

APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS

Overview

Multiple recruitment packages will be used to notify schools selected to participate in the TIMSS and PIRLS field test, their districts, and their state education agencies. Given the field test sampling plan, larger elementary schools with multiple fourth-grade classes will be asked to participate in both TIMSS and PIRLS, while smaller schools will be asked to participate in one but not both assessments. For that reason, there are three versions of the same recruitment letter for the grade four recruitment efforts, and three versions of supporting materials. The grade eight recruitment effort is more straightforward, as it involves TIMSS only.

Below is a complete list of the recruitment materials, and their intended uses. Copies of the text of all these materials are on the pages that follow. Each one is identified by the name in a box in the upper left corner, and referenced by its appendix page number. (**NOTE: the last document is formatted to print out on a legal-size sheet of paper.**)

The recruitment package for *state chief school officers* and *state test coordinators* will consist of

1. a letter to notify them that some schools in their state have been selected to participate in the TIMSS & PIRLS field test (see “State PIRLS & TIMSS letter”, p. 3);
2. a brochure describing TIMSS, its history, its primary goals, the purpose of its field test, the structure of the assessment, and a list of participating countries (see “TIMSS draft brochure”, pp. 23-25);
1. a brochure describing PIRLS covering the same topics as the TIMSS brochure (see “PIRLS draft brochure”, pp.26-7);
2. a FAQ sheet answering questions about the field test and why some schools are assigned to TIMSS, some to PIRLS, and some to both assessments (T&P 2011 FT FAQ_Combined”, pp. 14-15).

The recruitment package for *district superintendents* and *district test coordinators* will vary depending on whether schools in the district have been selected to participate in just TIMSS, just PIRLS, or both.

- If the district includes schools selected to participate in just one assessment, it will receive
 1. a letter to notify them that some schools in their district have been selected to participate in [either the TIMSS or PIRLS] field test, and the letter will list which schools have been selected (either “School District TIMSS letter“, p. 6-7, or “School District PIRLS letter“, p. 8-9);
 2. the brochure describing the assessment to be administered (either “TIMSS draft brochure “, pp. 23-25, or “PIRLS draft brochure”, pp.26-7);
 3. a FAQ sheet answering questions about that assessment’s field test (“T&P 2011 FT FAQ_g4”, pp. 16-17, if asked to participate in just PIRLS or TIMSS grade 4, or “T&P 2011 FT FAQ_g8”, pp.18-19, if asked to participate in just TIMSS grade 8, or “T&P 2011 FT FAQ_Combined”, pp.14-15, if asked to participate in TIMSS grade 4 and 8);
 4. a sheet describing what school coordinators need to do to participate (“T&P 2011 FT Summary of Activities Combined”, p. 20); and
 5. a one-page table or “timeline” summarizing what activities the school, school coordinator, teachers, and students need to do and when these activities occurs, as well as the benefits of participation (“Timeline of Activities”, p. 28).

- If the district includes schools selected to participate in both assessments, it will receive
 1. a letter to notify them that some schools in their district have been selected to participate in both the TIMSS and PIRLS field test, and the letter will list which schools have been selected (“School district PIRLS and TIMSS letter“, p. 4);
 2. the TIMSS brochure (“TIMSS draft brochure “, pp. 23-25);
 3. the PIRLS brochure (“PIRLS draft brochure”, pp.26-7);
 4. the FAQ sheet answering questions about the field test and why some schools are assigned to TIMSS, some to PIRLS, and some to both assessments (T&P 2011 FT FAQ_Combined”, pp. 14-15);
 5. the sheet describing what school coordinators need to do to participate (“T&P 2011 FT Summary of Activities Combined”, p. 20); and
 6. the timeline (“Timeline of Activities”, p. 28).

The recruitment package for *schools* that have been randomly selected to participate in the field test will vary depending on whether schools in the district have been selected to participate in just TIMSS, PIRLS, or both.

- If the school was selected to participate in just one assessment, it will receive
 1. a letter to notify it that it has been selected to participate in [either the TIMSS or PIRLS] field test (“School TIMSS Letter”, p. 12, or “School PIRLS letter”, p. 13);
 2. the brochure describing the assessment to be administered (either “TIMSS draft brochure “, pp. 23-25, or “PIRLS draft brochure”, pp.26-7);
 3. a FAQ sheet answering questions about that assessment’s field test (“T&P 2011 FT FAQ_g4”, pp. 16-17, if asked to participate in just PIRLS or TIMSS grade 4, or “T&P 2011 FT FAQ_g8”, pp.18-19, if asked to participate in just TIMSS grade 8, or “T&P 2011 FT FAQ_Combined”, pp.14-15, if asked to participate in TIMSS grade 4 and 8);
 4. a sheet describing what school coordinators need to do (either the “T&P 2011 FT Summary of Activities Combined g4 & g8”, pp. 20, or the version for grade 8 TIMSS schools, “T&P 2011 FT Summary of Activities_TIMSS_g8”, pp. 22); and
 5. the timeline (“Timeline of Activities”, p. 28).

- If the school was selected to participate in both assessments, it will receive
 1. a letter to notify it that it has been selected to participate in both the TIMSS and PIRLS field test (“School PIRLS & TIMSS Letter “, p. 10-11);
 2. the TIMSS brochure (“TIMSS draft brochure “, pp. 23-25);
 3. the PIRLS brochure (“PIRLS draft brochure”, pp.26-7);
 4. the FAQ sheet answering questions about the field test and why some schools are assigned to TIMSS, some to PIRLS, and some to both assessments (T&P 2011 FT FAQ_Combined”, pp. 14-15);
 5. the sheet describing what school coordinators need to do to participate (“T&P 2011 FT Summary of Activities Combined”, p. 20); and
 6. the timeline (“Timeline of Activities”, p. 28).

State PIRLS & TIMSS letter

[Date]

[Title] [Name First] [Name Last]
[Title/Department]
[State]
[Address 1]
[Address 2]
[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

The United States will be participating in two important international studies in 2011 to help benchmark student performance in the United States compared to that in other countries around the world. Some schools in your state have been randomly selected to participate in the international field tests for these studies this spring. I am writing to ask your agency to support the participation of schools in your state in these two studies: the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2011 and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011.

TIMSS is administered every four years in more than 60 countries and provides important information for internationally benchmarking U.S. performance in mathematics and science at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels against top countries around the world. PIRLS is administered every five years in more than 50 countries and provides similarly important international benchmarking information in fourth-grade reading. For the 2011 assessments, new mathematics, science, and reading questions have been developed, which will be tested this spring to ensure that they accurately measure our students’ knowledge and skills. Field testing the new questions is necessary to eliminate wording or topics that would put U.S. students at a disadvantage in answering relative to students in other countries.

TIMSS, PIRLS, and the field test process for schools are described in more detail in materials enclosed with this letter. The studies are sponsored in the United States by the National Center for Education Statistics in the U.S. Department of Education and are conducted by Westat of Rockville, MD. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # xxx-xxx. While participation in this study is entirely voluntary, we ask your agency to support participation on the part of schools in your state so that the United States has a representative sample of schools across the country.

NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279, Section 153). By law, the data provided by your schools, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Public Law 107-279, Section 183 and Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347)). Reports of the findings from the field test will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

Within the next few weeks, a representative of Westat will contact sampled school districts and schools to discuss conducting data collection. In the meantime, if you have questions about the study, please do not hesitate to call [insert name of contact] at 1-888-XXX-XXXX or send an email to TIMSS&PIRLS@westat.com. You may also get more information about these studies by contacting Dr. Patrick Gonzales at NCES at (415) 920-9229 or visiting the TIMSS and PIRLS websites at: <http://nces.ed.gov/timss/> and <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls/>.

Thank you for your time and support. TIMSS and PIRLS are important elements in the U.S. effort to benchmark the performance and progress of our education system against international standards.

Sincerely,

Stuart Kerachsky
Acting Commissioner
cc: [State assessment coordinator name]

Enclosures

[Date]

[Title] [Name First] [Name Last], [Title/Department]
[School District]
[Address 1]
[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

The United States will be participating in two important international studies in 2011 to help benchmark student performance in the United States compared to that in other countries around the world: the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2011 and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011. We are contacting you because one or more schools in your district have been randomly selected to represent the United States in the international field tests for these studies this spring.

TIMSS is administered every four years in more than 60 countries and provides important information for internationally benchmarking U.S. performance in mathematics and science at the fourth- and eighth-grade against top countries around the world. PIRLS is administered every five years in more than 50 countries and provides similarly important international benchmarking information in fourth-grade reading.

For the 2011 assessments, new mathematics, science, and reading questions have been developed, which will be field tested this spring to ensure that they accurately measure our students' knowledge and skills. Field testing the new questions is necessary to eliminate wording or topics that would put U.S. students at a disadvantage in answering relative to students in other countries.

We ask your agency to support the participation of schools in your district in the TIMSS and PIRLS field test as the test is vital to ensure that the TIMSS and PIRLS assessments are fair and the procedures for sampling students are comparable across countries. Schools that participate in the 2010 field test will not be sampled again for the 2011 main assessments. In addition, to compensate their time and efforts, participating schools will receive \$200, their school-level coordinator will receive \$100, and each student that takes the field test will receive a small gift.

Materials enclosed with this letter describe TIMSS and PIRLS and the field test process for schools in more detail. Both assessments are sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics and are conducted by Westat, a research organization based in the Washington D.C. area. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # xxx-xxx. While participation in this study is entirely voluntary, we ask your agency to support participation on the part of schools in your district so that the United States has a representative sample of schools across the country.

Within the next few days, a representative of Westat will contact the following school or schools in your district that have been selected for the field test: [LIST SAMPLED SCHOOLS HERE...]

NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279, Section 153). By law, the data provided by your schools, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Public Law 107-279, Section 183 and Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347)). We will disclose the names of schools in each district only to the governing district for each school,

and we ask that each district maintain the confidentiality of the sampled schools in the TIMSS and PIRLS field test. Reports of the findings from the field test will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call [insert name of contact] at 1-888-XXX-XXXX or send an email to TIMSS&PIRLS@westat.com. You may also get more information about these studies by contacting Dr. Patrick Gonzales at NCES at (415) 920-9229 or visiting the TIMSS and PIRLS websites at: <http://nces.ed.gov/timss/> and <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls/>.

Thank you for your time and support. TIMSS and PIRLS are important elements in the U.S. effort to benchmark the performance and progress of our education system against international standards.

Sincerely,

Stuart Kerachsky
Acting Commissioner

Enclosures

School district TIMSS letter

[Date]

[Title] [Name First] [Name Last], [Title/Department]
 [School District]
 [Address 1]
 [City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

I am writing to inform you about the upcoming Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2011, in which the United States will participate along with more than 60 other countries. TIMSS provides important international benchmarking information in fourth- and eighth-grade mathematics and science. We are notifying you now because one or more schools in your district have been randomly selected to take part in the TIMSS field test this spring.

New assessment questions have been developed for TIMSS and they will be field tested this spring to ensure that they accurately measure our students' knowledge and skills. Field testing the new questions is necessary to eliminate wording or topics that would put U.S. students at a disadvantage in answering relative to students in other countries.

We ask your agency to support the participation of schools in your district in the TIMSS field test as the test is vital is to ensure that the TIMSS assessment is fair and that the procedures for sampling students are comparable across countries. Schools that participate in the 2010 field test will not be sampled again for the 2011 main assessment. In addition, to compensate their time and efforts, participating schools will receive \$200, their school-level coordinator will receive \$100, and each student that takes the field test will receive a small gift.

Materials enclosed with this letter describe TIMSS and the field test process for schools in more detail. TIMSS is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics and is conducted by Westat, a research organization based in the Washington D.C. area. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # xxx-xxx. While participation in this study is entirely voluntary, we ask your agency to support participation on the part of schools in your district so that the United States has a representative sample of schools across the country.

Within the next few days, a representative of Westat will contact the following school or schools in your district that have been selected for the field test: [LIST SAMPLED SCHOOLS HERE...]

NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279, Section 153). By law, the data provided by your schools, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Public Law 107-279, Section 183 and Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347)). We will disclose the names of schools in each district only to the governing district for each school, and we ask that each district maintain the confidentiality of the sampled schools in the TIMSS and PIRLS field test. Reports of the findings from the field test will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call [insert name of contact] at 1-888-XXX-XXXX or send an email to TIMSS&PIRLS@westat.com. You may also get more information about these studies

by contacting Dr. Patrick Gonzales at NCES at (415) 920-9229 or visiting the TIMSS website at:
<http://nces.ed.gov/timss/>.

Thank you for your time and support. TIMSS is an important element in the U.S. effort to benchmark the performance and progress of our education system against international standards.

Sincerely,

Stuart Kerachsky
Acting Commissioner

Enclosures

[Date]

[Title] [Name First] [Name Last], [Title/Department]
[School District]
[Address 1]
[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

I am writing to inform you about the upcoming Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011, in which the United States will participate along with more than 50 other countries. PIRLS provides important international benchmarking information in fourth-grade reading. We are notifying you now because one or more schools in your district have been randomly selected to take part in the PIRLS field test this spring.

New assessment questions have been developed for PIRLS and they will be field tested this spring to ensure that they accurately measure our students' knowledge and skills. Field testing the new questions is necessary to eliminate wording or topics that would put U.S. students at a disadvantage in answering relative to students in other countries.

We ask your agency to support the participation of schools in your district in the PIRLS field test as the test is vital is to ensure that the PIRLS assessment is fair and that the procedures for sampling students are comparable across countries. Schools that participate in the 2010 field test will not be sampled again for the 2011 main assessment. In addition, to compensate their time and efforts, participating schools will receive \$200, their school-level coordinator will receive \$100, and each student that takes the field test will receive a small gift.

Materials enclosed with this letter describe PIRLS and the field test process for schools in more detail. Both assessments are sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics and are conducted by Westat, a research organization based in the Washington D.C. area. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # xxx-xxx. While participation in this study is entirely voluntary, we ask your agency to support participation on the part of schools in your district so that the United States has a representative sample of schools across the country.

Within the next few days, a representative of Westat will contact the following school or schools in your district that have been selected for the field test: [LIST SAMPLED SCHOOLS HERE...]

NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279, Section 153). By law, the data provided by your schools, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Public Law 107-279, Section 183 and Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347)). We will disclose the names of schools in each district only to the governing district for each school, and we ask that each district maintain the confidentiality of the sampled schools in the TIMSS and PIRLS field test. Reports of the findings from the field test will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call [insert name of contact] at 1-888-XXX-XXXX or send an email to PIRLS@westat.com. You may also get more information about these studies by

contacting Dr. Stephen Provasnik at NCES at (202) 502-7480 or visiting the PIRLS website at:
<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls/>.

Thank you for your time and support. PIRLS is an important element in the U.S. effort to benchmark the performance and progress of our education system against international standards.

Sincerely,

Stuart Kerachsky
Acting Commissioner

Enclosures

School PIRLS & TIMSS letter

[Date]

[Title] [Name First] [Name Last], [Title/Department]

[School District]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

The United States will be participating in two important international studies in 2011 to help benchmark student performance in the United States compared to that in other countries around the world: the Trends in International and Mathematics Study (TIMSS) 2011 and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011. We are contacting you because your school has been selected to represent the United States in the TIMSS and PIRLS international field test this spring.

TIMSS is administered every four years in more than 60 countries and provides important information for internationally benchmarking U.S. performance in mathematics and science at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels against top countries around the world. PIRLS is administered every five years in more than 50 countries and provides similarly important international benchmarking information in fourth-grade reading.

For the 2011 assessments, new mathematics, science, and reading questions have been developed for TIMSS and PIRLS and they will be field tested this spring to ensure that they accurately measure our students' knowledge and skills. Field testing the new questions is necessary to eliminate wording or topics that would put U.S. students at a disadvantage in answering relative to students in other countries.

I encourage your school's participation in the TIMSS and PIRLS field test as the test is vital to ensure that the TIMSS and PIRLS assessments are fair and that their samples of students are comparable across countries. Schools that participate in the 2010 field test will not be sampled again for the 2011 main assessments. In addition, to compensate their time and efforts, participating schools will receive \$200, their school-level coordinator will receive \$100, and each student that takes the field test will receive a small gift.

Materials enclosed with this letter describe TIMSS and PIRLS and the field test process for schools in more detail. Both assessments are sponsored in the United States by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics and are conducted by Westat of Rockville, MD. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # xxx-xxx. We hope you will participate in this study so that the United States has a representative sample of schools across the country; however, participation in this study is entirely voluntary. NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279, Section 153). By law, the data provided by your schools, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Public Law 107-279, Section 183 and Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347)). We will only disclose the names of schools in each district to the governing district for each school, and we have asked that each district maintain the confidentiality of the sampled schools in the TIMSS and PIRLS field test. Reports of the findings from the field test will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

Within the next few days, a representative of Westat will call you to discuss your participation in the field test. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the TIMSS and PIRLS field test or your school's participation, please feel free to call 1-888-270-6227 or send an email to TIMSS&PIRLS@westat.com. You may also get more information about these studies by contacting Dr. Patrick Gonzales at NCES at (415) 920-9229 or visiting the TIMSS and PIRLS websites at: <http://nces.ed.gov/timss/> and <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls/>.

Thank you for your time and support. TIMSS and PIRLS are important elements in the U.S. effort to benchmark the performance and progress of our education system against international standards.

Sincerely,

Stuart Kerachsky
Acting Commissioner

Enclosures

School TIMSS letter

[Date]

[Title] [Name First] [Name Last], [Title/Department]
[School District]
[Address 1]
[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

I am writing to inform you about the upcoming Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2011, in which the United States will participate along with more than 60 other countries. TIMSS provides important international benchmarking information in fourth- and eighth-grade mathematics and science. We are notifying you now because your school has been randomly selected to take part in the TIMSS field test this spring.

New assessment questions have been developed for TIMSS and they will be field tested this spring to ensure that they accurately measure our students' knowledge and skills. Field testing the new questions is necessary to eliminate wording or topics that would put U.S. students at a disadvantage in answering relative to students in other countries.

I encourage your school's participation in the TIMSS field test as the test is vital to ensure the assessment is fair and its samples of students are comparable across countries. Schools that participate in the 2010 field test will not be sampled again for the 2011 main assessment. In addition, to compensate their time and efforts, participating schools will receive \$200, their school-level coordinator will receive \$100, and each student who takes the field test will receive a small gift.

Materials enclosed with this letter describe TIMSS and PIRLS and the field test process for schools in more detail. Both assessments are sponsored in the United States by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics and are conducted by Westat of Rockville, MD. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # xxx-xxx. We hope you will participate in this study so that the United States has a representative sample of schools across the country; however, participation in this study is entirely voluntary. NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279, Section 153). By law, the data provided by your schools, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Public Law 107-279, Section 183 and Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347)). We will only disclose the names of schools in each district to the governing district for each school, and we have asked that each district maintain the confidentiality of the sampled schools in the TIMSS and PIRLS field test. Reports of the findings from the field test will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

Within the next few days, a representative of Westat will call you to discuss your participation in the field test. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the TIMSS field test or your school's participation, please feel free to call 1-888-270-6227 or send an email to TIMSS@westat.com. You may also get more information about these studies by contacting Dr. Patrick Gonzales at NCES at (415) 920-9229 or visiting the TIMSS website at: <http://nces.ed.gov/timss/>.

Thank you for your time and support. TIMSS is an element in the U.S. effort to benchmark the performance and progress of our education system against international standards.

Sincerely,

Stuart Kerachsky
Acting Commissioner
Enclosures

School PIRLS letter

[Date]

[Title] [Name First] [Name Last], [Title/Department]

[School District]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

I am writing to inform you about the upcoming Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011, in which the United States will participate along with more than 50 other countries. PIRLS provides important international benchmarking information in fourth-grade reading. We are notifying you now because your school has been randomly selected to take part in the PIRLS field test this spring.

New assessment questions have been developed for PIRLS and they will be field tested this spring to ensure that they accurately measure our students' knowledge and skills. Field testing the new questions is necessary to eliminate wording or topics that would put U.S. students at a disadvantage in answering relative to students in other countries.

I encourage your school's participation in the PIRLS field test as the test is vital to ensure the assessment is fair and its samples of students are comparable across countries. Schools that participate in the 2010 field test will not be sampled again for the 2011 main assessment. In addition, to compensate their time and efforts, participating schools will receive \$200, their school-level coordinator will receive \$100, and each student who takes the field test will receive a small gift.

Materials enclosed with this letter describe TIMSS and PIRLS and the field test process for schools in more detail. Both assessments are sponsored in the United States by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics and are conducted by Westat of Rockville, MD. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # xxx-xxx. We hope you will participate in this study so that the United States has a representative sample of schools across the country; however, participation in this study is entirely voluntary. NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279, Section 153). By law, the data provided by your schools, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Public Law 107-279, Section 183 and Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347)). We will only disclose the names of schools in each district to the governing district for each school, and we have asked that each district maintain the confidentiality of the sampled schools in the TIMSS and PIRLS field test. Reports of the findings from the field test will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

Within the next few days, a representative of Westat will call you to discuss your participation in the field test. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the PIRLS field test or your school's participation, please feel free to call 1-888-270-6227 or send an email to PIRLS@westat.com. You may also get more information about the study by contacting Dr. Stephen Provasnik at NCES at (202) 502-7480 or visiting the PIRLS website at: <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls/>.

Thank you for your time and support. PIRLS is an important element in the U.S. effort to benchmark the performance and progress of our education system against international standards.

Sincerely,

Stuart Kerachsky
Acting Commissioner
Enclosures

Frequently Asked Questions

FIELD TEST 2010

What is the field test for?

Field Tests are a critical part of the development of test questions for international assessments. Field Tests (small-scale, trial runs of an assessment) allow assessment developers to try out new questions to determine how they work when administered to students around the world. It is important to make sure that any questions used in an international assessment accurately and fairly measure students' knowledge and skills in all participating countries. The results of the U.S. Field Test will help assessment developers to eliminate wording or topics that would put U.S. students at a disadvantage in answering relative to students in other countries. The Field Test is also designed to provide valuable information about ways to reduce the time and effort required of schools and students to participate in an assessment.

Why was my school selected for participation?

Schools of varying demographics and locations were randomly selected so that the overall U.S. field test sample is representative of the overall U.S. school population. The random selection process is important for ensuring that a country's sample accurately reflects its schools and therefore can fairly be compared with samples of schools from other countries.

Is it possible that my school will be selected for the main study as well as the field test?

No. Schools selected for the 2010 field test will not be selected for the 2011 main study.

Will all students in a selected grade be asked to participate?

It depends on the number of classrooms in the school at the selected grade. In schools with only one or two classrooms per selected grade, all students will be asked to participate. In schools with more than two classrooms per selected grade, only students in two randomly selected classrooms will be asked to participate.

In addition, some students with special needs or limited English proficiency may be excused from the assessment.

Who conducts the field test assessment?

The entire assessment process will be undertaken by trained staff from Westat, a research organization under contract to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). NCES conducts this study under authorization in the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279, Section 153). The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # xxx-xxx.

Do teachers need to help administer the field test assessment?

No. Westat staff will visit the school on the day of the assessment, bringing with them all the materials required, and they will handle the entire administration of the assessment.

When will the field test be conducted?

The field test will be conducted between March 1 and April 15, 2010. Westat will work with schools to identify an assessment date convenient for the school in that time period.

Where will the field test be conducted?

The field test will be conducted in the schools that are selected to participate.

How long does the field test take?

The assessment session is approximately 2½ hours and includes the administration of the assessment, a brief questionnaire that students complete about themselves, and two breaks. The questionnaire takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.

What will happen with the collected data?

The field test data will be used to evaluate whether the assessment accurately and fairly measures students' knowledge and skills in all participating countries. By law, the data provided by schools, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Public Law 107-279, Section 183 and Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347)). Reports of the findings from the field test will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

Are schools required by federal law to participate?

No. School participation is voluntary. However, we hope you will participate in this study so that students like those in your school are accurately and fairly represented.

What do school staff and students do?

- Schools are asked to designate a *School Coordinator* to assist Westat staff members with in-school arrangements.
- The school principal or lead administrator will receive a School Questionnaire to complete. The questionnaire, which asks about the school environment and structure, takes about 20 minutes to complete.
- Teachers of the sampled classes will receive Teacher Questionnaires to complete. These questionnaires focus on the nature of implemented curricula, instructional practices, and attitudes toward mathematics and science.
- Students will attend the assessment session (2½ hours in length) and will be asked to complete the assessment booklet and questionnaire. Those who do will receive a small gift as a thank-you.

Frequently Asked Questions

FIELD TEST 2010

What is the field test for?

Field Tests are a critical part of the development of test questions for international assessments. Field Tests (small-scale, trial runs of an assessment) allow assessment developers to try out new questions to determine how they work when administered to students around the world. It is important to make sure that any questions used in an international assessment accurately and fairly measure students' knowledge and skills in all participating countries. The results of the U.S. Field Test will help assessment developers to eliminate wording or topics that would put U.S. students at a disadvantage in answering relative to students in other countries. The Field Test is also designed to provide valuable information about ways to reduce the time and effort required of schools and students to participate in an assessment.

Why was my school selected for participation?

Schools of varying demographics and locations were randomly selected so that the overall U.S. field test sample is representative of the overall U.S. school population. The random selection process is important for ensuring that a country's sample accurately reflects its schools and therefore can fairly be compared with samples of schools from other countries.

Is it possible that my school will be selected for the main study as well as the field test?

No. Schools selected for the 2010 field test will not be selected for the 2011 main study.

Will all our fourth-graders be asked to participate?

It depends on the number of fourth-grade classrooms in the school. In schools with only one or two fourth-grade classrooms, all students will be asked to participate. In schools with more than two fourth-grade classrooms, only students in two randomly selected classrooms will be asked to participate.

In addition, some students with special needs or limited English proficiency may be excused from the assessment.

Who conducts the field test assessment?

The entire assessment process will be undertaken by trained staff from Westat, a research organization under contract to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). NCES conducts this study under authorization in the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279, Section 153). The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # xxx-xxx.

Do teachers need to help administer the field test assessment?

No. Westat staff will visit the school on the day of the assessment, bringing with them all the materials required, and they will handle the entire administration of the assessment.

When will the field test be conducted?

The field test will be conducted between March 1 and April 15, 2010. Westat will work with schools to identify an assessment date convenient for the school in that time period.

Where will the field test be conducted?

The field test will be conducted in the schools that are selected to participate.

How long does the field test take?

The assessment session is approximately 2½ hours and includes the administration of the assessment, a brief questionnaire that students complete about themselves, and two breaks. The questionnaire takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.

What will happen with the collected data?

The field test data will be used to evaluate whether the assessment accurately and fairly measures students' knowledge and skills in all participating countries. By law, the data provided by schools, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Public Law 107-279, Section 183 and Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347)). Reports of the findings from the field test will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

Are schools required by federal law to participate?

No. School participation is voluntary. However, we hope you will participate in this study so that students like those in your school are accurately and fairly represented.

What do school staff and students do?

- Schools are asked to designate a *School Coordinator* to assist Westat staff members with in-school arrangements.
- The school principal or lead administrator will receive a School Questionnaire to complete. The questionnaire, which asks about the school environment and structure, takes about 20 minutes to complete.
- Teachers of the sampled fourth-grade classes will receive Teacher Questionnaires to complete. These questionnaires focus on the nature of implemented curricula, instructional practices, and attitudes toward mathematics and science.
- Students will attend the assessment session (2½ hours in length) and will be asked to complete the assessment booklet and questionnaire. Those who do will receive a small gift as a thank-you.

Frequently Asked Questions

FIELD TEST 2010

What is the field test for?

Field Tests are a critical part of the development of test questions for international assessments. Field Tests (small-scale, trial runs of an assessment) allow assessment developers to try out new questions to determine how they work when administered to students around the world. It is important to make sure that any questions used in an international assessment accurately and fairly measure students' knowledge and skills in all participating countries. The results of the U.S. Field Test will help assessment developers to eliminate wording or topics that would put U.S. students at a disadvantage in answering relative to students in other countries. The Field Test is also designed to provide valuable information about ways to reduce the time and effort required of schools and students to participate in an assessment.

Why was my school selected for participation?

Schools of varying demographics and locations were randomly selected so that the overall U.S. field test sample is representative of the overall U.S. school population. The random selection process is important for ensuring that a country's sample accurately reflects its schools and therefore can fairly be compared with samples of schools from other countries.

Is it possible that my school will be selected for the main study as well as the field test?

No. Schools selected for the 2010 field test will not be selected for the 2011 main study.

Will all our eighth-graders be asked to participate?

It depends on the number of eighth-grade classrooms in the school. In schools with only one or two eighth-grade classrooms, all students will be asked to participate. In schools with more than two eighth-grade classrooms, only students in two randomly selected classrooms will be asked to participate.

In addition, some students with special needs or limited English proficiency may be excused from the assessment.

Who conducts the field test assessment?

The entire assessment process will be undertaken by trained staff from Westat, a research organization under contract to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). NCES conducts this study under authorization in the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279, Section 153). The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # xxx-xxx.

Do teachers need to help administer the field test assessment?

No. Westat staff will visit the school on the day of the assessment, bringing with them all the materials required, and they will handle the entire administration of the assessment.

When will the field test be conducted?

The field test will be conducted between March 1 and April 15, 2010. Westat will work with schools to identify an assessment date convenient for the school in that time period.

Where will the field test be conducted?

The field test will be conducted in the schools that are selected to participate.

How long does the field test take?

The assessment session is approximately 2 1/2 hours and includes the administration of the assessment, a brief questionnaire that students complete about themselves, and two breaks. The questionnaire takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.

What will happen with the collected data?

The field test data will be used to evaluate whether the assessment accurately and fairly measures students' knowledge and skills in all participating countries. By law, the data provided by schools, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Public Law 107-279, Section 183 and Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347)). Reports of the findings from the field test will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

Are schools required by federal law to participate?

No. School participation is voluntary. However, we hope you will participate in this study so that students like those in your school are accurately and fairly represented.

What do school staff and students do?

- Schools are asked to designate a *School Coordinator* to assist Westat staff members with in-school arrangements.
- The school principal or lead administrator will receive a School Questionnaire to complete. The questionnaire, which asks about the school environment and structure, takes about 20 minutes to complete.
- Teachers of the sampled eighth-grade classes will receive Teacher Questionnaires to complete. These questionnaires focus on the nature of implemented curricula, instructional practices, and attitudes toward mathematics and science.
- Students will attend the assessment session (2½ hours in length) and will be asked to complete the assessment booklet and questionnaire. Those who do will receive a small gift as a thank-you.

Summary of Activities for School Coordinators

FIELD TEST 2010

What will be asked of the school coordinator?

Upon the school's agreement to participate, Westat staff will work with the school coordinator to:

- Schedule the assessment. A Westat staff member will contact the school coordinator to schedule a convenient date between March 1 and April 15, 2010. The coordinator will need to arrange the use of each selected class' classroom or an alternative quiet space for the assessment.
- Review parent notification procedures. If your school requires parental permission to conduct the assessment(s), the Westat staff member will review these procedures with the school coordinator.
- Provide a list of classes at the selected grade. The school coordinator will receive instructions for preparing and submitting a list of classes at the selected grade. Classes from the list will be selected randomly to participate.
- Provide a student listing for each selected class. **All student names will be kept confidential and will never be linked to assessment booklets or results. Individual student responses or scores are NEVER reported or distributed.**

Closer to the assessment date, the school coordinator will be asked to:

- Work with a Westat staff member to identify those students with special needs or limited English proficiency that preclude them from participating in the assessment.
- Notify parents, teachers, and students. Once the classes and students have been selected, a Westat staff member will work with the school coordinator on procedures for notifying parents, teachers, and students of the study and the benefits of participating.
- Receive the School and Teacher Questionnaires. The school coordinator will be mailed the School and Teacher Questionnaires and asked to distribute them to the school principal and teachers of the selected classes. The Coordinator should also retrieve the questionnaires and return them to the Westat staff member on assessment day.
- Confirm the assessment information. At least 2 weeks before the assessment, a Westat staff member will contact the school coordinator to confirm the date and location of the assessment.

On assessment day, the school coordinator will be asked to:

- Ensure that all students in the selected classes attend the assessment session. While it is not necessary for the school coordinator to be present during the session, the school coordinator should be available before the assessment to help locate selected students and ensure participation. **It is very important that student attendance rates be as high as possible** to avoid the need for a makeup session.

A graphic timeline of activities is also available for your convenience.

Please feel free to contact the TIMSS/PIRLS U.S. Home Office with any questions
via e-mail at TIMSS&PIRLS2011@westat.com
or by calling 1-800-XXX-XXXX

T&P 2011 FT Summary of Activities Combined

Summary of Activities for School Coordinators

FIELD TEST 2010

What will be asked of the school coordinator?

Upon the school's agreement to participate, Westat staff will work with the school coordinator to:

- Schedule the assessment. A Westat staff member will contact the school coordinator to schedule a convenient date between March 1 and April 15, 2010. The coordinator will need to arrange the use of each selected class' classroom or an alternative quiet space for the assessment.
- Review parent notification procedures. If your school requires parental permission to conduct the assessment(s), the Westat staff member will review these procedures with the school coordinator.
- Provide a list of fourth-grade classes. The school coordinator will receive instructions for preparing and submitting a list of fourth-grade classes. Classes from the list will be selected randomly to participate.
- Provide a student listing for each selected class. **All student names will be kept confidential and will never be linked to assessment booklets or results. Individual student responses or scores are NEVER reported or distributed.**

Closer to the assessment date, the school coordinator will be asked to:

- Work with a Westat staff member to identify those students with special needs or limited English proficiency that preclude them from participating in the assessment.
- Notify parents, teachers, and students. Once the classes and students have been selected, a Westat staff member will work with the school coordinator on procedures for notifying parents, teachers, and students of the study and the benefits of participating.
- Receive the School and Teacher Questionnaires. The school coordinator will be mailed the School and Teacher Questionnaires and asked to distribute them to the school principal and teachers of the selected classes. The Coordinator should also retrieve the questionnaires and return them to the Westat staff member on assessment day.
- Confirm the assessment information. At least 2 weeks before the assessment, a Westat staff member will contact the school coordinator to confirm the date and location of the assessment.

On assessment day, the school coordinator will be asked to:

- Ensure that all students in the selected classes attend the assessment session. While it is not necessary for the school coordinator to be present during the session, the school coordinator should be available before the assessment to help locate selected students and ensure participation. **It is very important that student attendance rates be as high as possible** to avoid the need for a makeup session.

A graphic timeline of activities is also available for your convenience.

Please feel free to contact the TIMSS/PIRLS U.S. Home Office with any questions
via e-mail at TIMSS&PIRLS2011@westat.com
or by calling 1-800-XXX-XXXX

Summary of Activities for School Coordinators

TIMSS GRADE 8 FIELD TEST 2010

What will be asked of the school coordinator?

Upon the school's agreement to participate, Westat staff will work with the school coordinator to:

- Schedule the assessment. A Westat staff member will contact the school coordinator to schedule a convenient date between March 1 and April 15, 2010. The coordinator will need to arrange the use of each selected class' classroom or an alternative quiet space for the assessment.
- Review parent notification procedures. If your school requires parental permission to conduct the assessment(s), the Westat staff member will review these procedures with the school coordinator.
- Provide a list of eighth-grade mathematics classes. The school coordinator will receive instructions for preparing and submitting a list of eighth-grade mathematics classes. Classes from the list will be selected randomly to participate.
- Provide a student listing for each selected class. **All student names will be kept confidential and will never be linked to assessment booklets or results. Individual student responses or scores are NEVER reported or distributed.**

Closer to the assessment date, the school coordinator will be asked to:

- Work with a Westat staff member to identify those students with special needs or limited English proficiency that preclude them from participating in the assessment.
- Notify parents, teachers, and students. Once the classes and students have been selected, a Westat staff member will work with the school coordinator on procedures for notifying parents, teachers, and students of the study and the benefits of participating.
- Receive the School and Teacher Questionnaires. The school coordinator will be mailed the School and Teacher Questionnaires and asked to distribute them to the school principal and teachers of the selected classes. The Coordinator should also retrieve the questionnaires and return them to the Westat staff member on assessment day.
- Confirm the assessment information. At least 2 weeks before the assessment, a Westat staff member will contact the school coordinator to confirm the date and location of the assessment.

On assessment day, the school coordinator will be asked to:

- Ensure that all students in the selected classes attend the assessment session. While it is not necessary for the school coordinator to be present during the session, the school coordinator should be available before the assessment to help locate selected students and ensure participation. **It is very important that student attendance rates be as high as possible** to avoid the need for a makeup session.

A graphic timeline of activities is also available for your convenience.

Please feel free to contact the TIMSS/PIRLS U.S. Home Office with any questions
via e-mail at TIMSS@westat.com
or by calling 1-800-XXX-XXXX

What is TIMSS?

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is an international assessment and research project designed to measure trends in mathematics and science achievement at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels as well as school and teacher practices related to instruction. Since 1995, TIMSS has been administered every four years. TIMSS 2011, the fifth study in the series, will involve students from more than 60 countries, including the United States.

TIMSS is sponsored by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and managed in the United States by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education.

Why is TIMSS important?

TIMSS provides a unique opportunity to compare U.S. students' math and science knowledge and skills at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels with that of their peers in countries around the world. TIMSS complements what we learn from national assessments by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of student performance relative to students around the world. The results inform national discussions about education as well as international competitiveness.

TIMSS provides valuable benchmark information on how U.S. students compare to students around the world, allows educators and policymakers to examine other educational systems for practices that could have application to the United States, and contributes to ongoing discussions of ways to improve the quality of education for all students.

Key findings from TIMSS 2007

- In TIMSS 2007, the average U.S. 4th-graders' mathematics score (529) was above the TIMSS scale average of 500, but below that of 4th-graders in 8 of the other 35 participating countries. The average U.S. 8th-graders' mathematics score (508) was also above the TIMSS scale average (500), but below that of 8th-graders in 5 of the other 47 participating countries. At both 4th and 8th grade, U.S. math scores in 2007 were higher than in 1995.
- In science, the 2007 TIMSS average U.S. 4th-graders' science score (539) for 4th-graders was above the TIMSS scale average (500), but below that of 4th-graders in 4 of the other 35 participating countries. The average U.S. 8th-graders' science score (520) was also above the TIMSS scale average (500), but below that of 8th-graders in 9 of the other 47 participating countries. At both 4th and 8th grade, U.S. science scores in 2007 were not measurably different than in 1995.

What is the purpose of the TIMSS Field Test?

TIMSS conducts a field test (a small-scale, trial run of the assessment) in every participating country to see if any of its test items are biased because of national, social, or cultural differences. Statistical analyses of student answers are also conducted to check for evidence of differences in student performance across countries that could indicate a linguistic or conceptual translation problem. Test questions that are found to be problematic are dropped from the assessment or scaled differently.

In the spring of 2010, the United States will participate in the TIMSS field study to test the viability of new items and procedures to be used in TIMSS 2011. The field test will ensure a fair assessment for U.S. students and also provide valuable information about ways to reduce the time and effort required of schools and students to participate in TIMSS.

What type of assessment is TIMSS?

The TIMSS mathematics and science assessment is developed through an international consensus-building process involving input from U.S. and international experts in mathematics, science and measurement. In a final step, the assessment is endorsed as suitable by all participating countries. The assessment contains a mix of questions: some require students to select appropriate responses, while others require that students solve problems and provide written answers. Examples of TIMSS mathematics and science assessment items are given below. Other examples of released TIMSS items are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/timss/educators.asp>.

Other information collected by TIMSS

TIMSS is more than an assessment of student knowledge in mathematics and science. TIMSS also considers the context in which learning occurs. Students, teachers and schools are asked about a variety of aspects of the environments in which content is taught, learned, practiced, and applied. In this way, TIMSS provides each country with a rich source of information on the factors influencing mathematics and science achievement.

[Closing info for back cover incl. logos]

For questions about TIMSS 2011,
contact the TIMSS Information Hotline at
1-888-xxx-xxxx or email to
TIMSS@westat.com



IES/NCES logo here



NCES is authorized to conduct TIMSS under Section 153, of Public Law 107-279. Information collected will help the U.S. Department of Education's ongoing efforts to benchmark student achievement in the United States. Participation is voluntary. Data collected may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347) and Section 183, Public Law 107-279). Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

Participating Countries in TIMSS 2011

Algeria
Armenia
Australia
Austria
Azerbaijan

Bahrain
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Botswana
Bulgaria
Chile

Chinese Taipei
Colombia
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic

Denmark
Egypt
England
Finland
Georgia
Germany
Ghana
Honduras
Hong Kong SAR
Hungary
Indonesia
Iran, Islamic Rep. of
Israel
Italy
Japan
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Korea, Rep. of
Kuwait
Latvia

Lebanon
Libya
Lithuania
Malaysia
Malta
Mongolia
Morocco
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Oman
Palestinian Nat'l Auth.
Poland
Qatar
Romania
Russian Federation
Saudi Arabia
Scotland
Serbia
Singapore

Slovak Republic
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Syrian Arab Republic
Thailand
Tunisia
Turkey
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
United States
Yemen

Benchmarking

Participants

Alberta, Canada
Basque Country, Spain
British Columbia, Canada
Ontario, Canada
Quebec, Canada

PIRLS draft brochure

What is PIRLS?

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international assessment and research project designed to measure both trends in fourth-grade students' reading literacy achievement as well as school and teacher practices related to reading instruction. PIRLS 2011 is the third such study in the PIRLS series of internationally comparative reading studies carried out in countries around the world every five years. In PIRLS 2011, students from more than 50 countries, including the United States, will participate.

PIRLS is sponsored by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and managed in the United States by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education.

Why is PIRLS important?

PIRLS provides a unique opportunity to compare the reading knowledge and skills of U.S. fourth-graders with their peers in countries around the world. PIRLS complements what we learn from national assessments by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of students in reading relative to students around the world. The results inform national discussions about U.S. education performance and practice within the wider context of international competitiveness.

Moreover, by participating in PIRLS 2011, the United States will obtain data about changes in children's reading achievement over the past 10 years, including valuable information about changes in reading instruction, how those changes relate to students' performance in reading, and about home, school, and classroom influences on reading achievement.

Key Findings from PIRLS 2006

- In PIRLS 2006, the average U.S. 4th-graders' reading literacy score (540) was above the PIRLS scale average of 500, but below that of 4th-graders in 7 of the other 39 participating countries and 3 of the 5 participating Canadian provinces.
- Among the 28 countries that participated in both the 2001 and 2006 PIRLS assessments, the average reading literacy score increased in 8 countries and decreased in 6 countries. In the rest of the countries, including the United States, there was no measurable change in the average reading literacy score.

What is the purpose of the PIRLS Field Test?

PIRLS conducts a field test (a small-scale, trial run of the assessment) in every participating country to see if any of its test items are biased because of national, social, or cultural differences. Statistical analyses of student answers are also conducted to check for evidence of differences in student performance across countries that could indicate a linguistic or conceptual translation problem. Test questions that are found to be problematic are dropped from the assessment or scaled differently.

In the spring of 2010, the United States will participate in the PIRLS field study to test the viability of new items and procedures to be used in PIRLS 2011. The field test will ensure a fair assessment for U.S. students and also provide valuable information about ways to reduce the time and effort required of schools and students to participate in PIRLS.

What type of reading assessment is PIRLS?

PIRLS is designed to reflect the reading curriculum used in participating countries. PIRLS asks students to read two texts, either two literary texts (narrative fiction, generally drawn from children's books), two informational texts (typically excerpts from biographies, step-by-step instructions, or scientific or non-fictional materials), or one of each type. It then asks students about a dozen questions—both multiple-choice and open-ended "constructed

response” questions—about the texts. These questions may range from identifying the place, time, and actions of the main characters or events to interpreting how characters might feel, why events occurred, or what the passage means overall (e.g., does the story teach a lesson?). Examples of released PIRLS test items can be viewed at http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008017_2.pdf.

PIRLS is also meant to study home and school factors associated with children’s reading literacy by the fourth grade. To that end, PIRLS will also administer questionnaires to students, their teachers, and the principals of their schools. The questions are designed to measure key aspects of students’ home and school environments. In this way, PIRLS provides each country with a rich source of information on the factors influencing reading literacy.

[Insert bubble or sidebar somewhere]

PIRLS assesses reading for literary experience and for acquiring and using information. PIRLS asks students to engage in a full repertoire of reading skills and strategies, including

- Focusing on and retrieving explicitly stated information
- Making straightforward inferences
- Interpreting and integrating ideas and information
- Examining or evaluating content, language, and textual elements.

For questions about PIRLS 2011,
contact the PIRLS Information Hotline at
1-888-xxx-xxxx or email to
PIRLS@westat.com

PIRLS logo

IES/NCES logo



NCES is authorized to conduct TIMSS under Section 153, of Public Law 107-279. Information collected will help the U.S. Department of Education’s ongoing efforts to benchmark student achievement in the United States. Participation is voluntary. Data collected may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose (Title V, subtitle A of the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347) and Section 183, Public Law 107-279). Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

Participating countries in PIRLS 2011 (as of June 2009)

Armenia	Denmark	Israel
Australia	Egypt	Italy
Austria	England	Kazakhstan
Azerbaijan	Finland	Kuwait
Bahrain	France	Latvia
Botswana	Georgia	Lithuania
Bulgaria	Germany	Luxembourg
Canada	Honduras	Malta
Chinese Taipei	Hong Kong SAR	Mongolia
Colombia	Hungary	Morocco
Croatia	Indonesia	Netherlands
Czech Republic	Iran	New Zealand

Nigeria
Norway
Oman
Poland
Qatar
Romania

Russian Federation
Scotland
Serbia
Singapore
Slovak Republic
Slovenia

South Africa
Spain
Sweden
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
United States

Timeline of School Activities

	After agreement to participate	1 month before assessment	Assessment day	Benefits
Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies a school coordinator. The school coordinator works with Westat assessment staff to plan for the assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completes a brief School Questionnaire (about the characteristics of the school, its enrollment, resources, policies, and learning environment). Arranges assessment day space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirms space for assessment is problem-free. If necessary, helps to ensure all sampled students attend the assessment session. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receives a \$200 check for the school. Represents the United States in the international study. Receives preliminary and final school reports describing classroom results compared with U.S. and international peers.
School coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works with Westat assessment staff to select an assessment date convenient for the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completes Class Listing Form and Student Listing Forms and returns these to Westat (via fax, mail or email). Ensures parents are notified that their children have been selected for the assessment. Works with assessment staff to identify students with special education needs. Meets with students/teachers as necessary to provide information about the study. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collects completed School and Teacher Questionnaires and returns it to assessment staff. Ensures all sampled students attend the assessment session. Meets with assessment staff and reviews the assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receives a \$100 personal check. Receives U.S. national report with final results.
Teachers of sampled classes	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a Teacher Questionnaire and returns it to the school coordinator prior to assessment day. 	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represent the United States in the international study. Receives preliminary and final school reports describing classroom results compared with U.S. and international peers.
Students	--	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students of the selected classes attend the assessment session and complete the assessment and Student Questionnaire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive a small thank-you gift. Represent the United States in the international study.
Westat assessment staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works with the school to set an assessment date. Helps school coordinator with assessment details. Protects school and student confidentiality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calls the school coordinator to discuss assessment day space and student participation. Selects classroom sample and notifies school of selected classes. Provides School and Teacher Questionnaires to the school coordinator for distribution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducts assessment from start to finish. Furnishes all the assessment materials, pencils, and test booklets. Conducts a brief follow-up interview with the school coordinator at the end of the assessment. Maintains security of all materials. 	