

# PISA Support Plan

## Feedback from PEI Home and School Federation

### March 17, 2015

On March 13, 2015, Bob Andrews, English Language School Board, forwarded the draft of a “PISA Support Plan” to PEI Home and School Federation for feedback.

What follows is the feedback received from our directors. This feedback is not an official response from PEI Home and School Federation, as we’ve not had an opportunity for broad consultation with our member schools, so it should simply be taken as a reflection of the kind of opinions that our members might have about the plan.

*Peter Rukavina*  
*President*

“It would be nice to emphasize the fact that preparation is key when trying to do well at something, and that we should be proud of representing PEI in this international assessment, to hopefully provide a reason to do well. These concepts should be mentioned first, to get people interested.”

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“Currently there are many details, acronyms, dates and statistics at the beginning that some people won't get past. Finally, wondering if there is a better way to ask parents to support and encourage their students to complete this challenge, as it sounds like the parents are being asked to find the answers with the students, and many parents won't be able to, or have the interest to do that.”

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“I am confused. Will just select students write the test, selected by whom and how? And they will be 'prepped' for the test? Is the ELSB not attempting to skew the results favourably? If the intention is to encourage better test writing skills to help students do their best and take the test seriously then I guess it could help get a truer reflection of the students knowledge. On the surface it seems well intentioned.”

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“This seems to be a good way to engage parents - is there a need to explain what PISA is and why the test are important for parents to understand their value? It seems to me there was a lot of media around these scores last year and I am not sure if parents (or general public) could explain to you in a few sentences about PISA.”

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“PISA is designed to measure the ability to use knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges. Literacy is defined as “students’ capacity to apply knowledge and skills in key subjects, and to analyse, reason and communicate effectively as they identify, interpret and solve problems in a variety of situations” (OECD, 2013a, p.24). **It is highly unlikely that quick fix exercises of this type will improve test scores.**”

The PISA scores of the sample population are intended to reflect the performance of that population relative to the other populations tested by PISA and to guide policy and curriculum development to address weaknesses in the system. “High Schools will deliver an orientation session for students who have been selected to write PISA 2015. (agenda to be developed)”

**The results of the PISA scores of this sample population will no longer reflect the performance of the population it is supposed to reflect. The scores would be meaningless.**

In Finnish Lessons, Pasi Sahlberg notes that “too strong an emphasis on international comparisons (or competitions) may lead to unethical means of temporarily boosting performance just to get a better position in the results tables.” I can’t imagine a more direct way of “teaching to the test.” **The goal of this exercise is not to increase student learning**, but to 1) increase panic about PISA test results; 2) offer false hope that such short term interventions can improve test scores; 3) increase misunderstanding about the purpose of PISA tests; 4) test the ability of some parents to help some children get higher scores on the PISA test.

On the positive side, pulling all the members of the education team together (including parents) and encouraging collaborative problem solving is a great idea! **But, let’s get creative!** Instead of using sample PISA tests and coaching the sample population, here are a few other ideas:

1. Challenge the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the English Language School Board and La Commission scolaire de langue française, schools, principals, parents and teachers to work in groups to understand PISA. How does it work? What does it mean? Why do we use it? How could we implement longer term, comprehensive strategies to improve scores in a lasting and ethical way?
2. Challenge the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the English Language School Board and La Commission scolaire de langue française, schools, principals, parents and teachers to work in groups to identify current issues in their local communities and provide solutions for those problems.
3. Challenge the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the English Language School Board and La Commission scolaire de langue française, schools, principals, parents and teachers to work in groups to identify the purpose of education in PEI. Is it to get good scores on PISA tests? What is equality in education? What is civic knowledge? How might those ideas improve “students’ capacity to apply knowledge and skills in key subjects, and to analyse, reason and communicate effectively as they identify, interpret and solve problems in a variety of situations?”