in the report.