

MEDIA RELEASE

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READING ENJOYMENT ON THE DECLINE IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS

New report shows worrying new stats for Ontario's kids

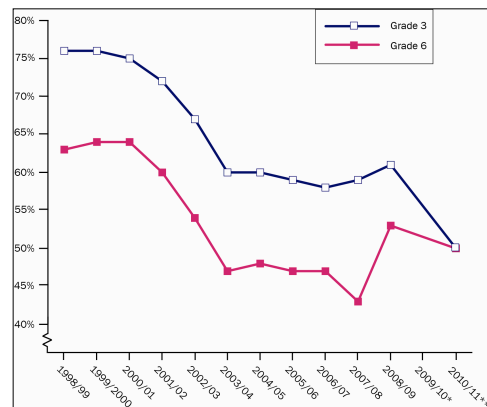
TORONTO (December 12, 2011) – A report released today by People for Education shows the percentage of Ontario students in grade 3 who report they “like to read” dropped from 75% in 1998/99 to 50% in 2010/11. The number of students in grade 6 who “like to read” fell from 65% to 50% in the same time period.

The group examined data from surveys of over 240,000 Ontario grade 3 and 6 students from the province’s [Education Quality and Accountability Office \(EQAQO\)](#) as well as research from the OECD. The research shows that students’ reading enjoyment contributes to their success in all subjects as well as their sense of social and civic engagement.

“Our education system should be focused on building students’ enjoyment of reading, says **Annie Kidder**, Executive Director of [People for Education](#). “Instead, the evidence seems to show we’re stifling it.”

At the release of the report, **Sam Hammond**, President of the [Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario](#) agreed that the findings point to a need for change in Ontario schools. “Every teacher knows that good reading is about more than sounding out words,” says Sam Hammond. “But currently the focus on meeting test score targets may be taking the joy out of reading. When students are really engaged with what they are reading, when they pick up a book or read an article online for fun – then they are ready to learn anything.”

According to **Patsy Aldana**, CEO of Groundwood Books and co-chair of the [National Reading Campaign](#), “If reading scores are going up at the expense of children’s acquiring a love of reading we need to be very concerned. I hope policy makers take this as a wake up call. There is a danger that we have forgotten the important and fundamental role public education has to play in our society—that of creating critical, thinking, empathetic citizens who have all the tools required to tackle the huge challenges that lie ahead. Loving to read is the most important gift we can give our children.”



Percentage of grade 3 & 6 students who report they like to read.

The report also notes that research shows that in elementary schools with teacher-librarians, students are more likely to say that they “like to read.” Despite the evidence, the percentage of elementary schools with teacher-librarians has dropped from 76% in 1998/99 to 56% in 2010/11. The percentage of secondary schools with teacher-librarians has fallen from 78% to 66%.

People for Education is calling on the province to begin using the percentage of students who report they “like to read” as one of the measures of success for Ontario’s education system. “It is not enough to focus only on test scores in reading, writing and math,” says Annie Kidder. “We must begin measuring the factors that contribute to overall success – not just in school, but in adult life.”

The full report is available on People for Education’s website at <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/document/reading-for-joy/>

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