

New Insights into Primary Education in Haiti

Since 2015, IEA (the International Association for the Assessment of Educational Achievement) has been working closely with the Haitian Ministry of National Education (MENFP), the Haitian Institute of Training in Educational Sciences (IHFOSED), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to support education in Haiti by building capacity in their assessment system.

Building on the first findings for the 2017 National Evaluation, this report presents further analysis of the data collected from about 60,000 Haitian fourth-grade students in nearly 2,000 schools. The data were gathered through comprehensive achievement tests in mathematics, French and Creole. Alongside the assessments, extensive contextual information was collected from students, teachers, and school principals through questionnaires.

Main Findings:

The Learning Environment

- Students learning in non-public schools perform significantly better than those in public schools across all subject domains.
- An orderly school environment in Haiti, as in many countries around the world, is strongly associated with higher educational outcomes. Students in schools where the principal reported none or few behavioral problems achieved significantly higher outcomes in all three subjects.
- Fourth-grade students in Haiti are about one year older on average than in many other countries around the world. This is likely related to very high rates of grade repetition in Haiti, where about half of the students reported to have already repeated a grade.
- Grade repetition doesn't seem to be an effective measure for improving learning, especially as *départements* with relatively high achievement have lower repetition rates, and vice-versa. Addressing this issue by focusing on limiting grade repetition and measures to prevent dropouts may be an effective way to mitigate the adverse effects of over-age children in primary school and beyond.
- Homework is an important pillar of student achievement in Haiti. The vast majority of fourth grade students (96%) reported completing their homework and reviewing their lessons at home. The completion of homework was found to be associated with achievement in all subjects.
- On average, students showing positive attitudes towards mathematics score significantly higher in all mathematics contents domains. Engaging instruction also seems to relate to higher achievement. Measures to encourage positive attitudes and engagement, and teaching methods, which enhance such positive cognitive patterns, may be especially effective in Haiti.

School Resources

- The choice of school matters in Haiti more than in many other countries around the globe. Some schools prepare students very well. In these schools, the majority of students were able to solve most questions in the test. In other schools however, most students had trouble to solve any of the questions.

- Overall, about 45% of Haitian fourth grade students reported absenteeism due to lack of materials, and in several *départements*, rates were significantly higher. High rates of shortages of furniture (76%), teaching materials (e.g. textbooks) (79%), teaching supplies (e.g. paper & pencils) (71%), buildings and school grounds (74%), and teaching staff (78%) were reported by principals. Furthermore, poor working conditions were found to be related to lower student achievement in all three subjects.

The Household Context

- The relationship between student social background and academic outcomes varies a lot across *départements*.
- The data show that students living in bilingual households perform better across all three subject domains than students who speak only one language at home.
- The ability of parents to read and write is significantly positively related with achievement. While most children have at least one parent who is able to read and write (90%), only 70% have parents who are both literate, and for about 10% neither their father nor mother can read and write.
- Students who reported the availability of drinking water at home perform far better in school than those who reported having no water availability.

This report was delivered to the Ministry of Education on Tuesday 7th May 2019. The analysis was coordinated by Dr des. Oliver Neuschmidt and Clara Wilsher Beyer (International Study Unit), and Dr Sabine Meinck (Research and Analysis Unit) from IEA, in collaboration with BID and MENPF.

[The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement](#) (IEA) and is an independent, international cooperative of national research institutions and governmental research agencies. It conducts large-scale comparative studies of educational achievement and other aspects of education, with the aim of gaining in-depth understanding of the effects of policies and practices within and across systems of education.

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