

Poland

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Introduction

Overview of Education System

The Polish school system consists of preprimary education (*przedszkole*), primary school (Grades 1 to 8), secondary school (Grades 9 to 12/13), and postsecondary nontertiary school.^{1,a} Preprimary education is available for children starting at age 3. Institutions for children ages 0 to 3 are supervised by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy. Parallel to the system of general schools, there is also a system of artistic education in Poland supervised by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. The school system and higher education are managed by the Ministry of Education and Science (until January 2021, the name of this organization was the Ministry of National Education).

The school system combines centralized regulation and decentralized school administration, with important roles assumed by local governments and schools. Parliamentary acts and ministerial ordinances regulate key aspects of the system, such as the general structure of the school system, management and funding, core curricula, timetables, examinations and assessments, admissions, and remuneration rules and career advancement arrangements for teachers. Local governments and school principals have broad autonomy in establishing schools, school administration, hiring teachers, and influencing learning conditions and teacher professional development. Quality assurance responsibilities are divided among the Ministry of Education and Science, Heads of the Regional Education Authorities (*kurator oświaty*), and school principals. Some responsibilities at the school level also are granted to teaching councils (composed of teachers), parent councils, school councils, or student government. The unified system of external examinations, operated by the Central and Regional Examination Boards, also plays an important role in quality assurance, admissions, and certification. Schools are financed mainly by local governments, based on a central government subsidy adjusted for student and school characteristics. Nonpublic institutions are also eligible for public funding.

In the last two decades, the education system has been affected by substantial reforms. Of particular importance are changes to the school starting age and changes to school structure. Until 2009, the school entry age was 7. Starting in September 2009, children could begin primary school

^a See the Eurydice description of education in Poland for more detailed information:
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/poland_en

education at age 6 at the discretion of their parents. At the same time, the age of compulsory participation in one-year preprimary education was lowered from 6 to 5. In September 2014, children born in the first six months of 2008 (half of the cohort) were required to start education in first grade, together with the large majority of children age 7. In the following year, all children commenced compulsory schooling in first grade at age 6. As a result, 6-year-olds constituted about half of all students in the first grade in the 2014–2015 academic year and more than 70 percent in the following academic year. However, when a new government came into power in 2015, this reform was reversed; in September 2016, the starting age for compulsory education was raised from 5 to 6, and the school entry age was raised back to 7. Lower secondary schools were closed down and the previous school structure was reinstated. This change was legislated in 2016 and implemented in 2017. Education in primary schools was extended from six to eight years by integrating two years of the prereform three-year lower secondary schools. As a result, sixth graders continued their education in seventh and eighth grade in primary schools, and lower secondary (Grades 7 to 9) schools were phased out. The last cohort of students to attend lower secondary school finished this phase of schooling in 2019 and are continuing secondary education according to the former curricula. More recent graduates of primary schools move directly to secondary schools (which have been extended by one year) and learn according to new curricula. The reform also aimed at modernizing vocational education by increasing the importance of dual vocational training and the cooperation of schools with employers and other business partners.

At present, primary education is organized as a single-structure, eight-year primary school for students ages 7 to 15. Primary education is compulsory for all children beginning at the age of 7. Secondary education (typically for students ages 15 to 18, 19, or 20) consists of the following types of schools:

- Four-year general secondary schools (general lyceum, *liceum ogólnokształcące*)
- Five-year technical secondary schools (*technikum*)
- Three-year Stage I sectoral vocational schools (*szkoła branżowa I stopnia*)
- Two-year Stage II sectoral vocational schools (*szkoła branżowa II stopnia*)

Postsecondary schools offer programs of up to 2.5 years that lead to vocational qualifications. They are intended mainly for students ages 19 to 20/21 who have completed general upper secondary education and want to obtain vocational education. Higher education programs are offered in public or private institutions in accordance with the three-cycle Bologna degree structure. Programs at all levels are offered as full-time and part-time programs in both public and nonpublic institutions. Higher education is divided further into university (“academic”) and nonuniversity (“professional” or “professionally oriented”) institutions.

The core curriculum defines curricular contents and aims, and knowledge, skills, and competencies that students are expected to acquire by the end of primary education and on which school curricula and textbooks are based. The core curriculum also is used as a framework for

external examinations. PIRLS 2021 students were taught according to the new curriculum, adopted in 2017.² A separate regulation defines outline timetables, which list the minimum weekly number of hours to be allocated to subjects in individual grades.³

The school year begins on the first weekday in September and ends on the first Friday after June 20. The school year is divided into two semesters separated by a winter break. Winter break, which lasts two weeks, is set between mid-January and the end of February, and timing varies between the provinces. Primary school students normally attend school five days a week (Monday through Friday). Each lesson (period/class) typically lasts 45 minutes; however, in Grades 1 to 3, teachers determine the length of each lesson.

Internal skill assessments are conducted by teachers, and external assessments by the Central Examination Board and Regional Examination Boards. Each school adopts its own assessment system based on national legislation. Students are assessed by teachers throughout the school year. Students' learning achievements are assessed by a generalist teacher in Grades 1 to 3 and separately for each subject by subject teachers in Grades 5 to 8. Midyear (semester) and end-of-year marks are based on marks given during a semester or year. Students in Grades 1 to 3 receive one end-of-year descriptive mark for educational activities and one end-of-year mark for behavior. In Grades 4 to 8, teachers typically use a marking scale of 1 to 6 to assess learning achievements (6: excellent, 5: very good, 4: good, 3: satisfactory, 2: acceptable, 1: unsatisfactory). The school statute may allow descriptive assessment to be used instead in fourth grade. There is a separate mark for behavior (conduct) according to the following scale: excellent, very good, good, acceptable, unacceptable, and inadmissible. Promotion is automatic in Grades 1 to 3. A student may repeat a year only in exceptional cases justified by the student's level of development, achievements, or health. In Grades 4 to 8, students must receive a positive mark for each compulsory subject or class at the end of the school year to be promoted to the next grade. A student who has received up to two unsatisfactory marks may resit for an examination. In principle, a student who fails this additional attempt is not promoted to the next grade. However, the school teaching council may promote a student who has received an unsatisfactory mark in only one subject conditionally.

External examinations are carried out by the Central and Regional Examination Boards.^b Before the change of school structure, all students took a compulsory external assessment at the end of primary education (after sixth grade). In the new system, the structure of school education requires all students in eighth grade to take a compulsory examination. This examination assesses the extent to which students meet the requirements set out in the national core curriculum. The examination covers Polish, mathematics, and foreign language. Beginning in 2021, there were plans to include an additional subject of the student's choosing: biology, chemistry, physics, geography, or history. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, implementation of this change was

^b See the Central Examination Board website for more details on the examination system: <https://cke.gov.pl/en>

postponed and it will likely be introduced in 2024. Results of the examination are used, together with school marks and other achievements, in the recruitment process to secondary schools.

Graduates can take the matriculation examination (*egzamin maturalny*) at the end of upper secondary education. This examination certifies the achievement of knowledge and skills defined in the core curriculum and enables entrance to higher education. Higher education institutions use the results of the matriculation examination in a given subject or subjects as criteria in the admission process. Examinations have both written and oral parts. The compulsory examinations are Polish, mathematics, a foreign language, and a selected additional subject. Students in vocational tracks can take vocational examinations (officially termed “examinations confirming vocational qualifications”) intended to evaluate the candidate’s attainment of the required knowledge and skills covered by a single qualification related to a given occupation. Adults also can sit for extramural examinations for different levels of education.

Use and Impact of PIRLS

PIRLS 2011 and PIRLS 2016 national reports were published, and national events were organized to disseminate the results. Because of the lack of other representative data on students’ performance in Grades 3 and 4, PIRLS data are an important resource for monitoring the quality of education in Poland.

PIRLS 2011 and PIRLS 2016 assessments increased awareness about the strengths and weaknesses of reading education in primary schools. The results of PIRLS home and student questionnaires also were used in discussions on the issues of school belonging, bullying, socioeconomic disadvantage, and homework activities.

The Language/Reading Curriculum in Primary Grades

The scope of school education is determined by two elements: the national core curriculum and outline timetables. The core curriculum establishes curricular contents for education. It provides a list of teaching and learning aims, knowledge, and competencies that students should acquire at a given education level. The outline timetable specifies the weekly number of hours per class for students at each grade level in a given type of school, with particular focus on compulsory general education classes. In the postreform school system, eight-year primary, single-structure education is based on the new core curriculum laid down by the Ministry ordinance.⁴

The core curriculum aims to set out general and specific requirements (learning outcomes) that determine students’ range of knowledge and skills. The knowledge and skills that students acquire are assessed objectively by examination boards conducting so-called external examinations (the eighth grade examination at the end of primary school, based on the legislation currently in force).

All schools are required to follow the national core curriculum. It divides the eight grades of primary school into two periods. In the first period (Grades 1 to 3), a single teacher teaches all content in an integrated form and evaluates students' progress descriptively. In the second period (Grades 4 to 8), the curriculum is divided into subjects taught by different teachers who mark students' performance. Students take external examinations at the end of eighth grade.

The national curriculum defines the objectives of education, teaching content, and expected achievement for each period of primary school. Teaching programs and methods of instruction are left up to teachers to develop themselves or, more frequently, purchase from a commercial publisher along with students' textbooks. Therefore, there is no common teaching program for fourth grade.

The preamble to the core curriculum states that the purpose of teaching and learning in primary school is to introduce students to the world of literature, to strengthen their interest in reading, and to develop reading competencies required for critical reception of literary works and other texts of culture. The school acts to reinstate excitement in reading and promote reading among students.

The aim of Polish language education at the first education level (Grades 1 to 3) is the process of learning the spoken and written language to make sense of the world, including social and environmental issues and the regional and national culture. The most important value of Polish language education includes the communicative use of the mother tongue by children in speaking and writing combined with reading comprehension that allows for the child's fluid learning of the language at this and subsequent education levels.

Reading, in accordance with the guidelines in the curriculum, should be introduced by the teacher's daily reading of excerpts from a required reading list and conversations about them to establish the habit of reading and extend the scope of the students' reading comprehension. The core curriculum recognizes reading as the ability to comprehend, use, and reflexively process texts, including cultural texts, and it constitutes one of the most important skills acquired by a student in the learning process. Instruction emphasizes sparking the student's interest in reading and ensuring contact with books.

The skills related to reading and text comprehension at the second education level (Grades 4 to 8) mainly are introduced in Polish language instruction. Using the mother tongue allows students to absorb knowledge from other areas (subjects), and it is the basis of efficient functioning in adult life. There is no division into specific skills and content is not assigned to specific grades.

The aims of education (general requirements) and the contents of education (detailed requirements) in Polish language instruction were formulated for four dimensions—literary and cultural education, language education, formulating expressions, and self-learning—and their implementation in Grades 4 to 8 of primary school requires integration, aiming to have students purposefully and consciously use the Polish language.

At the second education level, students have more advanced requirements for reading. Skills that are developed include fluency in reading, differentiating characters and events, noticing relationships, assessment of elements of texts, and interpretation. A student also should be able to carry out operations on text (e.g., paraphrasing, summarizing, finding information, comparing information, rewriting, making a list of events) and do creative writing.

The required reading list for students in Grades 4 to 8 of primary school consists of obligatory and supplementary items (selected by the teacher), while its core consists of selected Polish and international classics, as well as literature for children and youth.

Professional Development Requirements and Programs

In-service teacher professional development programs are not mandatory. However, pursuant to legislation, teachers should expand their knowledge and skills continually, and career advancement includes an assessment of each teacher's professional achievements based on an agreed-upon professional development plan. Teachers have ample opportunities for professional development. Universities offer postgraduate courses for teachers seeking to teach additional subjects, and every province has a public in-service education center. Commercial education firms also offer shorter or longer courses. Although teachers are not obligated, attendance in many kinds of professional development courses counts toward promotion. Teachers are required to participate in workshops at school devoted to issues such as formative assessment, personal development, cooperation with parents, and first aid.

Monitoring Student Progress in Reading

The performance and progress of students are assessed regularly by teachers throughout the school year. Students are assessed in each subject by their subject teachers. Teachers collect information on student achievement in a form based on the assessment system adopted in a given school. Cumulative assessment results from the entire school year are considered in the end-of-term (midyear) and end-of-year assessments. In Grades 1 to 3, these summative assessments are descriptive in nature and address students' academic and social achievements as well as their strengths and weaknesses. Polish law does not permit the use of conventional grades.

Starting in fourth grade, teachers assess student achievement based on a grading scale of 1 to 6. School grades and assessment criteria should be made available to students and their parents. Students take their first external examination in the final grade of primary school (eighth grade, and modal age 15) and in general and technical education; their second examination (Matura) is taken at the end of secondary school (twelfth grade, age 19).

The Matura examination assesses the extent to which students fulfill the requirements set for each subject in the national core curriculum. It has replaced entrance examinations at higher education institutions where results of the Matura examination are the key admission criteria. The

oral part includes compulsory examinations in the Polish language and a modern foreign language (and a national minority language for students in schools and classes where a given national minority language is the language of instruction). The level of the oral examination (basic or extended) is not predefined. The written part consists of compulsory examinations at the basic level in the Polish language, mathematics, and a modern foreign language (and a national minority language for students in schools and classes where a given national minority language is the language of instruction). Students should choose at least one additional subject (and may choose up to six subjects) for an examination at the extended level. These subjects include biology, chemistry, philosophy, physics, geography, history, history of music, history of art, information technology, Latin and ancient culture, a minority language (ethnic or national), a modern foreign language, Polish language, regional language, mathematics, and knowledge about society.

Special Reading Initiatives

The National Reading campaign, an initiative established in 2012, involves public readings of outstanding works of Polish literature. The annual event is organized by various groups, including social organizations and local governments, as well as schools, libraries, and theaters. Its goal is to popularize the wealth of the Polish literary tradition, promote reading, and strengthen national identity. The president of Poland typically opens the event and books are read by the presidential couple, politicians, actors, and celebrities.

Another initiative to promote reading is the national campaign by the foundation ABCXXI—All of Poland Reads to Kids. Among other activities, it encourages parents to read aloud to their children for at least 20 minutes every day.

Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Teaching and Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In the beginning of March 2020, the first cases of COVID-19 were identified in Poland. On March 12, all education activities in Kindergartens, schools, and tertiary educational institutions were suspended. The decision was communicated on March 11 and schools were initially closed for two weeks. Regulations for online teaching and assessment were announced on March 20 and online education officially started on March 25. At the same time, employed parents of children up to 8 years old could receive a special care allowance (80 percent of the allowance) in case of closure of a nursery, Kindergarten, or school.

On May 6, Kindergartens resumed their work at partial capacity. For safety reasons, organizational and hygienic guidelines were introduced, which, along with other conditions, limited the number of children per group. Parents involved in combatting the pandemic and parents without opportunity to combine work and childcare had preference in sending their

children to Kindergartens. Schools continued distance learning until the end of the school year. Starting on May 25, schools provided care and some form of activity only for students in Grades 1 to 3 of primary school; individual consultations with teachers also were available starting on June 1. However, standard education took place in distance form. Distance learning lasted until the end of the 2019–2020 academic year, which was June 26.⁵

The 2020–2021 academic year started on September 1 with traditional in-class learning. However, due to increasing COVID-19 cases, on October 24, 2020, schools were closed for students in Grades 4 to 8 of primary school and for all students in secondary school. All of these students came back to schools on May 17, 2021 (until May 30 in hybrid form). In-person classes for these students started on May 31, 2021, and continued until the end of the school year on June 25, 2021. The youngest students in Grades 1 to 3 of primary schools also started the 2020–2021 academic year in person, but began online learning on November 9. They returned to in-person learning on January 18 until February 28, 2021. Between March 1 and May 2, these students had hybrid classes with different strategies adopted in different localities due to a number of coronavirus cases noted. In-person classes for all younger students (Grades 1 to 3) started on May 3, 2021, and continued until the end of the school year on June 25, 2021.⁶

Schools reopened in May 2021 after a long period of lockdown. The decision to reopen schools at the end of the school year caused heated public debate. Most experts and commentators were in favor of this decision. However, some parents thought that it did not make much sense for students to return to schools for such a short period of time and that returning to schools caused additional stress for children. The authorities suggested focusing on children’s well-being and developing students’ collaboration more than on educational achievement and advocated that teachers should refrain from testing students’ knowledge.

When schools closed in March 2020, teachers in Poland were required to deliver lessons online. Many different modes of teaching were used depending on the education level taught, with variability across regions. At the beginning of the lockdown period, many teachers sent students materials or links and asked students to work alone at home on the given material. In some schools, parents picked up printed materials for their children to work on at home. There were also some schools that started online classes in real time from the beginning of the lockdown. Later on, some trainings on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) use in education and the use of learning platforms and software were organized for teachers. Gradually, more and more teachers started conducting live lessons in real time using online platforms.

Lack of preparation for online education could be observed in two areas: technical resources (infrastructure, hardware, applications) and familiarity of individuals with digital resources. Some families, in particular disadvantaged ones, lacked IT equipment needed for distance learning. Another problem faced families with more children who needed to share computers with parents—who often worked from home as well. Parents and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) very quickly started collecting computers, laptops, iPads, and other IT equipment and

distributed them to those in need. Those efforts made it possible to ensure access to classes for more children. Huge effort was observed among companies and local authorities to donate some equipment to schools. In April and May, the Ministry of National Education and the Digital Poland Project Centre launched two grant programs offering local governments funding to buy equipment for students and teachers for distance learning—computers, laptops, or tablets, as well as software, broadband or mobile internet access, or other accessories needed for distance learning. Around 85 million euros were allocated to those initiatives. However, it is not yet possible to evaluate the impacts of those programs. The need to assist children in learning at home resulted in parents learning or mastering ICT skills. They had to learn how to use learning apps and learning websites, web conferencing software, and collaboration tools.

In autumn 2020, the government decided to offer an extra subsidy to teachers to buy necessary equipment. Each teacher could get 500 Polish zloty (about \$126). The Ministry of National Education provided special platforms^c with materials that could be used by teachers during distance learning. Materials shared on the platforms were developed in previous years within various projects funded nationally and by the European Social Fund or shared by different institutions, publishers, and organizations free of charge after fulfilling the requirements of the Ministry of National Education. Materials include e-textbooks and e-materials for most general education subjects, additional teaching resources for some subjects, educational films, audiobooks, and sample lesson scenarios, as well as tools for e-learning activities and to help teachers develop their own materials. There are over 6,800 interactive e-materials, over 3,200 lesson plans, and 105 syllabi available through these platforms. Furthermore, public television and radio broadcast special educational programs for students in different grades at the direction of the Ministry of National Education. Over 1,600 lessons were prepared, and 191 teachers took part in this project. The Ministry also recommended the use of a platform^d that gathers versions of textbooks for Grades 1 to 3 of primary school adapted to the needs of students with disabilities or who have difficulties in learning and/or communication, including students who are deaf or hard of hearing or who have intellectual disabilities, autism, and aphasia.

The Ministry also sought to provide free or very low-cost internet connections for schools. Help was offered by the biggest internet providers in the country. The use of e-registers was either introduced or improved in schools.

The Ministry of National Education published several guidebooks supporting school principals and teachers. They focus primarily on forms and methods of distance teaching and provide guidelines for different groups as well as links to different recommended e-tools and e-materials, including the following:

^c For example, see www.epodreczniki.pl

^d For more information, see www.adaptacje.ore.edu.pl

1. Distance learning⁷
2. A brochure for school principals and teachers on Ministry activities for digital education⁸
3. Personal data protection regulations during distance teaching—a guide of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) institution for schools⁹
4. Materials for psychological support¹⁰

Shifting to distance learning was not easy for Polish schools and parents, in particular for vulnerable groups. One issue was lack of necessary IT equipment. A second problem was related to housing, which sometimes did not provide sufficient space for students to have a quiet place to participate in online classes. Thirdly, teachers had difficulties encouraging the active participation of students in classes. Especially for younger children, distance learning required huge support from parents with parental opportunities and skills varying across socioeconomic categories. Migrant parents struggled even more. Many efforts to assist were undertaken by NGOs. Additionally, teachers and multicultural assistants working in some of the schools had a very important role helping families learn how to deal with distance education, translating and adapting materials, and even providing psychological support.

Another problem was students dropping out of education for certain amounts of time. Not all teachers/schools were able to reach, motivate, and engage all students in distance learning during the pandemic. There was no contact at all from a number of students. There are no detailed data available on the scale of this problem.

Impact of the Pandemic on Student Learning

There have been a few research studies and reports on the pandemic and its consequences for students and the school system published in Poland. Most reports focused on online learning and the way it was organized. Attention was also paid to students' and parents' perceptions of online classes and students' well-being.

In June 2020, the Faculty of Education at the University of Warsaw published a report on online learning during the pandemic. It was based on an online research study conducted among teachers and parents. The most important conclusion from the report is that teachers managed to enter the digital world quite quickly and appreciated the potential of online teaching. However, they felt they were not really well prepared for distance teaching and felt they did not get enough support from schools and the system of education. Students did not have many technical problems and thought distance learning should continue as a part of school practice when the pandemic is over. However, they would need two things: attractive learning materials and the possibility to talk to peers.¹¹

Another report was prepared by foundations working to assess the impact of online learning for students, teachers, and parents. Nearly 60 percent of parents perceived preparation of teachers and schools during remote learning as good or very good. Forty-five percent of Polish teachers claimed that they were not very well prepared for running online classes. Usually teachers used

“lecturing” methods like showing presentations or films. They used active methods like quizzes and groupwork less frequently. Nearly half of the students asked decided that online lessons were less attractive than before the pandemic.¹²

A research team from the University of Lublin focused on students’ well-being in digital school.¹³ Another report referred to ICT skills and access to modern technologies in connection with distance learning.¹⁴ More research studies and reports prepared in Poland on the topic of the pandemic and online learning were rather general. None of them focused directly on fourth grade students and learning/teaching of reading.

Policy and Practice Changes

Due to the pandemic, the Ministry of National Education made a few decisions regarding external examinations and implementation of core curriculum content into school practice. Some requirements for students were abandoned or lowered. These decisions influenced students’ motivation and attitude toward learning, especially in higher grades of primary school and in secondary school.

Changes in the external examinations were introduced in 2020. The examination in eighth grade of primary school was postponed from April to June, the Matura examination was postponed from May to June, and the oral part of the Matura examination was canceled. Some vocational examinations also were postponed until August. Additional regulations and measures were implemented regarding specific situations in which students in vocational education and training (VET) schools and apprentices were not able to complete required practical training.

In 2021, examinations took place on their originally planned dates. They were administered in strict sanitary conditions. Again, the oral part of the Matura examination was canceled and only written examinations were held. The requirements for the eighth grade examination and the Matura examination were lowered. The ordinance of the Ministry of Education from December 2020 defined which content from the core curriculum was abandoned in the examinations.

The change from offline to online learning had a negative impact on children who have difficulties in adapting to a new learning environment. The switch also emphasized existing education inequalities. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds especially were likely to fall behind in learning during lockdown. Some of these students had problems with access to digital resources (e.g., laptop/computer, broadband internet connection). Some students did not have a suitable home learning environment (e.g., a quiet place to study or their own desk). In addition, students from disadvantaged backgrounds may not have received much support from their parents, especially if parents had to go out to work during the lockdown period. In more affluent families, parents were more likely to be able to work from home and help their children with online learning.¹⁵

Remote learning also affected students’ emotional well-being and motivation. Some students had a stressful home environment (e.g., they had to share a small space and a limited number of

digital devices with other family members). Furthermore, parents may have been under pressure because of financial and job security issues due to the COVID-19 crisis and may not have been in the best position to support their children under these circumstances. Also, the school environment influences achievement through peer effects. Being in a classroom and interacting with classmates may result in better school performance. Students often teach and motivate each other. Additionally, being at school helps students acquire social skills that influence their personal and professional growth. It also improves students' ability to work in groups and collaborate together. It seems that the pandemic had more of an impact on younger students, those in primary education and in lower grades of primary school (PIRLS students included), and they might have been affected most in terms of emotional and psychological well-being.

Impact of the Pandemic on PIRLS 2021

The pandemic had an impact on both the field test and the main study of PIRLS in Poland. Fortunately, the field test was partially conducted. Schools were first closed during the field test's operating window. The planned field test sample consisted of 30 schools. The field test was administered in 19 schools and 43 classes between March 2 and March 11, 2020 (the testing window originally was planned to last until March 20). On March 12, 2020, all schools were closed and it was not possible to continue the field test. COVID-19 also impacted the scoring of constructed response items. The number of coders was limited and all procedures were conducted in sanitary conditions.

The main study testing window was scheduled to occur between April 19 and May 30, 2021. Unfortunately, schools were still closed at that point. They had been closed on October 24, 2020, and opened on May 17, 2021, for fourth grade students. Thus, the test administration had to be postponed. It started on May 10 (students were allowed to go to school for tests, examinations, and special events in some regions) and finished on June 18. Additionally, all test administrators were trained on the sanitary measures undertaken at schools and the study took place in sanitary conditions. No COVID-19 cases were noted among test administrators or other staff involved in administering the study. Making appointments at schools was more difficult than in previous cycles due to the quarantine time imposed on some school coordinators, teachers, or students. The national center went to great lengths to arrange for all the schools to participate in the data collection. Fortunately, response rates turned out very well given the circumstances. Again, scoring constructed response items took longer than in previous cycles. What is worth emphasizing is that schools in Poland were closed for nearly the whole school year (between October and May). The whole year of online study for 10-year-olds likely had an impact on the students' learning and well-being.

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