

Overview of PIRLS 2006 Results

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Presentation of PIRLS 2006 International Results

Good morning. We are pleased to release the results of PIRLS 2006, which is IEA's international assessment of students' reading achievement at the fourth grade. Forty countries participated in PIRLS 2006, including 26 countries that participated also in PIRLS 2001 and have trend data.

Achievement Results

- The Russian Federation, Hong Kong SAR, and Singapore were the three top-performing countries in PIRLS 2006. Luxembourg, Italy, Hungary, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium (Flemish), Bulgaria, and Denmark also had higher achievement than the majority of other participants. In addition, three Canadian provinces—Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario—were among the highest achieving participants (Exhibit 1).
- PIRLS demonstrates that countries can make progress in improving children's academic achievement. Most of the highest-achieving countries in 2006 showed significant improvement since 2001, including the three top-performing countries. The five other countries with significant gains in achievement were Singapore, Slovenia, the Slovak Republic, Italy, Germany, and Hungary (Exhibit 2).
- In the majority of countries, relatively few students (7% or less) reached the Advanced International Benchmark, while nearly one fifth did so in Singapore and the Russian Federation. Students reading at this level could provide and support interpretations, integrate information across texts, and understand literary and organizational features.
- In PIRLS 2001, and again in PIRLS 2006, girls had higher reading achievement than boys in all countries (509 vs. 492, on average). The difference was substantial in many countries, raising concern about the educational prospects of so many low-achieving boys during their adolescent years and beyond.
- Countries with the highest achievement also tended to have the highest achievement in literary and informational reading, the two major purposes addressed by PIRLS. However, most countries had relatively higher achievement in one purpose than the other.

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Impact of the Home

- PIRLS 2006 reinforces on a worldwide basis the well-established finding that children from homes fostering literacy become better readers. Students had higher reading achievement when they were from homes where their parents enjoyed reading and read frequently, books were in abundance, and students were engaged in literacy activities—from alphabet blocks to word games—from an early age.
- Internationally, there was a positive relationship between fourth grade students' reading achievement and the amount of time spent in preprimary education. According to parents' reports, about four fifths of students internationally had attended more than one year of preprimary education.
- In both PIRLS 2001 and PIRLS 2006, parents' assessments of their children's early literacy skills were in alignment with how well their children could read at the fourth grade. According to parents, about one third of children, on average, entered school with basic literacy skills, which represented an increase in 17 countries since PIRLS 2001.

Students' Attitudes

- Only about half the students across the PIRLS 2006 countries agreed that they enjoyed reading and appreciated books, reflecting a troubling downward trend since 2001. Moreover, fewer students in PIRLS 2006 reported reading for fun. Almost one third hardly ever read for fun (twice monthly at most).

Reading Instruction

- Primary schools around the world place considerable emphasis on teaching reading. Almost three fourths of students attended schools that placed more emphasis on reading than on other school subjects. Many schools had initiatives to encourage students to read, and half had programs to help teachers improve reading instruction.
- Both principals and teachers reported that textbooks were the foundation of reading instruction. In general, more students were asked to read literary than informational texts on a weekly basis.
- Both teachers and students agreed that independent silent reading was a frequent classroom activity. Most often, students were asked to answer questions about what they had read, either orally or via worksheets.
- Internationally, most fourth grade students (89%) attended schools with libraries, and had classroom libraries (69%). Nearly two thirds had access to computers in school and more than half were in schools with Internet access. Since PIRLS 2001, there was a substantial increase in the percentage of students having access to computers and the Internet in school.

School Environment

- The reading achievement of students in schools with few disadvantaged students was much higher than for students with a high percentage (more than 50%) of disadvantaged classmates. On average, 18 percent of students were in schools with a high percentage of disadvantaged students.
- There was a positive relationship between school safety and reading achievement. Fortunately, most students felt safe in their schools and reported minimal, if any, incidents of stealing, bullying, and injury. Principals generally were in agreement that school safety was a minor problem, at most.
- The majority of teachers (64%) had a positive view of their teaching career. Interestingly, there was a correspondence with parents' views, with 60 percent of the students having parents who reported a good deal of satisfaction with their child's school.

Countries	Average Scale Score	Exhibit 1	PIRLS 2006 4th Grade
Russian Federation	565	Reading Achievement at the 4th Grade	
Hong Kong SAR	564		
Canada, Alberta	560		
Singapore	558		
Canada, British Columbia	558		
Luxembourg	557		
Canada, Ontario	555		
Italy	551		
Hungary	551		
Sweden	549		
Germany	548		
Netherlands	547		
Belgium (Flemish)	547		
Bulgaria	547		
Denmark	546		
Canada, Nova Scotia	542		
Latvia	541		
United States	540		
England	539		
Austria	538		
Lithuania	537		
Chinese Taipei	535		
Canada, Quebec	533		
New Zealand	532		
Slovak Republic	531		
Scotland	527		
France	522		
Slovenia	522		
Poland	519		
Spain	513		
Israel	512		
Iceland	511		
PIRLS Scale Average	500		
Moldova, Rep. of	500		
Belgium (French)	500		
Norway	498		
Romania	489		
Georgia	471		
Macedonia, Rep. of	442		
Trinidad and Tobago	436		
Iran, Islamic Rep. of	421		
Indonesia	405		
Qatar	353		
Kuwait	330		
Morocco	323		
South Africa	302		



Exhibit 2

PIRLS 2006
4th Grade

Trends in Reading Achievement at the 4th Grade

Countries	PIRLS 2006 Average Scale Score	PIRLS 2001 Average Scale Score	Difference Between 2001 and 2006 Scores
Russian Federation	565	528	37
Hong Kong SAR	564	528	36
Singapore	558	528	30
Slovenia	522	502	20
Slovak Republic	531	518	13
Italy	551	541	11
Germany	548	539	9
Moldova, Rep. of	500	492	8
Hungary	551	543	8
Iran, Islamic Rep. of	421	414	7
Canada, Ontario	554	548	6
Israel	512	509	4
New Zealand	532	529	3
Macedonia, Rep. of	442	442	1
Scotland	527	528	-1
Norway	498	499	-1
Iceland	511	512	-2
United States	540	542	-2
Bulgaria	547	550	-3
France	522	525	-4
Latvia	541	545	-4
Canada, Quebec	533	537	-4
Lithuania	537	543	-6
Netherlands	547	554	-7
Sweden	549	561	-12
England	539	553	-13
Romania	489	512	-22
Morocco	323	350	-27

