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Overview of IEA's PIRLS Assessment

The IEA and Reading Literacy

Reading literacy is one of the most important abilities students acquire as they progress through their early school years. It is the foundation for learning across all subjects, it can be used for recreation and for personal growth, and it equips young children with the ability to participate fully in their communities and the larger society.

Because it is vital to every child's development, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) conducts a regular cycle of studies of children's reading literacy and the factors associated with its acquisition in countries around the world. IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) focuses on the achievement of young children in their fourth year of schooling and the experiences they have at home and at school in learning to read. Designed to measure trends in reading literacy achievement, PIRLS is conducted every five years. The first PIRLS assessment took place in 2001; the next assessment after the 2006 assessment is planned for 2011.

IEA's 1991 Reading Literacy Study (Elley, 1992, 1994; Wolf, 1995) served as a foundation for PIRLS. It provided a basis for the basis

A Definition of Reading Literacy

Figure 1 shows the reading processes and purposes assessed by PIRLS and the percentages of the test devoted to each. It should be noted that the four processes are assessed within each purpose for reading. The reading purposes and the processes for comprehension are described in Chapter 2.

The reading purposes and comprehension processes will be assessed using test booklets containing five literary and five informational passages. Each passage will be accompanied by approximately 12 questions, with about half multiple-choice and half constructed-response item format. The design of the written assessment is discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and sample reading passages and questions from the PIRLS 2001 assessment are presented in Appendix B.



Reading Literacy Behaviors and Attitudes

Reading literacy involves not only the ability to construct meaning from a variety of texts, but also behaviors and attitudes that support lifelong reading. Such behaviors and attitudes contribute to the full realization of the individual's potential within a literate society.

A positive attitude toward reading may be among the most important attributes of a lifelong reader. Children who read well typically display a more positive attitude than do children who have not had a great deal of success with reading (Mullis, Martin, González, & Kennedy, 2003). Children who have developed positive attitudes and self-concepts regarding reading are also more likely to choose reading for recreation. When children read on their own time they are not only demonstrating a positive attitude, they are also gaining valuable experience in reading different types of texts that further their development as proficient readers.

In addition to reading for enjoyment, reading for knowledge and information is a hallmark of reading literacy acquisition. Using informational texts to learn more about a topic may help children develop their interests and gain confidence in their reading abilities. Furthermore, the knowledge gained through such reading enhances subsequent reading, broadening and deepening the reader's interpretation of texts.

Discussing one's reading, orally or in writing, establishes the reader as a member of a literate community. Readers can further develop their understanding of texts and explore various perspectives and interpretations by talking with other readers. These exchanges of ideas sustain a literate community, which can promote intellectual depth and openness to new ideas within society.

A student questionnaire will address students' attitudes towards reading and their reading habits. In addition, questionnaires will be g

contexts, countries will complete questionnaires about reading goals and curricula and a profile of reading education in each country will be compiled. Chapter 3 describes the reading contexts addressed by the PIRLS questionnaires

