

Better prospects for indigenous students

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Plutarch once said, “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” The educational prospects of indigenous students in Canada, New Zealand and Queensland, Australia, are getting brighter, a new study of the OECD finds. The share of indigenous pupils graduating from high school increased between 2010 and 2015 in all regions analysed in *Promising Practices in Supporting Success for Indigenous Students*. The largest growth was observed in Canada with an increase of more than 10 percentage points to 53%. However this share has not yet reached that of indigenous pupils graduating in New Zealand and Queensland, Australia (both 68%).

Policies are getting better at supporting the well-being, participation, engagement and achievement in education of indigenous students. Take the example of New Zealand, where the expulsion rate of indigenous students was halved between 2005 and 2015. Expulsion from school is a punishment that can have extreme consequences for pupils, limiting their ability to finish their education. To avoid it, certain schools in New Zealand introduced the indigenous practice of *Te Whakatika*, a process that helps students resolve issues in groups. In Queensland, Australia, the enrolment gap between indigenous and non-indigenous students has nearly closed in the past decade, falling from 29.2% in 2008 to 0.9% in 2016. In this regard, supporting students and schools with academic coaches has been particularly effective.

While there is a strong commitment to improve education outcomes for indigenous peoples in the countries and regions analysed in the book, certain challenges remain, such as the teaching of indigenous languages, which is often missing from high-school curricula. The remoteness of schools is another

problem, as it renders the recruitment of teachers more difficult and raises social issues. The fire is lit but persistent efforts and data collection are needed to keep prospects bright for indigenous students.

OECD (2017), *Promising Practices in Supporting Success for Indigenous Students*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264279421-en>