Return to State of the Union Report

PISA Scores

(Programme for International Student Assessment)

Information Retrieved from AI - To Be Verified

Section 1: Top 35 Countries with the Highest PISA Scores

Data Source: PISA 2022 Results (OECD). Data year: 2022. Countries with population over 5 million included.

Rank	Country	PISA Score (2022)
1	Singapore	561
2	日本 Nippon (Japan)	536
3	한국 Hanguk (South Korea)	527
4	Hong Kong SAR	520
5	台灣 (Taiwan)	520
6	Canada	519
7	Éire (Ireland)	516
8	Polska (Poland)	516
9	Estonia	510
10	Nederland (Netherlands)	508
11	Suisse or Schweiz (Switzerland)	508
12	Belgique (Belgium)	507
13	Suomi (Finland)	507
14	New Zealand	501
15	Sverige (Sweden)	497
16	Česko (Czech Republic)	497
17	Australia	496
18	United Kingdom	494
19	Österreich (Austria)	491
20	Danmark (Denmark)	489
21	Norge (Norway)	480
22	Deutschland (Germany)	480
23	Portugal	478
24	Latvija (Latvia)	476
25	Magyarország (Hungary)	476
26	Lietuva (Lithuania)	476
27	République française (France)	474

28	ישראל Yisra'el (Israel)	474
29	España (Spain)	473
30	Italia (Italy)	471
31	United States	465
32	Slovak Republic	462
33	Croatia	461
34	Iceland	459
35	Ελλάδα Elláda (Greece)	447

Source: OECD PISA 2022 Results. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/pisa/

United States Ranking: The United States ranked 33rd among PISA 2022 participating countries with populations over 5 million, achieving a composite PISA score of 465. The United States has historically performed below the OECD average due to several systemic factors.

These include significant achievement gaps between socioeconomic groups, inconsistent curriculum standards across states, disparities in school funding between wealthy and poor school districts, teacher shortages in critical STEM fields, and a cultural de-emphasis on academic achievement compared to top-performing East Asian nations.

In the most recent 2022 PISA cycle, the United States scored 465 in mathematics, reading, and science combined, placing it in the lower third of OECD nations. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated learning loss, particularly in mathematics, contributing to a decline from prior cycles.

The 8 Top Rated Countries with PISA Scores

Rank	Country	PISA Score (2022)
1	Singapore	561
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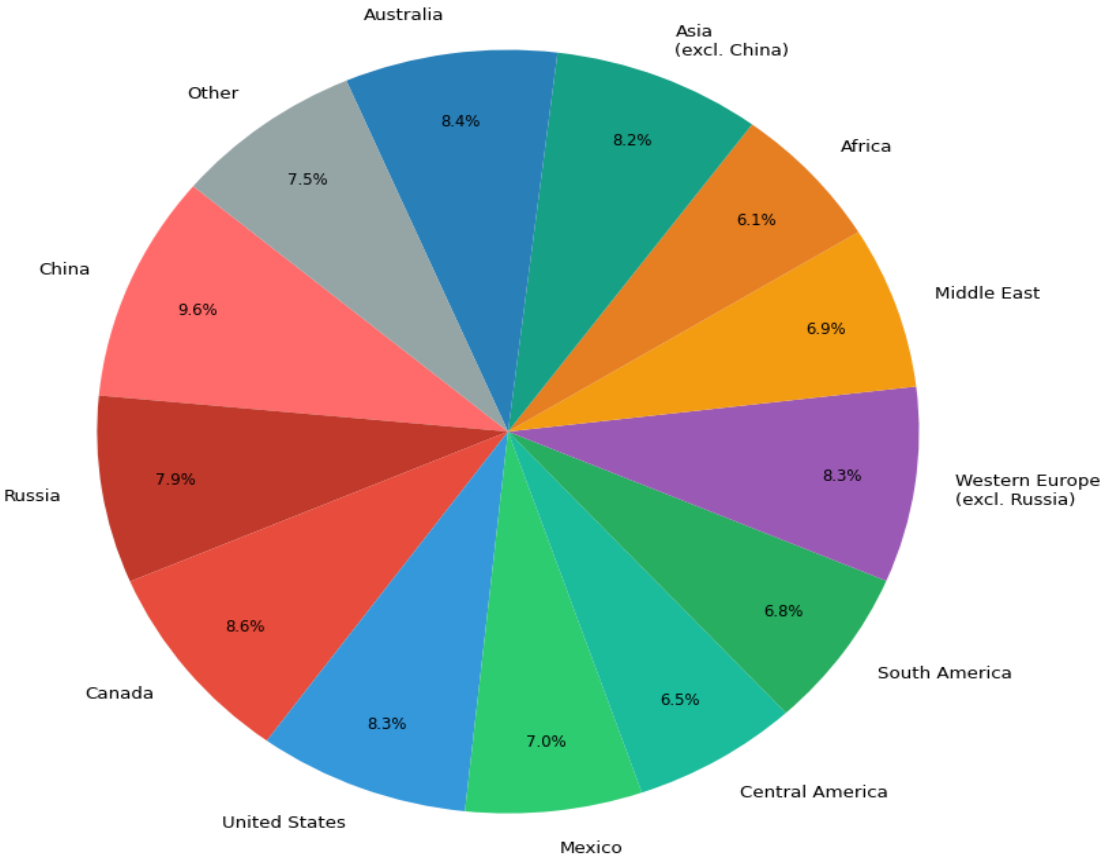
6	Hong Kong SAR	520
7	Estonia	510
8	Nederland (Netherlands)	508

PISA Scores by World Region (2022)

PISA Scores by World Region (2022)



References for Section 1 Data Sources:

1. OECD PISA 2022 Results: https://www.oecd.org/pisa/
2. National Center for Education Statistics - PISA: https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/
3. OECD iLibrary PISA Reports: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/pisa_19963777

Section 2: What Other Countries Have Done to Increase Their PISA Scores

The 8 Top Rated Countries with PISA Scores

Rank	Country	PISA Score (2022)
1	Singapore	561
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Singapore

Singapore's exceptional PISA performance results from a highly coordinated national education strategy. The Ministry of Education Singapore (MOE) (https://www.moe.gov.sg) implemented the Teach Less, Learn More (TLLM) initiative, which shifted classrooms from rote memorization toward deep conceptual understanding and critical thinking.

The Singapore Teaching Practice framework mandates ongoing professional development for all teachers, ensuring instructional quality remains world-class. The National Institute of Education (NIE) (https://www.nie.edu.sg) rigorously trains teachers. The government invested in the Edusave scheme, providing every student with individual educational funds.

Singapore's Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) was reformed to reduce over-emphasis on grades.

Bilingual education policies have strengthened both English and mother-tongue proficiency. The Applied Learning Programme integrates real-world applications into the curriculum across all secondary schools.

Nippon (Japan)

Nippon has maintained elite PISA standings through its Monbukagakusho (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology - MEXT) (https://www.mext.go.jp/en/) national curriculum reform programs.

The 2020 Course of Study introduced active learning methodologies and emphasized inquiry-based education.

Nippon's structured lesson study (jugyou kenkyuu) system requires teachers to collaborate in professional learning communities to design, observe, and refine lessons. The Japanese Teachers' Union and local boards of education fund professional development.

Nippon's Zenkoku Gakuryoku Chosa (National Assessment of Academic Ability) provides annual benchmarks. After a dip in earlier PISA cycles, MEXT launched emergency reading improvement programs including enhanced phonics instruction. The government's Society 5.0 initiative integrates technology into schools under the GIGA School Program, providing every student a device and high-speed internet.

Hanguk (South Korea)

Hanguk's education success is driven by the Ministry of Education (MOE) () and supported by Confucian cultural values that place the highest importance on academic achievement. https://english.moe.go.kr

The Hanguk Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE) (https://www.kice.re.kr) designs and annually revises the national curriculum. Government investments in hagwon (private tutoring academies) regulation aim to balance access.

Hanguk 's National Scholarship Program ensures economically disadvantaged students can attend top universities.

The government legislated the School Violence Prevention and Countermeasure Act to improve school environment and student well-being.

Hanguk invests approximately 5.1% of GDP in education, among the highest proportions in the OECD. Teacher selection is highly competitive, drawing candidates from the top 5% of university graduates.

台灣 (Taiwan)

Taiwan Ministry of Education (https://english.moe.gov.tw) implemented the 12-Year Basic Education Curriculum Reform in 2019, transforming instruction from test-driven approaches to competency-based learning. The Curriculum Guidelines emphasize core competencies including self-directed learning, systemic thinking, and communication.

The National Academy for Educational Research (NAER) (https://www.naer.edu.tw) conducts research to improve learning standards.

Taiwan launched Technology-Enhanced Learning projects in all middle and high schools and significantly increased science and math instructional hours.

The government subsidizes teacher professional development through the 台灣 Taiwan Sustainable Education Initiative.

Canada

Canada's strong PISA performance is attributed to inclusive education policies and provincial investments.

The Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) (https://www.cmec.ca) coordinates national education strategy while provinces such as Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia lead implementation. Ontario's Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, operating under the Ontario Ministry of Education (https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-education), introduced evidence-based instructional coaching and school-level data analysis that improved reading scores dramatically.

Canada's multiculturalism policy and support for English Language Learner (ELL) students have ensured that immigrant students quickly reach grade-level proficiency.

Teacher unions negotiate strong professional development clauses, and teachers average 240 hours of professional learning annually.

Hong Kong SAR

Hong Kong's Education Bureau (EDB) (https://www.edb.gov.hk) has implemented the New Academic Structure Reform that shifted from a colonial British examination model to a more student-centered, locally relevant curriculum.

The Quality Education Fund finances innovation grants for schools implementing new pedagogical approaches. Hong Kong introduced Life-wide Learning policies that integrate outdoor education, service-learning, and arts programs alongside core academics to develop whole-person competencies.

The Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) (https://www.scolar.gov.hk) has driven biliteracy and trilingualism programs that significantly strengthen reading performance.

Estonia

Estonia has emerged as Europe's top PISA performer through strategic reforms by the Ministry of Education and Research (https://www.hm.ee/en).

Estonia's Tiger Leap (Tiigrihupe) program, launched in 1997, made Estonia one of the world's first nations to integrate digital technology into every classroom.

The national curriculum, revised in 2011 and 2014, emphasizes interdisciplinary thinking, independent learning, and entrepreneurship.

Estonia's Innove Foundation and the Education and Youth Authority (Harno) (https://harno.ee/en) coordinate teacher development and monitor school effectiveness. Autonomous school governance, allowing principals and teachers to adapt curricula to local needs, has proven highly effective. Estonia allocates over 6% of GDP to education.

Nederland (Netherlands)

The Nederland' Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science) (https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-education-culture-and-science) maintains PISA excellence through a uniquely decentralized school governance system. Dutch law (Article 23 of the Constitution) grants 'freedom of education,' allowing schools significant autonomy while the government sets attainment targets. The Onderwijsraad (Education Council) provides independent policy advice.

The Nederland invests in the Masterplan Basisvaardigheden (Basic Skills Master Plan), which targets literacy and numeracy improvements in primary school.

The Dutch Inspectorate of Education conducts regular school quality reviews. The SLO (National Institute for Curriculum Development) (https://www.slo.nl/en/) develops and evaluates national curriculum standards.

References for Section 2:

1. OECD PISA Framework: https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/
2. Singapore MOE: https://www.moe.gov.sg
3. MEXT Nippon: https://www.mext.go.jp/en/
4. Korea MOE: https://english.moe.go.kr
5. Estonia Ministry of Education: https://www.hm.ee/en

Section 3: What the United States Can Do to Increase Its PISA Scores

The United States' 33rd-place PISA ranking reflects a complex set of systemic challenges that require coordinated federal, state, and local action. The following broad strategies are recommended to substantially raise PISA performance:

1. Elevate Teacher Quality and Compensation

The United States must raise the social and economic status of the teaching profession.

Congress and state legislatures should enact legislation requiring competitive teacher salaries, with federal incentive grants tied to states that raise minimum teacher salaries to match median engineer compensation.

The Department of Education should fund Teacher Residency Programs modeled on medical residencies, ensuring new teachers receive two years of mentored clinical practice before leading classrooms independently.

States should adopt Nationally Board Certified Teacher standards and require ongoing professional development of at least 100 hours annually.

2. Reduce Achievement and Funding Gaps

Congress should reform the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to equalize per-pupil funding across rich and poor districts.

The Department of Education should expand the Title I program to ensure high-poverty schools receive at minimum 120% of per-pupil expenditure compared to affluent schools.

States must reform property tax-based school funding formulas to reduce disparities.

Federal early childhood education investment should expand Head Start to universal pre-K access for all three- and four-year-olds.

3. Reform Curriculum and Instruction

The Department of Education should create national frameworks for evidence-based math and reading curricula, similar to Singapore's Mathematics and Canada's balanced literacy program reforms.

States should mandate adoption of high-quality, evidence-based instructional materials. The National Science Foundation should fund STEM instructional innovation grants in underperforming districts.

Congress should establish a National Institute for Education Sciences with significantly expanded budget authority to evaluate and scale effective educational interventions.

4. Improve School Leadership and Governance

The Department of Education should create a Principal Excellence Fund to develop high-quality school leaders.

States should revise principal preparation programs to require data-driven instructional leadership training. School boards should adopt transparency and accountability policies including public publication of academic performance data disaggregated by race, income, and English learner status.

5. Expand Access to Technology and Innovation

Congress should fund a national Digital Equity in Education Act guaranteeing every student a learning device and broadband access.

The Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology should publish and fund adoption of digital learning standards. Federal grants should support development of artificial intelligence-assisted tutoring tools for personalized learning.

Section 4: References

Section 2 References:

OECD PISA 2022 Results: https://www.oecd.org/pisa/

NCES PISA Data: https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/

Singapore Ministry of Education: https://www.moe.gov.sg

Nippon MEXT: https://www.mext.go.jp/en/

Hanguk Ministry of Education: https://english.moe.go.kr

台灣 Ministry of Education: https://english.moe.gov.tw

Council of Ministers of Education Canada: https://www.cmec.ca

Hong Kong Education Bureau: https://www.edb.gov.hk

Estonia Ministry of Education and Research: https://www.hm.ee/en

Nederland Ministry of Education: https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-education-culture-and-science

Section 3 References:

U.S. Department of Education: https://www.ed.gov

National Science Foundation Education: https://www.nsf.gov/dir/index.jsp?org=EDU

National Institute of Education Sciences: https://ies.ed.gov

Education Trust - Achievement Gap Research: https://edtrust.org

Learning Policy Institute: https://learningpolicyinstitute.org

Section 5: Draft of a House Bill

H.R. ____

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

A BILL

To improve the academic performance of students in the United States on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and related international benchmarks, and for other purposes.

SHORT TITLE: THE AMERICAN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS ACT OF 2025

SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS.

As used in this Act:

1. "PISA" means the Programme for International Student Assessment, administered by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
2. "Department" means the United States Department of Education.
3. "Secretary" means the Secretary of the United States Department of Education.
4. "Local Educational Agency" or "LEA" means a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted to administer, direct, or perform a service function for public elementary or secondary schools.
5. "State Educational Agency" or "SEA" means the agency primarily responsible for the supervision of public elementary and secondary schools in a State.
6. "Evidence-Based Instruction" means educational practices supported by rigorous scientific research demonstrating a statistically significant positive effect on student academic outcomes.
7. "Achievement Gap" means the measurable and persistent disparity in academic performance between different groups of students, including gaps based on race, income, disability status, and English learner status.
8. "STEM" means Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.
9. "Professional Development" means structured learning activities designed to improve educator knowledge, skills, and instructional practice, including workshops, coaching, peer collaboration, and advanced coursework.
10. "High-Need School" means a school that is among the bottom quartile of schools in the State, as determined by student academic achievement, and serves a student population of which at least 40% are from low-income families.
11. "Qualified Teacher" means an individual who holds full State licensure as a teacher and meets the content knowledge requirements established by the Secretary for teaching in core academic subjects.
12. "Early Childhood Education" means organized educational programs and services for children from birth through age five.

SECTION 2. ENACTING CLAUSE.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that this Act shall be known as the "American Student Achievement and Global Competitiveness Act of 2025."

(a) The Congress finds that:

(1) The United States ranked 33rd in the 2022 PISA assessment among countries with populations over five million, with a composite score of 465, significantly below the OECD average.

(2) Elevating educational performance is essential to maintaining national competitiveness, workforce readiness, and democratic participation.

(3) International evidence demonstrates that sustained, systemic reform of teacher quality, curriculum, early childhood access, and equitable funding significantly improves PISA performance.

(4) Countries including Singapore, Nippon, Hanguk, Canada, and Estonia have demonstrated that government-led, data-driven educational reforms can dramatically improve student outcomes within one decade.

(5) It is the policy of the United States to close achievement gaps and provide every student, regardless of background, with a world-class education.

SECTION 3. REQUIREMENTS BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.

(a) Department of Education Requirements.

(1) The Secretary shall, within 180 days of enactment, establish a National PISA Improvement Task Force comprising representatives from the Department of Education, the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Education Sciences, State Educational Agencies, and independent research institutions.

(2) The Secretary shall issue annual PISA Preparedness Reports to Congress detailing national, state, and district-level progress toward established PISA score benchmarks.

(3) The Department shall administer competitive grants to LEAs for adoption of evidence-based curricula in mathematics, reading, and science, prioritizing high-need schools.

(4) The Secretary shall develop and publish a National Framework for Evidence-Based Mathematics Instruction, drawing on practices from Singapore, Nippon, and Canada.

(5) The Department shall expand the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant program to fund teacher residency programs modeled on medical residency training, requiring a minimum two-year clinical practice component.

(b) National Science Foundation.

(1) The National Science Foundation shall increase funding for STEM Education research by no less than 25% per fiscal year for five consecutive years following enactment.

(2) The NSF shall establish regional STEM Innovation Hubs in each of the ten federal education regions, providing technical assistance, professional development, and curriculum resources to LEAs.

(A) Each Hub shall prioritize service to high-need schools and districts.

(B) Hubs shall maintain partnerships with at least one institution of higher education and two local education agencies.

(c) National Institute of Education Sciences.

(1) The Institute shall establish a National Clearinghouse of Evidence-Based Instructional Practices, updated no less than annually, identifying curricula and pedagogical approaches with demonstrated PISA-relevant outcomes.

(2) The Institute shall conduct a biennial National Study of Teaching Quality measuring the correlation between teacher professional development intensity and student achievement gains.

(d) State Educational Agencies.

(1) Within two years of enactment, each SEA receiving funds under this Act shall submit to the Secretary a PISA Improvement State Plan including measurable benchmarks, identified high-need schools, professional development strategies, and curriculum adoption timelines.

(2) SEAs shall revise principal preparation certification requirements to include mandatory training in data-driven instructional leadership and school turnaround management.

(3) SEAs shall, consistent with laws in Canada, Australia, England, Norge, Sverige, Suomi, Deutschland, République française, Zhongguo, and Nippon, require that no child complete third grade without demonstrated reading proficiency, and provide mandatory intensive intervention for students below grade-level benchmarks.

SECTION 4. REQUIREMENTS BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

(a) Secretary of Education.

(1) The Secretary shall, within 120 days of enactment, convene a National Education Summit bringing together state governors, state superintendents, superintendents of the 100 largest school districts, representatives of teacher unions, and leaders from the private sector to develop a 10-Year National Action Plan for PISA Improvement.

(2) The Secretary shall, by no later than one year after enactment, publish a comprehensive National Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy identifying barriers to entry and proposing federal, state, and local solutions.

(3) The Secretary shall negotiate with states to establish a National Teacher Salary Benchmark, providing federal matching funds to states that raise minimum teacher salaries to 90% of the median salary of other college-educated professionals.

(b) State Governors.

(1) Each Governor of a state receiving funds under this Act shall annually submit to the legislature a State Education Performance Report that includes

comparison of the state's academic performance to national and international benchmarks.

(2) Governors shall appoint a State PISA Coordinator within 90 days of enactment to serve as the state's point of contact for federal PISA improvement initiatives.

(c) Local School Board Members.

(1) Local school board members shall complete mandatory training in education finance, student achievement data analysis, and evidence-based instructional practice no later than 12 months after taking office.

(2) Local school boards shall publicly post on their official website annual school-by-school academic performance data, including scores on any PISA-aligned assessments, disaggregated by student subgroup.

SECTION 5. REQUIREMENTS BY CORPORATIONS.

(a) Public Benefit and Corporate Responsibility Requirements.

(1) Corporations with annual revenues exceeding $1 billion operating in the United States shall, beginning in the second fiscal year after enactment, publicly disclose in their annual reports the scope and dollar amount of investments made in PreK-12 education, workforce readiness, STEM education, and teacher professional development.

(2) Corporations may qualify for federal tax credits equal to 35% of qualifying investments in evidence-based education programs meeting standards established by the Secretary, including:

(A) Endowment of Teacher Excellence Award programs recognizing outstanding STEM teachers in high-need schools.

(B) Funding of after-school STEM enrichment programs serving economically disadvantaged students.

(C) Establishment of paid summer internship programs for high school students in STEM fields.

(3) Corporations shall partner with LEAs to develop industry-aligned curriculum supplements in computer science, engineering, and data literacy.

(b) Technology Companies.

(1) Technology companies receiving federal contracts of $50 million or more shall contribute no less than 0.5% of such contract value to the National Digital Equity in Education Fund established under this Act.

(2) Technology companies shall offer educational licensing discounts of no less than 60% to Title I schools for learning management systems, digital curriculum products, and educational software.

SECTION 6. REQUIREMENTS BY PRIVATE CITIZENS.

(a) Parental and Guardian Engagement.

(1) State plans under this Act shall include strategies to increase parental engagement in student academic development, including requirements that LEAs provide:

(A) Annual individual academic progress meetings for each student with the student's teacher and parent or guardian.

(B) Parent education workshops, offered in the primary language of parents, describing evidence-based strategies to support student learning at home.

(2) Parents or guardians who participate in volunteer tutoring or mentoring programs certified by their LEA shall be eligible for a nonrefundable federal tax credit of $500 per year.

(b) Volunteer and Civic Organizations.

(1) Nonprofit organizations with 501(c)(3) status that provide tutoring, mentorship, or academic support to students in high-need schools shall be eligible for enhanced federal matching grants through the AmeriCorps Education Award program.

(2) Philanthropic foundations making contributions of $1 million or more to qualifying education programs under this Act may apply for recognition as a National Education Partner, receiving federal certification and public acknowledgment.

SECTION 7. PENALTY CLAUSES.

(a) Any State Educational Agency that fails to submit a PISA Improvement State Plan within the time prescribed under Section 3(d)(1) shall be subject to a withholding of 5% of its Title I Part A allocation until such plan is submitted and approved.

(b) Any LEA that misrepresents student academic performance data required under this Act shall be subject to repayment of grants received under this Act, plus interest at the applicable federal rate.

(c) Corporations that fail to comply with disclosure requirements under Section 5(a)(1) shall be subject to civil penalties of not more than $100,000 per annual report in which such disclosure is omitted.

(d) No penalty under this section shall be imposed without prior written notice and an opportunity to cure within 90 days.

SECTION 8. EFFECTIVE DATES AND IMPLEMENTATION.

(a) Except as otherwise specified, this Act shall take effect 90 days after the date of enactment.

(b) The Secretary shall issue implementing regulations not later than 270 days after the date of enactment.

(c) State PISA Improvement Plans required under Section 3(d)(1) shall be submitted not later than two years after enactment.

(d) All grant programs established under this Act shall be operational not later than one year after enactment.

(e) The National PISA Improvement Task Force established under Section 3(a)(1) shall convene its first meeting not later than 180 days after enactment.

SECTION 9. APPROPRIATIONS AND BUDGETARY NOTES.

(a) There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act:

(1) $2,500,000,000 for Fiscal Year 2026;

(2) $3,000,000,000 for Fiscal Year 2027;

(3) $3,500,000,000 for Fiscal Year 2028;

(4) $4,000,000,000 for Fiscal Year 2029; and

(5) $4,500,000,000 for Fiscal Year 2030.

(b) Of the amounts appropriated under subsection (a):

(A) Not less than 40% shall be allocated to grant programs for high-need schools.

(B) Not less than 25% shall be allocated to teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention programs.

(C) Not less than 15% shall be allocated to early childhood education expansion.

(D) Not more than 5% may be used for administrative expenses of the Department.

(c) The Congressional Budget Office shall, within 180 days of enactment, submit to Congress a report on the long-term fiscal impact and projected economic return of investments made under this Act, including projected improvements to national workforce productivity attributable to improved PISA outcomes.

ENDNOTES:

Requirements in Section 3(d)(3) regarding third grade reading proficiency draw on practices from

Suomi (National Core Curriculum 2014),

Norge (Kindergarten Framework Plan),

Sverige (Education Act 2010:800),

Canada (Ontario Education Act),

Australia (Australian Curriculum Standards),

England (National Curriculum Key Stage 1-2),

Deutschland (Kultusministerkonferenz Standards), République française (Socle Commun),

Nippon (Course of Study 2017), and

Zhongguo (National Curriculum Standards 2011).

See: https://www.oecd.org/education/school/