

Developing the PIRLS Background Questionnaires

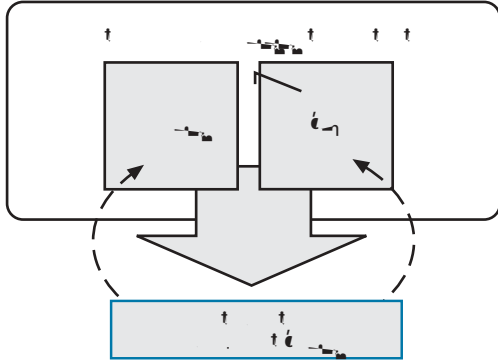
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3.1 Overview

Children are exposed to language and print at home and at school; receive formal reading instruction; and see others reading for recreation and to perform tasks. These and other experiences and activities at home and school combine to influence how well children read and how they feel about reading by the end of fourth grade. Beyond influences within the home and at school are those in the wider environments in which children live and learn. Community size and resources, organization of the educational system, and educational decision-making affect homes and schools, and thus children's literacy development. To be sure, not all children have the same experiences. Children have varying levels of home support for reading, and different levels of exposure to language and print throughout their lives. They also attend schools with different approaches to learning and resources with which to teach.

By gathering information about children's experiences in learning to read together with reading achievement on the PIRLS test, it is possible to identify the factors or combinations of factors associated with a high degree of reading literacy. The PIRLS design includes a set of questionnaires targeting important factors related to reading literacy. PIRLS administered four questionnaires to the tested students and their parents, reading teachers, and school principals. This chapter describes the conceptual framework underlying the questionnaires, the process used to develop them, and their content.¹

1 See *Framework and Specifications for the PIRLS Assessment 2001* (Campbell, Kelly, Mullis, Martin, & Sainsbury, 2001) for more information about the conceptual framework underlying the questionnaires.



3.2 Framework for the Questionnaires

The PIRLS questionnaires are grounded in a conceptual model relating reading outcomes – students’ reading literacy achievement and attitudes – to home, school, and community and national contexts. Exhibit 3.1 illustrates how PIRLS conceptualizes the influences on children’s reading by depicting the relationship between home and school, and how both are situated within the community and the country.

The PIRLS questionnaires address factors within each of the aspects that are deemed important for the development of reading literacy. In addition to reading achievement, reading outcomes include students’ reading attitudes and behaviors. The factors within the home, school, and national and community contexts addressed by PIRLS are shown in Exhibit 3.2.

Exhibit 3.2: Factors within the Home, School, and National and Community Contexts Addressed by PIRLS

Factors	
National and Community Contexts	
...	...
...	...
...	...
Home Contexts	
...	...
...	...
...	...
...	...
...	...
School Contexts	
...	...
...	...
...	...
...	...
...	...

3.3 Process for Developing Questionnaire Items and Final Forms

The PIRLS questionnaires were developed through a collaborative process involving the PIRLS International Study Center, the National Research Coordinators (NRCs), the Questionnaire Development Group (QDG), the Reading Development Group (RDG), and the IEA Data Processing Center (DPC). The process included a series of reviews of draft instruments, a field test of five questionnaires in 30 countries, a review of field-test data, and a revision of the field-test questionnaires.

3.3.1 Plan for Questionnaires

In developing the PIRLS questionnaires, the aim was to create instruments that could be used to collect reliable information related to children's reading literacy achievement (as outlined in the framework) without unduly burdening students and schools. Altogether, the instruments were intended to provide a picture of children's experiences from early language and literacy development to the time of the PIRLS assessment. The plan initially called for five questionnaires:

- A student questionnaire to provide data on home and school factors related to reading
- A home questionnaire (to be completed by the students' parents or primary caregivers) to provide data on home support for literacy

- A school questionnaire to provide information on school policies and resources related to reading

- A

In general, the committee recommended few revisions of the field-test question-

Exhibit 3.3: Content of the PIRLS Student Questionnaire

Student Questionnaire		
Item Number	Item Content	Description
1
2
3
4
5
6
7-8
9-10
11
12
13
14
15
16-18
19
20
21-22
23-25

3.4.3 Teacher Questionnaire

The reading teacher of each fourth-grade class sampled for PIRLS completed a teacher questionnaire, which was designed to gather information about classroom contexts for developing reading literacy. This questionnaire asks teachers to describe the general characteristics of the class tested, such as

class size, and the reading levels and language abilities of the students. Several questions in the questionnaire focus on factors related to reading instruction, such as instructional time, materials, grouping of students for instruction, and activities to teach reading and promote the development of the students' reading literacy. The ques-

Exhibit 3.4: Content of the PIRLS Learning-to-Read Survey (Home Questionnaire)

Learning-to-Read Survey		
Item Number	Item Content	Description
1
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9-10
11
12-13
14
15-16
17-18
19

tionnaire also asks teachers about classroom resources, assessment practices, and efforts to maintain home-school connections. It also asks teachers for their views about opportunities provided for cooperation and collaboration with other teachers, for professional development, and for information about themselves and their education and training. This questionnaire requires about 30 minutes of the teacher’s time. Exhibit 3.5 presents details regarding the items in the questionnaire.

3.4.4 School Questionnaire

The principal of each school sampled for PIRLS responded to the school questionnaire. It asks school principals about enrollment and school demographic characteristics, such as school location, resources available in the surrounding area, and indicators of the socioeconomic background of the study body. The school questionnaire also asks principals about reading curriculum policies and total instructional time for the school year. It also includes questions

about resources, the availability of materials and staff, and perceptions of the school climate, as well as the interaction between the schools and the students' parents and families. The school questionnaire was designed to be completed in about 30 minutes. Exhibit 3.6 presents detail on the items in the questionnaire.

References

Campbell, J.R., Kelly, D. L., Mullis, I. V. S., Martin, M.O., & Sainsbury, M. (2001). *Framework and specifications for PIRLS assessment 2001*. (2nd ed.). Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College.

