

## Chapter 5.

### Innovation in practices to develop cross-disciplinary technical skills

*This chapter presents the change in education teaching and learning practices aimed at developing student content and procedural knowledge. It is mainly about searching information and acquiring knowledge in any domain. The change within countries is presented as an increase or decrease in the share of students exposed to the practice. The percentage point change is also expressed as a standardised effect size in the final table.*

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The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

## 22. Reading textbooks and resource materials in science

### Why it matters

Reading science textbooks and materials during lessons (or outside class) is one way of acquiring knowledge about science. In primary education, this strengthens students' reading skills as much their knowledge about science. In secondary education, many other resources should supplement textbooks, but enquiring about scientific phenomena requires some reading as opposed to merely listening to one's teacher.

### Primary education

#### Change at the OECD level: small

In primary education, this practice has spread in most OECD countries, by 7 percentage points on average. The absolute change was 9 percentage points on average, corresponding to an effect size of 0.19. This pedagogical practice is common in many countries, especially in Hungary where 97% of 4th grade students were asked to read textbooks and resource materials in half or more of their science lessons in 2015. By contrast, no more than 20 % of students did so in England.

#### Countries where there has been the most change

Innovation took the form of increases and to a lesser extent reductions in the use of this practice. Students in Norway experienced the largest expansion of this practice between 2007 and 2015 (37 percentage points) whereas the Dutch students experienced the largest decline (9 percentage points).

### Secondary education

#### Change at the OECD level: large

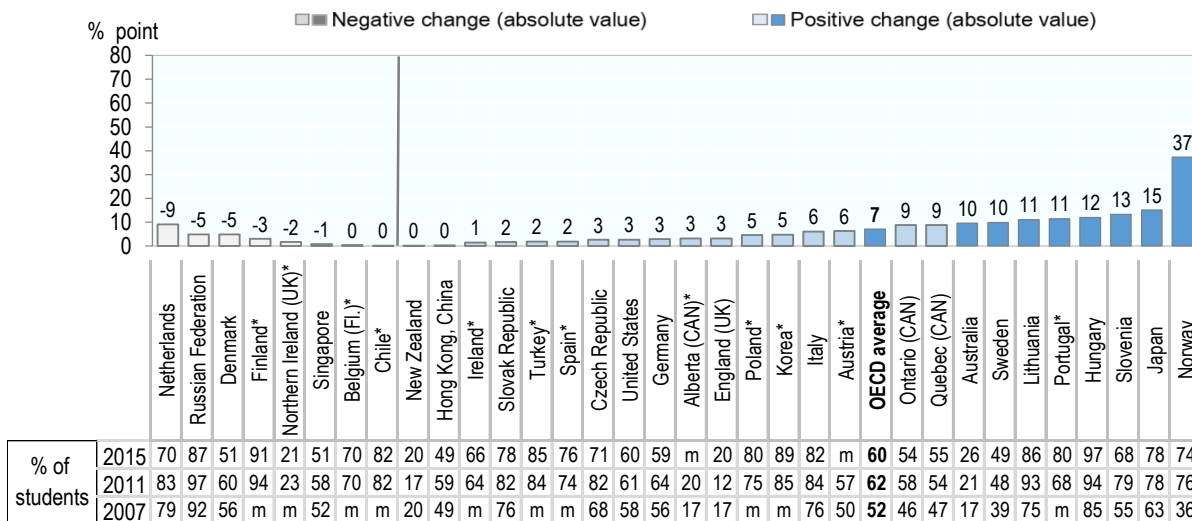
The average share of 8th grade students regularly being asked to read textbooks or resource materials during science lesson went up from 43 % in 2007 to 63% in 2015. This 20-percentage point absolute change between 2007 and 2015 corresponds to a large effect size of 0.41, a high level of innovation. In 2015, 63% of students are exposed to this practice in 8th grade science on average in the OECD area, ranging from 86% of in Hungary to 35% in England.

#### Countries where there has been the most change

Slovenia is by far the country that experienced the largest innovation in this practice: it expanded by 45 percentage points between 2007 and 2015. During the same period, Quebec (Canada), Israel and Korea highly innovated in the same direction with an increase by about 30 percentage points. Chile saw the only contraction in this pedagogical activity (13 percentage points between 2011 and 2015).

**Figure 5.1. 4th grade students reading textbooks and resource materials in science**

Change in and share of students whose teachers ask them to read textbooks or other resource materials in at least half the lessons, 2007-2015, teachers report



Note: Darker tones correspond to statistically significant values.

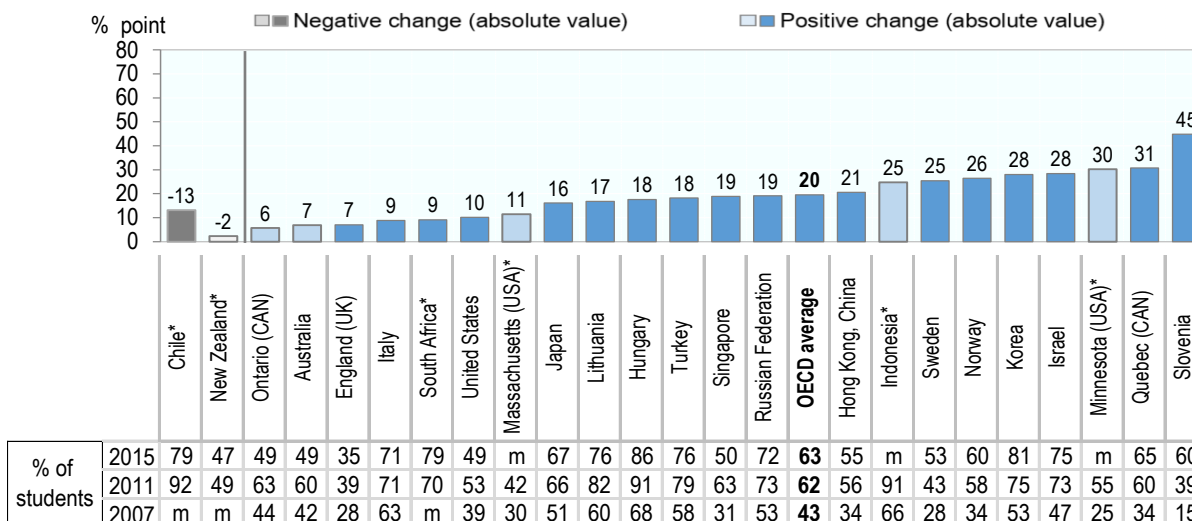
\* refers to calculations based on other years, based on data availability.

The OECD average is based on OECD countries with available data in 2007, 2011 and 2015.

Source: Authors' calculations based on TIMSS Databases.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888933904239>

**Figure 5.2. 8th grade students reading textbooks and resource materials in science**



Note: Darker tones correspond to statistically significant values.

\* refers to calculations based on other years, based on data availability.

The OECD average is based on OECD countries with available data in 2007, 2011 and 2015.

Source: Authors' calculations based on TIMSS Databases.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888933904258>

## 23. Reading non-fiction work

### Why it matters

While adults often associate reading in primary education with fiction, fairy tales and bed stories, young students benefit from reading non-fiction texts to improve their reading and understanding skills, to gain knowledge about different topics, and become aware of the power of reading all kinds of texts to acquire information and knowledge. This is a practice that one would in principle not see decline.

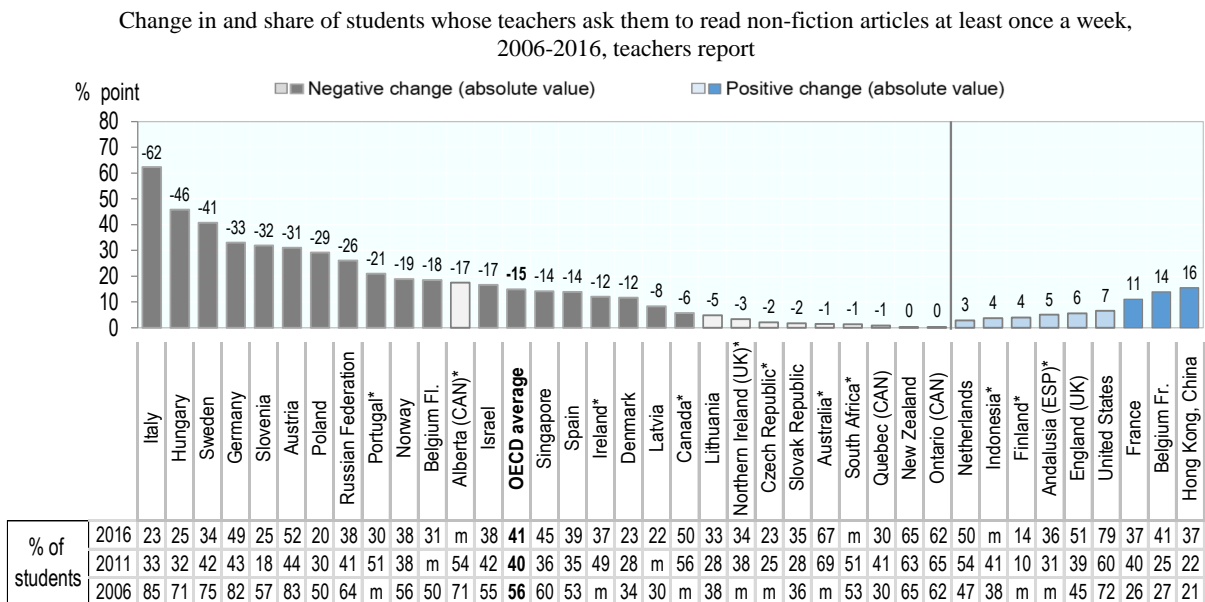
### Change at the OECD level: large

This practice has overwhelmingly declined across OECD countries. Between 2006 and 2016, there was a 15 percentage point decrease in the average proportion of 4th grade students regularly asked to read non-fiction – while the absolute change in both direction amounted to 19 percentage points, corresponding to a large effect size of 0.4. In 2016, 41% of 4th grade students were asked to read non-fiction at least once a week. In the United States, this practice is the most widespread with 79% of students concerned.

### Countries where there has been the most change

Innovation in this domain has taken the form of a significant recession of this practice, most notably in Italy (62 percentage points), Hungary (46 percentage points) and Sweden (41 percentage points). Noticeable expansions occurred in France (11 percentage points), Belgium Fr. (14 percentage points) and Hong Kong, China (16 percentage points).

**Figure 5.3. 4th grade students reading non-fiction work for reading lessons**



Note: Darker tones correspond to statistically significant values.

\* refers to calculations based on other years, based on data availability.

The OECD average is based on OECD countries with available data in 2006, 2011 and 2016.

Source: Authors' calculations based on PIRLS Databases.

StatLink  <https://doi.org/10.1787/888933904277>

## 24. Using computers to look for information in reading

### Why it matters

Computers and other digital screens are often seen as the rivals, if not the enemies, of books and reading. On the other end, books often appear as a self-contained world of words and meanings. Looking up for information and ideas on computers in reading class helps break these two misconceptions, and help students learn to find information about the authors, contexts as well as other ideas and perspectives about what they read and their understanding of it.

### Change at the OECD level: large

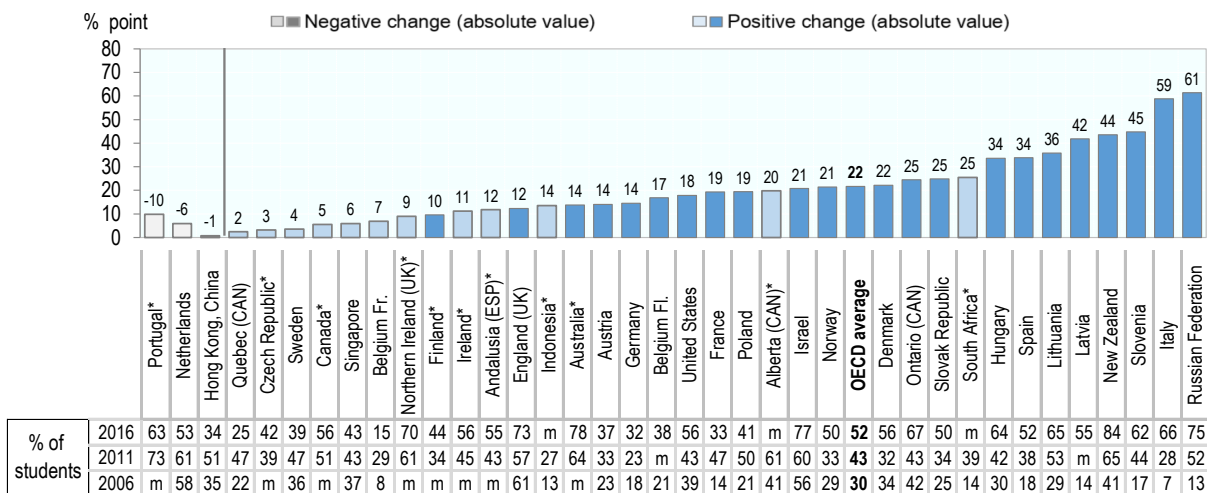
This practice has gained significant ground in OECD countries. Between 2006 and 2016, the share of 4th grade students regularly asked to look for information in reading increased by 22 percentage points on average. The absolute change was 22 percentage points as well, corresponding to a large effect size of 0.48. In 2016, on average, 52% of 4th grade students used computers to look up for information in reading lessons at least once a week, with shares ranging from 84% and 78% in New Zealand and Australia (respectively) to 25% in Quebec (Canada).

### Countries where there has been the most change

Between 2006 and 2016, the Russian Federation and Italy experienced the largest increases in this practice (61 and 59 percentage points respectively). In Latvia, New Zealand and Slovenia, it also expanded by over 40 percentage points.

**Figure 5.4. 4th grade students using computers to look up for information in reading lessons**

Change in and share of students who use computers to look up for ideas and information during lessons at least once a week, 2006-2016, teachers report



Note: Darker tones correspond to statistically significant values.

\* refers to calculations based on other years, based on data availability.

The OECD average is based on OECD countries with available data in 2006, 2011 and 2016.

Source: Authors' calculations based on PIRLS Databases.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888933904372>

## 25. Using computers to look up for ideas and information in mathematics

### Why it matters

Students can easily find some solution to their calculation problems on the Internet – or just their scientific calculator. Making them use their computers to look up for ideas and information during the maths lesson can potentially develop their student agency, and also give them a better grasp of how to use computers to better understand this symbolic world that is often alien to their daily life. A practice to be encouraged.

### Primary education

#### Change at the OECD level: large

Across OECD countries, on average 31% of students used computers to look up for ideas and information during 4th grade mathematics lessons in 2015, against less than 4% in 2007. With an absolute change by 27 percentage points, associated to a very large effect size of 0.8, this is a large innovation and novelty. This practice remains emergent in primary education, touching a range of student going from 66% in Turkey to merely 3% in Japan in 2015.

#### Countries where there has been the most change

The emergence of this pedagogical activity has been a significant innovation in several countries. This is especially the case in New Zealand, with an increase by 50 percentage points between 2007 and 2015, but also in Australia, the Slovak Republic, the Russian Federation and Lithuania with expansions between 49 and 41 percentage points.

### Secondary education

#### Change at the OECD level: large

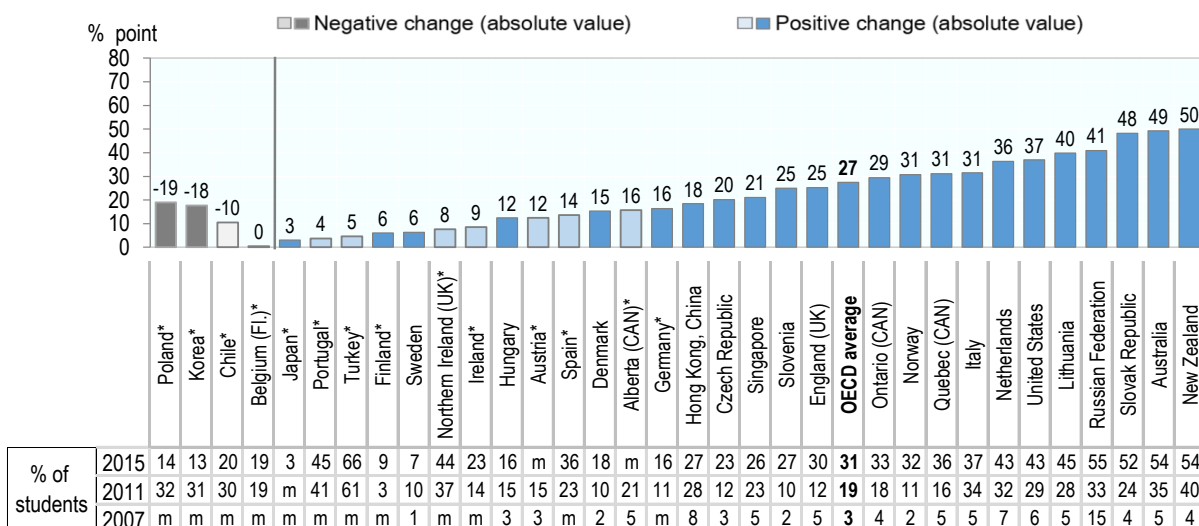
Like in primary education, the share of 8th grade students using computers to look up for ideas and information in mathematics lessons each week increased, this time by 18 percentage points. With an absolute change also equal to 18 percentage points between 2007 and 2015, corresponding to a very large effect size of 0.57, this has been a large innovation. The practice remains relatively uncommon across OECD countries: on average 23% of 8th grade students regularly looked for information in maths in 2015.

#### Countries where there has been the most change

Students in the United States experienced the most innovation in this domain where the practice gained significant ground between 2007 and 2015 (+39 percentage points). The Russian Federation, Australia, Ontario (Canada) and Turkey also strongly innovated by registering increases of over 30 percentage points. The single negative change is recorded in Chile, a decline of 14 percentage points measured between 2011 and 2015.

**Figure 5.5. 4th grade students using computers to look up for ideas and information in maths**

Change in and share of students who use computers to look up for ideas and information during lessons at least once a week, 2007-2015, teachers report

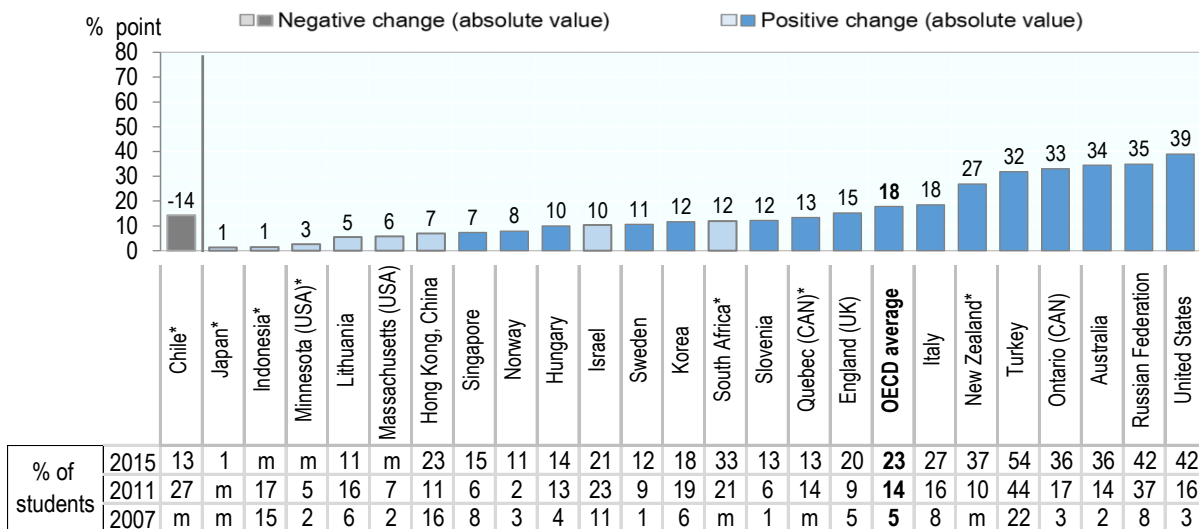


Note: Darker tones correspond to statistically significant values.  
 \* refers to calculations based on other years, based on data availability.  
 The OECD average is based on OECD countries with available data in 2007, 2011 and 2015.  
 Source: Authors' calculations based on TIMSS Databases.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888933904296>

**Figure 5.6. 8th grade students using computers to look up for ideas and information in maths**

Change in and share of students who use computers to look up for ideas and information during lessons at least once a week, 2007-2015, teachers report



Note: Darker tones correspond to statistically significant values.  
 \* refers to calculations based on other years, based on data availability.  
 The OECD average is based on OECD countries with available data in 2007, 2011 and 2015.  
 Source: Authors' calculations based on TIMSS Databases.

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## 26. Using computers to look up for ideas and information in science

### Why it matters

In the past students had encyclopaedias, well, some of them. Some schools as well. Today, they still exist online, but there are so many other ways to look up for ideas and information on the Internet. Using computers during class to enquire about a scientific phenomenon or watch a video is one potential way to get students more interested and more active learners in science. It also helps learn how to find information about science.

### Primary education

#### Change at the OECD level: large

On average, the share of 4th grade students exposed to this pedagogical activity at least once a week increased by 17 percentage points between 2007 and 2015. The absolute change, be it positive or negative, amounted to 18 percentage points, corresponding to a large effect size of 0.42. With an OECD mean at 39% in 2015, we observe large disparities across countries, with the range of students using computers to look up for information and ideas during their science lessons once a week or more going from 91% in Turkey to less than 2% in Japan.

#### Countries where there has been the most change

Large increases above 30 percentage points in the share of science students exposed to this practice are observed in Italy, the Slovak Republic and the Russian Federation. On the contrary, innovation in Hong Kong, China took the form of a contraction of this practice by 19 percentage points.

### Secondary education

#### Change at the OECD level: large

As in primary education, the use of computers to look up for ideas and information in science lessons has gained ground across secondary schools. The average share of 8th grade students regularly participating in this exercise has increased by 21 percentage points between 2007 and 2015 in OECD systems. The absolute change equates the net change in the use of this practice, corresponding to a large effect size of 0.49. At the OECD level, 38% of students are exposed to this practice on average, with a span ranging from 60% in Turkey to 7% in Japan in 2015.

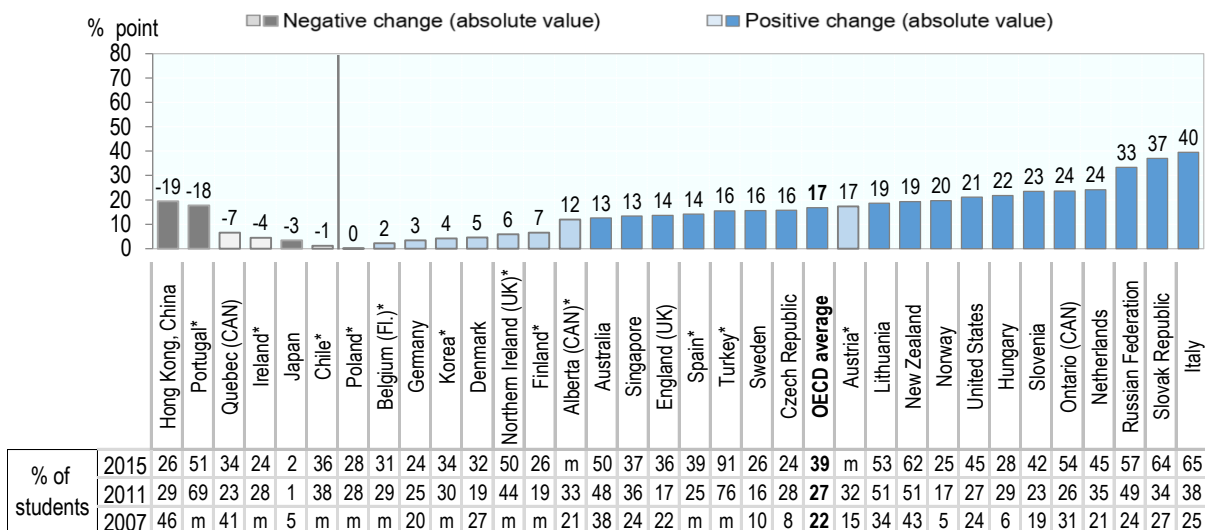
#### Countries where there has been the most change

In Australia, the share of students participating in this science pedagogy on a regular basis increased from 16% in 2007 to almost 60% in 2015. Ontario (Canada) and the Russian Federation also experienced large increases, by over 38 percentage points between 2007 and 2015. Minnesota (United States) and Chile experienced a moderate decline over 11 percentage points between 2011 and 2015.



**Figure 5.7. 4th grade students using computers to look up for ideas and information in science**

Change in and share of students who use computers to look up for ideas and information during lessons at least once a week, 2007-2015, teachers report

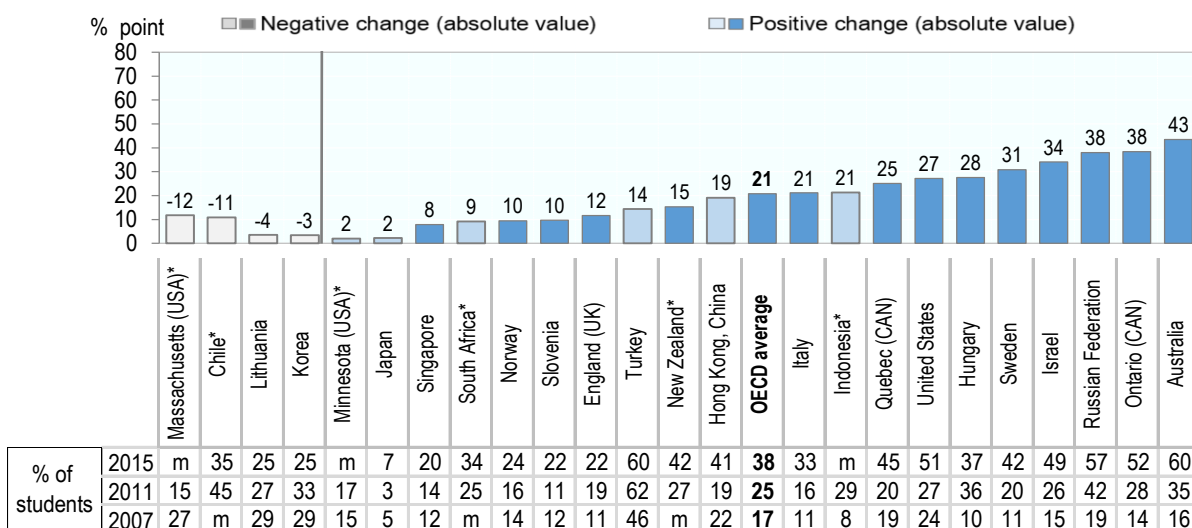


Note: Darker tones correspond to statistically significant values.  
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 The OECD average is based on OECD countries with available data in 2007, 2011 and 2015.  
 Source: Authors' calculations based on TIMSS Databases.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888933904334>

**Figure 5.8. 8th grade students using computers to look up for ideas and information in science**

Change in and share of students who use computers to look up for ideas and information during lessons at least once a week, 2007-2015, teachers report




Note: Darker tones correspond to statistically significant values.  
 \* refers to calculations based on other years, based on data availability.  
 The OECD average is based on OECD countries with available data in 2007, 2011 and 2015.  
 Source: Authors' calculations based on TIMSS Databases.


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**Table 5.1. Effect sizes for changes in practices to develop cross-disciplinary technical skills**

	Reading textbooks and resource materials in science		Reading non-fiction books	Using computers to look up for ideas and information				
	4th grade	8th grade	4th grade	4th grade Maths	8th grade Maths	4th grade Science	8th grade Science	4th grade Reading
Australia	0.23	0.14	-0.03	1.21	1.03	0.25	0.94	0.31
Austria	0.13	m	-0.68	0.47	m	0.42	m	0.31
Belgium (Fl.)	-0.01	m	-0.38	-0.01	m	0.05	m	0.37
Belgium (Fr.)	m	m	0.29	m	m	m	m	0.21
Canada	m	m	-0.12	m	m	m	m	0.11
Canada (Alberta)	0.08	m	-0.36	0.50	m	0.27	m	0.40
Canada (Ontario)	0.18	0.12	-0.01	0.83	0.93	0.48	0.85	0.50
Canada (Quebec)	0.18	0.63	-0.02	0.85	0.75	-0.14	0.55	0.06
Chile	0.00	-0.39	m	-0.24	-0.36	-0.02	-0.22	m
Czech Republic	0.06	m	-0.05	0.66	m	0.44	m	0.07
Denmark	-0.10	m	-0.26	0.56	m	0.10	m	0.45
Finland	-0.11	m	0.12	0.26	m	0.16	m	0.20
France	m	m	0.24	m	m	m	m	0.47
Germany	0.06	m	-0.71	0.83	m	0.08	m	0.34
Hungary	0.45	0.42	-0.95	0.45	0.37	0.61	0.68	0.69
Ireland	0.03	m	-0.24	0.22	m	-0.10	m	0.23
Israel	m	0.59	-0.34	m	0.28	m	0.76	0.44
Italy	0.15	0.19	-1.35	0.84	0.50	0.82	0.52	1.36
Japan	0.33	0.33	m	0.35	0.23	-0.20	0.09	m
Korea	0.14	0.61	m	-0.44	0.37	0.09	-0.08	m
Latvia	m	m	-0.19	m	m	m	m	0.92
Lithuania	0.28	0.36	-0.10	1.00	0.20	0.38	-0.08	0.73
Netherlands	-0.21	m	0.06	0.90	m	0.52	m	-0.12
New Zealand	0.00	-0.05	-0.01	1.25	0.66	0.39	0.32	0.94
Norway	0.77	0.54	-0.38	0.96	0.32	0.59	0.25	0.44
Poland	0.11	m	-0.62	-0.46	m	0.00	m	0.42
Portugal	0.26	m	-0.43	0.07	m	-0.36	m	-0.21
Slovak Republic	0.04	m	-0.04	1.21	m	0.76	m	0.52
Slovenia	0.27	0.97	-0.66	0.83	0.54	0.52	0.26	0.96
Spain	0.04	m	-0.28	0.30	m	0.30	m	0.73
Spain (Andalusia)	m	m	0.11	m	m	m	m	0.24
Sweden	0.20	0.52	-0.84	0.35	0.47	0.41	0.73	0.07
Turkey	0.05	0.39	m	0.10	0.67	0.43	0.29	m
UK (England)	0.08	0.15	0.11	0.72	0.49	0.30	0.32	0.26
UK (Northern Ireland)	-0.04	m	-0.07	0.16	m	0.12	m	0.19
United States	0.05	0.21	0.15	0.93	1.06	0.45	0.57	0.36
US (Massachusetts)	m	0.24	m	m	0.30	m	-0.29	m
US (Minnesota)	m	0.63	m	m	0.14	m	0.06	m
<b>OECD (average)</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>0.39</b>	<b>-0.30</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.55</b>	<b>0.37</b>	<b>0.48</b>	<b>0.44</b>
<b>OECD (av. absolute)</b>	<b>0.20</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>0.40</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.42</b>	<b>0.49</b>	<b>0.48</b>

	Reading textbooks and resource materials in science		Reading non-fiction books	Using computers to look up for ideas and information				
	4th grade	8th grade	4th grade	4th grade Maths	8th grade Maths	4th grade Science	8th grade Science	4th grade Reading
Hong Kong, China	0.01	0.42	0.35	0.50	0.18	-0.41	0.42	-0.02
Indonesia	m	0.62	0.08	m	0.04	m	0.58	0.35
Russian Federation	-0.16	0.40	-0.53	0.90	0.86	0.69	0.81	1.34
Singapore	-0.02	0.39	-0.28	0.62	0.23	0.29	0.22	0.12
South Africa	m	0.21	-0.03	m	0.27	m	0.20	0.59

 Effect size from -0.5 to -0.2 and from 0.2 and 0.5

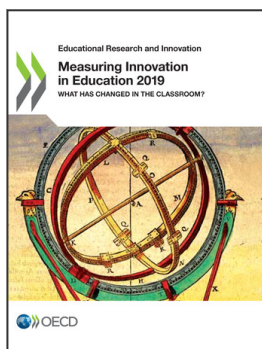
 Effect size from -0.8 to -0.5 and from 0.5 and 0.8

 Effect size equals or less than -0.8 and equals or greater than 0.8

Source: Authors' calculations based on TIMSS (2007, 2011 and 2015) and PIRLS (2006, 2011 and 2016).

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