

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' USES FOR ASSESSMENTS

Key Findings: Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russian Federation, United States

A greater percentage of U.S. students than their peers in all other G-8 countries had principals who reported that they used assessment results to compare their school's performance to district- or national-level performance.

Results from assessments can be used for many purposes, and there is considerable debate as to what the best uses may be (Phye 1997; OECD 2004). The 2003 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA 2003) asked school principals to report whether or not they have used assessment results for various purposes.

In 2003, principals across the G-8 countries very frequently reported using assessment results to inform parents about their child's progress. In all of the G-8 countries reporting data,¹⁴ at least 96 percent of 15-year-olds had principals who reported that they used assessment results for this purpose (figure 14). Similarly, principals frequently cited using assessment results to make decisions about students' retention or promotion. In all G-8 countries, at least three-quarters of the students had principals who reported that they used assessment results for this purpose. In the United States, however, this percentage was lower than the corresponding percentages for Japan, Canada, Germany, and the Russian Federation—76 percent in the United States compared to a range from 90 to 97 percent. In all but one of the G-8 countries, at least three-quarters of the students had principals who reported that they used assessment results to identify aspects of instruction or the curriculum that could be improved. (The exception was Germany, at 45 percent.) In the United States, the percentage was 92 percent.

On the other hand, the percentage of 15-year-olds with principals who reported using assessment results to group students for instructional purposes ranged from 36 percent in Germany to 72 percent in Canada; in the United States, the percentage was 66 percent.

There was also considerable variation across G-8 countries in principals' reports pertaining to several other assessment purposes. For example, a greater percentage of U.S. 15-year-old students than their peers in all other G-8 countries in 2003 had principals who reported using assessment results to compare their school's performance to district- or national-level performance. This frequency ranged from about 2 out of 10 students in Germany and Japan, 3 out of 10 students in Italy, and 7 out of 10 students in Canada and the Russian Federation to 9 out of 10 students in the United States. Similarly, a greater percentage of U.S. students than their peers in four other G-8 countries had principals who reported using assessment results to compare their school with other schools (80 percent in the United States vs. 53 percent in Canada, 29 percent in Italy, 17 percent in Germany, and 12 percent in Japan). Assessment results were also more likely to be used in the United States than in the same four G-8 countries to monitor schools' progress from year to year (93 percent of students in the United States had principals reporting this compared to a range from 44 to 79 percent).

In the United States, the assessment purpose least frequently cited was making judgments about teachers' effectiveness (55 percent of students had principals reporting this). Compared to the United States, a greater percentage of students in Japan and the Russian Federation (82 and 99 percent, respectively) and a smaller percentage in Canada, Italy, and Germany (31, 23, and 12 percent, respectively) had principals who reported that they used assessment results for this purpose.

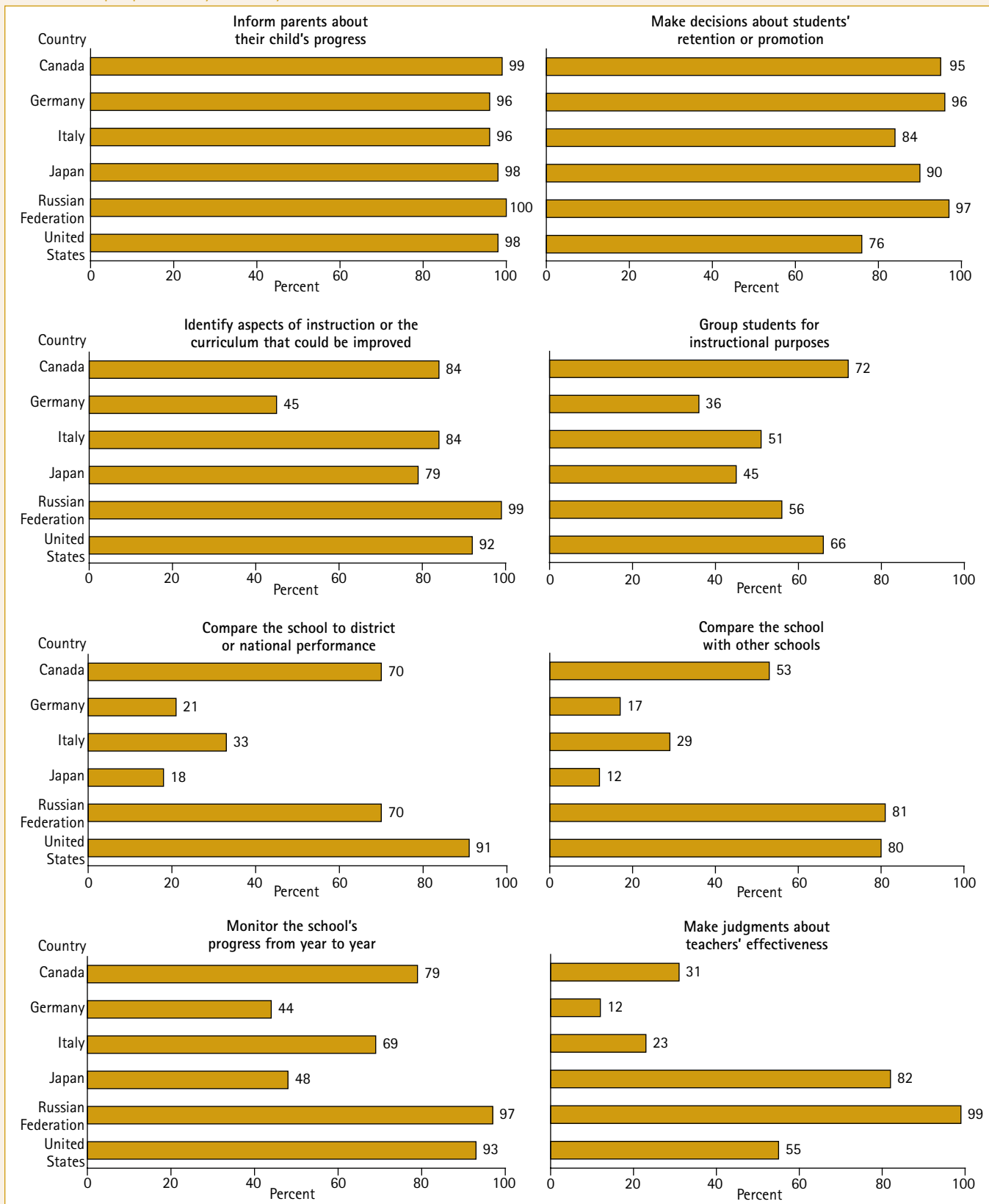
Definitions and Methodology

Data for this indicator are from the PISA 2003 school questionnaire, which was designed to obtain information about a variety of school-related aspects, including school characteristics, the school's resources, the student body, teachers in the school, pedagogical practices of the school, and administrative structures within the school. At all schools with participating 15-year-old students, a

school questionnaire was administered to the principal. The PISA 2003 principals do not constitute representative samples of principals. Rather, they are the principals for nationally representative samples of 15-year-old students. Thus, the school data presented in this indicator were analyzed at the student level.

¹⁴Data for France have been withdrawn at the request of the country and thus are not shown in this indicator. Due to low response rates, data for the United Kingdom are also not shown here.

Figure 14. Percentage of 15-year-old students whose principals reported that they used assessment results for various purposes, by country: 2003



NOTE: For the United States, item response rates across the purposes of assessment are at least 84 percent; for all other countries shown, item response rates are at least 85 percent. Missing data have not been explicitly accounted for in the data. Data for France have been withdrawn at the request of the country and thus are not shown here. Due to low response rates, data for the United Kingdom are not shown.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), 2003.