



PIRLS 2021 ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS

Introduction

Ina V.S. Mullis

In I.V.S. Mullis & M. O. Martin (Eds.), *PIRLS 2021 Assessment Frameworks*.



TIMSS & PIRLS
International Study Center
Lynch School of Education
BOSTON COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

PIRLS 2021—20 Years of Monitoring Trends in International Reading Achievement

Ina V.S. Mullis

IEA's PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) was inaugurated in 2001 as a follow-up to IEA's 1991 Reading Literacy Study. Conducted every five years, PIRLS assesses international trends in the reading comprehension of young students in their fourth year of schooling—an important transition point in children's development as readers. Typically, at this point in their schooling, students have learned how to read and are now reading to learn. PIRLS was designed to complement IEA's TIMSS assessments of mathematics and science at the fourth grade. PIRLS is directed by IEA's TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center at Boston College, working in close cooperation with IEA Amsterdam and IEA Hamburg.

Because developing reading literacy is vital to every student's growth, education, and daily life, IEA (the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) has been conducting regular international assessments of reading achievement and the contexts for learning to read for almost 60 years. IEA is an independent international cooperative of national research institutions and government agencies that pioneered international comparative assessments of educational achievement in the 1960s to gain a deeper understanding of policy effects across countries' different systems of education. Each successive PIRLS assessment has continued in this tradition, consisting of a state-of-the-art reading assessment measuring trends in reading achievement and accompanied by an extensive set of questionnaires for parents or caregivers, schools, teachers, countries, and the students themselves. The questionnaire data about students' contexts for learning to read and educational opportunities provide important information for interpreting the achievement results.

The first two chapters of the PIRLS 2021 Assessment Frameworks contain the PIRLS 2021 Reading Framework and PIRLS 2021 Context Questionnaire Framework, respectively. The reading framework provides guidelines for assessing reading comprehension at the fourth grade according to a matrix of two reading purposes—literary and informational—by four comprehension strategies (retrieval, inferencing, integrating, and evaluation). The context questionnaire framework describes the topics to be covered by the PIRLS 2021 questionnaires. The third chapter describes the

assessment design for PIRLS 2021. Across the past 20 years, linking the PIRLS assessments of reading achievement to the rich array of PIRLS questionnaire data about the contexts in which students learn to read has provided researchers an important source of policy relevant information about how to improve reading education around the world.

History of PIRLS 2021

PIRLS 2021 is the fifth assessment in the current trend series, following PIRLS 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016. The number of countries participating in PIRLS has grown with each assessment. Nearly 70 countries and sub-national benchmarking entities are participating in PIRLS 2021, including many that have participated in previous cycles since 2001. For countries with data since 2001, PIRLS 2021 will provide the fifth in a series of trend achievement measures collected over 20 years.

In 2001, countries that had participated in IEA's reading literacy assessments wanted to work with IEA and Boston College to build a new innovative reading assessment. This included a commitment to extend the information PIRLS collects about student educational contexts for learning to read. Since 2001, PIRLS has included the Learning to Read Survey completed by students' parents or caregivers as central to the questionnaires. There also is a PIRLS Encyclopedia produced as part of each assessment cycle, which contains comparative system-level information across countries and a chapter written by each participating country describing its own reading curriculum and instruction.

Since its creation in 2001, PIRLS has been a collaborative effort among the participating countries and IEA's TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center. All the countries, institutions, and agencies involved in successive PIRLS assessments have worked to improve PIRLS and build the most comprehensive and innovative measure of reading comprehension possible. In 2006, PIRLS was expanded from 8 to 10 passages to enable reporting results by reading comprehension processes in addition to literary and informational purposes.

In 2011, the TIMSS and PIRLS assessment cycles came together, providing a unique opportunity for countries to collect reading, mathematics, and science achievement data on the same fourth grade students. Particular effort was expended on updating the questionnaires and coordinating them across PIRLS and TIMSS. Also, in 2011 IEA broadened the PIRLS assessment coverage to meet the needs of countries in which most children in the fourth grade are still developing fundamental reading skills.

PIRLS 2016 was further increased to 20 passages to include a second assessment option—PIRLS Literacy, a less difficult reading assessment which was equivalent in scope to PIRLS. Also, ePIRLS—an assessment of online reading—was introduced in 2016 as another option. ePIRLS addresses the ever increasing prevalence of online reading. The internet often is the primary way students acquire information and the central source for students to conduct research in their school subjects. ePIRLS uses an engaging simulated internet environment to present fourth grade students with school-like assignments involving science and social studies topics.

PIRLS 2021—digitalPIRLS Transitioning to the Future

Consistent with the drive to innovate with each successive PIRLS cycle, PIRLS 2021 is transitioning from paper-based booklets to a digital environment. About half the countries will deliver PIRLS 2021 via computers, using a streamlined, easy-to-use user interface that allows students to manage reading the passages and answering the questions together in one seamless process. The colorful passages are designed to be engaging, and there are new item types to facilitate computerized scoring.

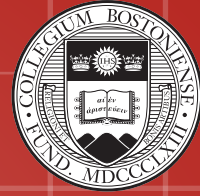
digitalPIRLS 2021 is administered through an eAssessment system that brings efficiency to the operational aspects of PIRLS, including computerized delivery of assessment materials to students (no more printing and distributing booklets). This enables ePIRLS to be integrated with digitalPIRLS so that ePIRLS does not require an additional day of assessment.

digitalPIRLS 2021 also provides some scope to adjust the assessment design. The computerized digitalPIRLS 2021 can integrate the PIRLS passages and the less difficult PIRLS Literacy passages in flexible ways, making it possible to target the difficulty of the PIRLS 2021 assessment to the level of achievement of the student population in the participating countries. By capitalizing on the wide range in difficulty of the passages developed for PIRLS and PIRLS Literacy in 2016 and continuing to expand the difficulty range with the newly developed reading passages, one unified PIRLS 2021 assessment can better measure the range of high, medium, and low reading abilities found in each of the PIRLS participating countries.

Updating the PIRLS Frameworks for PIRLS 2021

Updating the PIRLS frameworks with each assessment cycle provides participating countries with opportunities to introduce fresh ideas and current information about curricula, standards, frameworks, and instruction. This keeps the frameworks educationally relevant, creates coherence from assessment to assessment, and permits the frameworks, instruments, and procedures to evolve gradually into the future.

For PIRLS 2021, the frameworks were updated using information provided through reviews by the National Research Coordinators (NRCs) from the participating countries and the descriptions of curriculum and instruction described in the PIRLS 2021 Encyclopedia. The PIRLS 2021 expert committees, the Reading Development Group (RDG) and the Questionnaire Development Group (QDG), also provided very important ideas and direction. There was an iterative process of the frameworks being reviewed and revised by the NRCs and expert committees prior to publication. IEA's TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center gratefully acknowledges the many important contributions made throughout the process.



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