Japan’s Education System
Consistent high performance combined with equity and efficiency

Top-Performing Students
According to the 2015 PISA exam results, Japan scored

2nd in science
5th in mathematics

15-year-olds in Japan are more than two years ahead of their U.S. counterparts in mathematics

Equity in Student Performance

49% of disadvantaged Japanese students were ‘resilient’ (scored in the top quartile of PISA 2015 despite their background), the highest share of resilient students among OECD member countries

5.6% of Japanese students were low-performing on PISA 2015 in all three subjects, less than half the OECD average of 13% and the second lowest among OECD member countries

10% Variance in student performance in science explained by student’s socio-economic background on PISA 2015, ninth lowest among OECD member countries

Demographic Data

13 million+ Total students in Japan’s primary and secondary schools, more than twice the students in California (6.2 million), the largest school population in the U.S.

17:1 Student : teacher ratio in Japan’s primary schools, higher than the U.S. ratio of 15:1

2.7% GDP spent on education, third lowest among OECD countries and much lower than the U.S. and OECD average of 3.5%

For more on this international top performer, see CIEB’s profile on Japan’s education system.

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