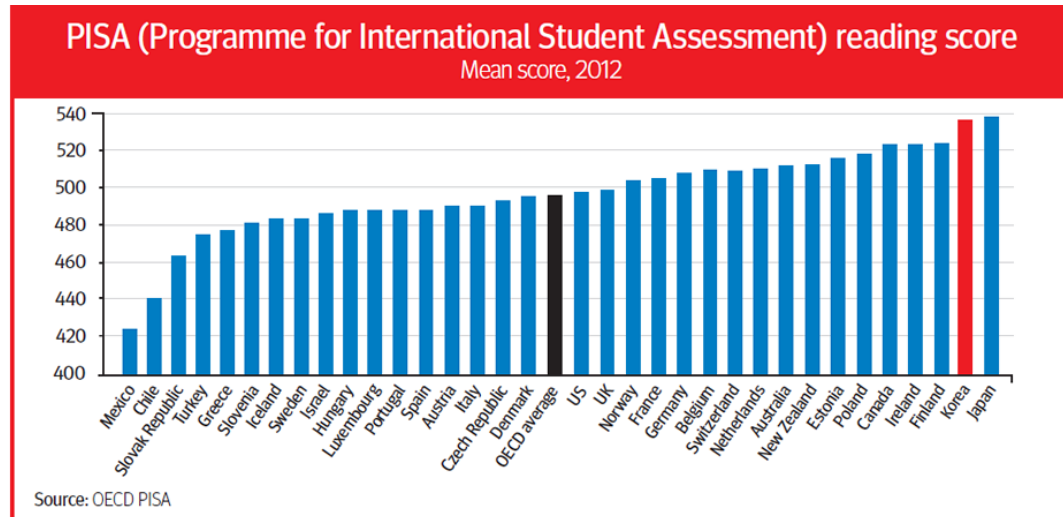


Korea's young students excel

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If there is one area where Korea has jostled to the front of the OECD field in 20 years, it is in education. Take school performance: according to the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a renowned global benchmark which surveys competence among 15-year-olds around the world, Korea's young students perform better at school than most of their peers in other OECD countries. In the last test in 2012, Korea led the OECD field in mathematics, was second to Japan for reading (our chart), and was in the top seven for science. Some 64 countries and economies with comparable data took the tests. In the 2009 tests Korea had also commanded a top spot.

Korea's consistently high rankings reflect excellent performances of students in Asia more widely, with Japan, Shanghai-China, Hong Kong-China and Singapore all performing strongly, which the OECD director for Education and Skills, Andreas Schleicher, puts down to a strong commitment to 21st century learning and investment in teachers, rather than, say, computer use in the classroom, which in technology-savvy Korea, is actually below the OECD average. The main challenge for Korean school education is less a matter of achieving excellence than how to improve well-being among children by reducing study pressure and finding a better work-play balance.

The OECD PISA 2015 survey of some 72 countries will be released in December. Visit www.oecd.org/pisa

References

Avvisati, Francesco (2014), “Digital learning in schools” in OECD Observer No 301, Q4 <http://oe.cd/R1>

For a more complete ranking across mathematics, reading and science, see “Class progress”, in OECD Observer No 297, Q4 2013 <http://oe.cd/1wj>