

**PROGRESS IN INTERNATIONAL READING LITERACY STUDY  
(PIRLS 2021) MAIN STUDY RECRUITMENT AND DATA COLLECTION**

**OMB# 1850-0645 v.16**

**APPENDIX A1:  
PIRLS 2021 Main Study Communication Materials**

**National Center for Education Statistics  
U.S. Department of Education  
Institute of Education Sciences  
Washington, DC**

**November 2020  
revised July 2021**

**Appendix A1**  
**PIRLS 2021 Main Study Communication Materials**

**Table of Contents**

PIRLS 2021 Main Study Sample Parent Notification Letter.....	4
PIRLS 2021 Main Study Sample Implicit Consent Letter.....	5
PIRLS 2021 Main Study Implicit Consent Form.....	6
PIRLS 2021 Main Study Sample Explicit Consent Letter.....	7
PIRLS 2021 Main Study Explicit Consent Form.....	8
PIRLS 2021 Main Study Sample Parent Notification Letter - Spanish.....	9
Facts for Parents about PIRLS 2021.....	10
Facts for Parents about PIRLS 2021 – Spanish.....	11
Multi-Language Translation Notice.....	12
PIRLS 2021 Main Study State Letter [Optional Incentive Information, Optional COVID-19 Clause].....	13
PIRLS 2021 Main Study School District Letter [First Tier/Second Tier, Optional COVID-19 Clause].....	15
PIRLS 2021 Main Study Private School District Letter [First Tier/Late Sub or NAEP Overlap, Optional COVID-19 Clause].....	17
PIRLS 2021 Main Study School Letter [First Tier/Second Tier, Optional COVID-19 Clause].....	19
PIRLS 2021 Main Study Private School Letter [First Tier/Late Sub or NAEP Overlap, Optional COVID-19 Clause].....	21
PIRLS 2021 Main Study Brochure Content: 8 ½ X 11in Tri-fold.....	23
PIRLS 2021 Main Study FAQ.....	26
Summary of School Activities: PIRLS 2021 Main Study.....	28
PIRLS 2021 COVID-19 Protocols.....	29
REVISED PIRLS 2021 Main Study School District Letter [First Tier/Second Tier, Optional COVID-19 Clause].....	31
REVISED PIRLS 2021 Main Study Private School District Letter [First Tier/Late Sub or NAEP Overlap, Optional COVID-19 Clause].....	33
REVISED PIRLS 2021 Main Study School Letter [First Tier/Second Tier, Optional COVID-19 Clause].....	35
REVISED PIRLS 2021 Main Study Private School Letter [First Tier/Late Sub or NAEP Overlap, Optional COVID-19 Clause].....	37
REVISED PIRLS 2021 Main Study Brochure Content: 8 ½ X 11in Tri-fold.....	39
REVISED PIRLS 2021 Main Study FAQ.....	42
REVISED Summary of School Activities: PIRLS 2021 Main Study.....	44

# PIRLS 2021 Main Study Sample Parent Notification Letter

(red for customization)

SCHOOL LETTERHEAD
-------------------

[Date]

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Our school has accepted an invitation from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, to participate in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) this fall. PIRLS provides important information for benchmarking student performance in reading in the United States against countries around the world.

{Insert number} of our 5th grade classes will take part. {This/One of these} is your child's class. I urge you to support this effort by encouraging your child to participate; however, participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Previous experience suggests that students enjoy taking part, and participating students will receive a small gift, which we think they will also like.

It is important for each selected student to take part in the study in order to have an accurate picture of what U.S. students can do in reading. The enclosed summary sheet provides background information about PIRLS, explains what is involved, and gives a phone number and email address to contact with any additional questions.

All of the information collected is protected as required by law. NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3)(iii) and 99.35). All of the information 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 except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). Students and schools are never identified in any reports. All reported statistics refer to the United States as a whole.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about this important study.

Sincerely,

[School Official]

Enclosures: Facts for Parents about PIRLS 2021

*The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3))*

*(iii) and 99.35). All of the information provided by school staff and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by NCES, part of the U.S. Department of Education, and the data are being collected by Westat. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0645.*

## PIRLS 2021 Main Study Sample Implicit Consent Letter

(yellow highlight for mail merge; red for customization)

SCHOOL LETTERHEAD
-------------------

[Date]

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Our school has accepted an invitation from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, to participate in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) this fall. PIRLS provides important information for benchmarking student performance in reading in the United States against countries around the world.

{Insert number} of our 5th grade classes will take part. {This/One of these} is your child's class. I urge you to support this effort by encouraging your child to participate; however, participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Previous experience suggests that students enjoy taking part, and participating students will receive a small gift, which we think they will also like.

It is important for each selected student to take part in the study in order to have an accurate picture of what U.S. students can do in reading. The enclosed summary sheet provides background information about PIRLS, explains what is involved, and gives a phone number and email address to contact with any additional questions.

All of the information collected is protected as required by law. NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3)(iii) and 99.35). All of the information 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 except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). Students and schools are never identified in any reports. All reported statistics refer to the United States as a whole.

If you have any objection to your child joining in the PIRLS activities, please let us know by completing the attached consent form and returning it to the school.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about this important study.

Sincerely,

[School Official]

[Enclosures/Attachments]:

Facts for Parents about PIRLS 2021  
Parent/Guardian Consent Form

*The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3)(iii) and 99.35). All of the information provided by school staff and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by NCES,*

*part of the U.S. Department of Education, and the data are being collected by Westat. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0645.*

**PIRLS 2021 Main Study Implicit Consent Form**  
**Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2021**  
**Parent/Guardian Consent Form**

Your child has been asked to participate in an international study of student learning called the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Approximately 250 schools across the United States will participate in PIRLS 2021, and your child's fifth grade class was one of the classes selected to represent the U.S. Each student who participates will receive a small gift. The student assessment will be administered by a team of researchers from Westat on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), with the U. S. Department of Education.

**If you grant permission for your child to participate in PIRLS 2021, you do not need to return this form.**

**If you do not consent to your child's participation in PIRLS 2021, please return this form to your child's school as soon as possible.**

**I do not grant permission** for my child, \_\_\_\_\_, to participate in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of parent or guardian)

Date of signature: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

PLEASE PRINT:

**Student name:** \_\_\_\_\_

School name: \_\_\_\_\_

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

## PIRLS 2021 Main Study Sample Explicit Consent Letter

(yellow highlight for mail merge; red for customization)

SCHOOL LETTERHEAD
-------------------

[Date]

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Our school has accepted an invitation from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, to participate in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) this fall. PIRLS provides important information for benchmarking student performance in reading in the United States against countries around the world.

{Insert number} of our 5th grade classes will take part. {This/One of these} is your child's class. I urge you to support this effort by encouraging your child to participate; however, participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Previous experience suggests that students enjoy taking part, and participating students will receive a small gift, which we think they will also like.

It is important for each selected student to take part in the study in order to have an accurate picture of what U.S. students graders can do in reading. The enclosed summary sheet provides background information about PIRLS, explains what is involved, and gives a phone number and email address to contact with any additional questions.

All of the information collected is protected as required by law. NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3)(iii) and 99.35). All of the information 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 except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). Students and schools are never identified in any reports. All reported statistics refer to the United States as a whole.

Before we can allow your child to join in the PIRLS activities, we must have your written consent. Please let us know by completing the attached form and returning it to the school.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about this important study and to consider your child's participation in it.

Sincerely,

[School Official]

[Enclosures/Attachments]:

Facts for Parents about PIRLS 2021  
Parent/Guardian Consent Form

*The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3)(iii) and 99.35). All of the information provided by school staff and students may be used only for*



*statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by NCES, part of the U.S. Department of Education, and the data are being collected by Westat. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0645.*

**PIRLS 2021 Main Study Explicit Consent Form**  
**Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2021**

**Parent/Guardian Consent Form**

Your child has been asked to participate in an international study of student learning called the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Approximately 250 schools across the United States will participate in PIRLS 2021, and your child's fifth grade class was one of the classes selected to represent the U.S. Each student who participates will receive a small gift. The student assessment will be administered by a team of researchers from Westat on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), with the U. S. Department of Education.

Yes, I grant permission for my child to participate in PIRLS 2021.

No, I do not grant permission for my child to participate in PIRLS 2021.

---

(Signature of parent or guardian)

Date of signature: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

PLEASE PRINT:

**Student name:** \_\_\_\_\_

School name: \_\_\_\_\_

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

## PIRLS 2021 Main Study Sample Parent Notification Letter - Spanish

(red for customization)

SCHOOL LETTERHEAD

[Date]

Estimado padre/madre o tutor,

Nuestra escuela ha aceptado una invitación del Centro Nacional de Estadísticas de la Educación (NCES, por sus siglas en inglés), parte del Departamento de Educación de Estados Unidos, para participar en el Estudio Internacional Sobre el Progreso en el Aprendizaje de la Lectura (PIRLS, por sus siglas en inglés) este otoño. PIRLS proporciona información importante para evaluar el rendimiento de los estudiantes en Estados Unidos en lectura en comparación con otros países del mundo.

Participarán {Insert number} de nuestras clases de 5° grado. {Esta/Una de estas} es la clase de su hijo(a). Quisiéramos pedirle que apoye esta iniciativa animando a su hijo(a) a participar; sin embargo, la participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria. Las experiencias anteriores sugieren que los estudiantes disfrutan de la participación. Además, los estudiantes que participen recibirán un pequeño regalo que creemos también les gustará.

Para tener una imagen precisa de lo que los estudiantes de cuarto grado en Estados Unidos pueden hacer en lectura, es importante que cada estudiante seleccionado participe en el estudio. El resumen adjunto ofrece información de trasfondo de PIRLS, explica lo que implica la participación en el estudio para cada estudiante seleccionado e incluye un número de teléfono y un correo electrónico de contacto donde usted podrá encontrar respuestas a cualquier pregunta que tenga.

Toda la información que se reúna está protegida, como lo exige la ley. El NCES está autorizado a realizar este estudio de acuerdo con la Ley de reforma de ciencias de la educación de 2002 (ESRA, 2002), Código de Estados Unidos, Título 20, Sección 9543) y a obtener los registros educativos de los estudiantes que mantienen las agencias o instituciones de educación con el propósito de evaluar los programas que cuentan con el apoyo federal de acuerdo con la Ley de derechos de educación y privacidad de las familias (FERPA, artículo 34, secciones 99.31(a)(3)(iii) y 99.35). Toda la información proporcionada por las escuelas, el personal y los estudiantes únicamente se puede usar con fines estadísticos y no se puede dar a conocer ni usar de alguna manera que pueda identificar a los participantes para ningún otro fin, excepto cuando lo exige la ley (20 U.S.C., § 9573 y 6 U.S.C. §151). En los informes nunca se identifica ni a los estudiantes ni a las escuelas. Todas las estadísticas publicadas se refieren a Estados Unidos en conjunto.

Gracias por tomarse el tiempo de informarse acerca de este importante estudio.

Atentamente,

[School Official]

Se adjuntan los siguientes documentos: Información para los padres acerca de PIRLS 2021

*El NCES está autorizado a realizar este estudio de acuerdo con la Ley de reforma de ciencias de la educación de 2002 (ESRA, 2002), Código de Estados Unidos, Título 20, Sección 9543.). Toda la información proporcionada por las escuelas, el personal y los estudiantes únicamente se puede usar con fines estadísticos y no se puede dar a conocer ni usar de alguna manera que pueda identificar a los participantes para ningún otro fin, excepto cuando lo exige la ley (20 U.S.C., § 9573 y 6 U.S.C. §151). En Estados Unidos, el Centro Nacional de Estadísticas de la Educación (NCES, por sus siglas en inglés), el cual forma parte del Departamento de Educación de Estados Unidos, realiza el estudio PIRLS y Westat reúne los datos. La Oficina de administración y presupuesto de Estados Unidos ha aprobado la obtención de estos datos bajo el número OMB # 1850-0645.*

## **Facts for Parents about PIRLS 2021**

Between October and November of 2021, your child's school will be one of about 250 nationwide taking part in PIRLS 2021. Within each school, 5th grade classrooms were selected randomly to represent the nation's students. All students from selected classrooms are invited to participate, and your child was among those students selected to take part in PIRLS 2021.

### **What is PIRLS?**

PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) is an international assessment that measures student learning in reading. Every five years since 2001, PIRLS documents worldwide trends in the reading knowledge of students. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the U.S. Department of Education conducts U.S. participation in PIRLS. Along with more than 50 other nations, the U.S. will take part in the 2021 PIRLS cycle as we did in 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016. For the first time, PIRLS will be completely digital and administered on a tablet with a keyboard. Some students will take a paper and pencil assessment in order to bridge the digital version of PIRLS to the previous paper and pencil version.

### **What is involved?**

PIRLS staff will visit the school and administer the study. The main assessment will take approximately 2.5 hours (including time for the directions and two breaks) and will include an online questionnaire that asks students about themselves and their educational experience.

### **What are the benefits?**

The nation as a whole benefits from PIRLS by having a greater understanding of how the reading knowledge and skills of U.S. students compared with students from other countries. Schools that participate in PIRLS will receive \$200, and each student who participates will receive a small gift.

### **Who administers PIRLS?**

The entire assessment is administered by trained staff from Westat, a research organization under contract to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics.

All of the information collected is protected as required by law. NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3)(iii) and 99.35). All of the information 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 except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). Students and schools are never identified in any reports. All reported statistics refer to the United States as a whole.

### **Where can I find out more about PIRLS?**

More information about PIRLS is available at the PIRLS website at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/PIRLS> or the PIRLS International Study Center website at <http://pirls.org>. Or if you would like to contact a PIRLS staff member directly, please feel free to call the PIRLS Help Desk at 1-855-951-1215 or email us at [PIRLS@westat.com](mailto:PIRLS@westat.com).

IES logo

## **Facts for Parents about PIRLS 2021 – Spanish**

### **Información para los padres acerca del estudio PIRLS 2021**

Entre octubre y noviembre de 2021, la escuela de su hijo(a) será una de aproximadamente 250 escuelas en todo el país que participará en el estudio PIRLS 2021. Dentro de cada escuela, se seleccionaron al azar a clases de quinto grado para representar a los estudiantes del país. A todos los estudiantes de las clases seleccionadas se les ha invitado a participar y su hijo(a) está entre los estudiantes seleccionados para participar en el estudio PIRLS 2021.

#### **¿Qué es PIRLS?**

El Estudio Internacional Sobre el Progreso en el Aprendizaje de la Lectura o PIRLS por sus siglas en inglés, es una evaluación internacional que mide el aprendizaje de los estudiantes en lectura. Cada cinco años, desde el 2001, PIRLS documenta las tendencias mundiales en el conocimiento de lectura de los estudiantes de cuarto grado. El Centro Nacional de Estadísticas de la Educación (NCES, por sus siglas en inglés) dentro del Departamento de Educación de Estados Unidos facilita la participación de Estados Unidos en PIRLS. Junto con más de 50 países, Estados Unidos participará en el ciclo de PIRLS para el 2021 así como lo hicimos en 2001, 2006, 2011 y 2016. Por primera vez, PIRLS se administrará de manera totalmente electrónica en una tableta con teclado. Algunos estudiantes tomarán la versión impresa de la evaluación para poder conciliar la versión digital de PIRLS con la versión anterior impresa.

#### **¿Qué implica?**

El personal de PIRLS visitará la escuela y administrará el estudio. La evaluación principal tomará aproximadamente 2 horas y media e incluirá un cuestionario por Internet en el que se les pregunta a los estudiantes sobre ellos mismos y sobre sus experiencias educativas.

#### **¿Cuáles son los beneficios?**

El país en conjunto se beneficia de PIRLS al contar con una mejor comprensión de cómo el conocimiento y las habilidades en lectura de los estudiantes de Estados Unidos se comparan con los estudiantes a nivel mundial. Las escuelas que participen en PIRLS recibirán 200 dólares y cada estudiante que participe recibirá un pequeño regalo.

#### **¿Quién administra PIRLS?**

La totalidad de la evaluación la administra personal capacitado de Westat, una compañía de estudios de investigación que tiene un contrato con el Centro Nacional de Estadísticas de la Educación del Departamento de Educación de Estados Unidos.

Toda la información que se reúna está protegida, como lo exige la ley. El NCES está autorizado a realizar este estudio de acuerdo con la Ley de reforma de ciencias de la educación de 2002 (ESRA, 2002), Código de Estados Unidos, Título 20, Sección 9543.). Toda la información proporcionada por las escuelas, el personal y los estudiantes únicamente se puede usar con fines estadísticos y no se puede dar a conocer ni usar de alguna manera que pueda identificar a los participantes para ningún otro fin, excepto





дитини. Якщо необхідно, попрохайте перекласти це повідомлення.	
والے کام کے متعلق ہے پیارے والدین یہ ضروری نوٹس آپ کے بچے کے سکول میں ہونے اگر ضرورت ہو تو اس کا ترجمہ کروا لیں	آردو
Kính gōi quý vò phụ huynh/Quý vò giám hoặ; Thoâng bàø raát quan troĩng. Noãi dung laø quan taâm veà sinh hoãit sãp tõi của con quý vò taĩi trõøng. Neáu cần thiếť, xin nhõø ngõøøi naøø hieãu tieáng Anh dòch thoâng bàøø naøø cho quý vò.	TIEÁNG VIEÁT

NOTE: School coordinator may provide this translation notice to parents/guardians to indicate whether the parental/guardian consent materials need to be translated, if necessary.

## PIRLS 2021 Main Study State Letter [Optional Incentive Information, Optional COVID-19 Clause]

(yellow highlight for mail merge; red for customization)

[Date]

[Title] [Name First] [Name Last]

[Title/Department]

[State]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

The United States is participating in an important international study in 2021: the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). PIRLS has measured trends in reading achievement in countries around the world since 2001 and will be administered digitally for the first time in 2021. To bridge both versions of the assessment, most students will take PIRLS on supplied tablets with keyboards, while others will take it on paper with pencils. Results from PIRLS are used by researchers and policymakers to chart national progress against international standards and other countries around the world, informing national discussions about international competitiveness.

PIRLS is described in more detail in the enclosed materials. In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB#1850-0645. Study findings will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. For information on the confidentiality of the data collected, please see the enclosed FAQ.

NCES is in contact with your state assessment director and NAEP State Coordinator to keep them informed about PIRLS and how it fits in with other NCES data collections, and to facilitate recruitment of sampled schools. While participation in this study is voluntary, your support of school participation in your state is invaluable so that the United States has a nationally representative sample of schools across the country. [Participating schools will receive a monetary incentive, and each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time and effort.]

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose significant challenges for state agencies, districts, and schools, while also affecting us all personally. / The recent coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to have an impact on the way districts and schools operate. NCES recognizes these challenges and the flexible approaches needed to administer PIRLS in 2021. As in previous years, PIRLS representatives will provide significant support to schools by administering the assessment and bringing all necessary materials and equipment, including sanitized tablets on which students take the assessment. PIRLS representatives' top priority is to protect the health and safety of students and school staff. For more information about PIRLS administration COVID-19 protocols, please see the enclosed COVID-19 Protocols document.

If you have questions about the study, please do not hesitate to call Laura Egan at Westat at 1-855-951-1215 or send an email to [PIRLS@westat.com](mailto:PIRLS@westat.com). Westat is under contract to NCES to collect the PIRLS data. You may also get more information about this study by contacting Dr. Sheila Thompson at NCES at (202) 245-8330 or [sheila.thompson@ed.gov](mailto:sheila.thompson@ed.gov), or by visiting the PIRLS website at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/PIRLS>.

Thank you for your time and support of this important international study.

Sincerely,

Peggy G. Carr, Ph.D.  
Associate Commissioner, NCES

cc: [State assessment director]  
[NAEP State Coordinator]

**Enclosures/Attachments: PIRLS Folder / PIRLS Brochure, PIRLS COVID-19 Protocols**

*The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3) (iii) and 99.35). All of the information you provide may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by NCES, part of the U.S. Department of Education, and the data are being collected by Westat. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0645.*

## PIRLS 2021 Main Study School District Letter [First Tier/Second Tier, Optional COVID-19 Clause]

(yellow highlight for mail merge; red for customization)

[Date]

[Title] [Superintendent First Name] [Superintendent Last Name]

[School District]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Superintendent Last Name]:

The United States is participating in an important international study in 2021: the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). PIRLS has measured trends in reading achievement in countries around the world since 2001 and will be administered digitally for the first time in 2021. To bridge both versions of the assessment, most students will take PIRLS on supplied tablets with keyboards, while others will take it on paper with pencils. Results from PIRLS are used by researchers and policymakers to chart national progress against international standards and other countries around the world, informing national discussions about international competitiveness.

I am writing to notify you that one or more schools in your district have been randomly selected to participate in PIRLS in the fall of 2021 and ask for your support of selected schools.

### Benefits of Your Support and of Participation

- While participation in this study is voluntary, your support of school participation in your district is invaluable so that the United States has a nationally representative sample of schools across the country.
- Participating schools will receive \$200, and each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time. / We understand that we are asking schools to participate in PIRLS later in the school year when school calendars are set, <or> We understand that we are asking some schools to participate in PIRLS in addition to participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and therefore are offering each school <up to \$800> as a thank you for participation. In addition, each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time and effort.
- Teachers will receive \$20 as a thank you for completing the questionnaire.
- Each student who participates will receive a small gift as a token of appreciation.

### Next Steps

The list of selected schools in your district is attached. I ask for your support of participation in PIRLS. Please include the PIRLS assessment window dates - [Assessment Window Dates] - on your district test calendar. [NAEP State Coordinator], your NAEP State Coordinator, will contact your staff with additional information.

### More Information

PIRLS is described in more detail in the enclosed materials. In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, and its data collection is administered by Westat in Rockville, Maryland. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB#1850-0645.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose significant challenges for districts and schools, while also affecting us all personally. / The recent coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to have an impact on the way districts and schools operate. NCES recognizes these challenges and the flexible approaches needed to administer PIRLS in 2021. As in previous years, PIRLS representatives will provide significant support to schools by administering the assessment and bringing all necessary materials and equipment, including sanitized tablets on which students take the assessment. PIRLS representatives' top priority is to protect the health and safety of students and school staff. For more information about PIRLS administration COVID-19 protocols, please see the enclosed COVID-19 Protocols document.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact [NAEP State Coordinator], call the PIRLS Help Desk at 1-855-951-1215, or send an email to PIRLS@westat.com. You may also get more information about this study by contacting Dr. Sheila Thompson at NCES at (202) 245-8330 or sheila.thompson@ed.gov, or by visiting the PIRLS website at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/PIRLS>.

I know that I can count on you to help accomplish our goal of 100 percent participation. Thank you for your time and support of this important international study.

Sincerely,

[Name of Chief State School Officer]

Enclosures/Attachments: PIRLS Folder / PIRLS Brochure, PIRLS COVID-19 Protocols

cc: [State Testing Director]  
[District Test Coordinator]  
[NAEP State Coordinator]

*The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3) (iii) and 99.35). All of the information you provide may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by NCES, part of the U.S. Department of Education, and the data are being collected by Westat. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0645.*

## PIRLS 2021 Main Study Private School District Letter [First Tier/Late Sub or NAEP Overlap, Optional COVID-19 Clause]

(yellow highlight for mail merge; red for customization)

[Date]

[Title] [Superintendent First Name] [Superintendent Last Name]

[School District]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Superintendent Last Name]:

The United States is participating in an important international study in 2021: the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). PIRLS has measured trends in reading achievement in countries around the world since 2001 and will be administered digitally for the first time in 2021. To bridge both versions of the assessment, most students will take PIRLS on supplied tablets with keyboards, while others will take it on paper with pencils. Results from PIRLS are used by researchers and policymakers to chart national progress against international standards and other countries around the world, informing national discussions about international competitiveness.

In [DioceseParish], [School Name] has/have been randomly selected to participate in PIRLS in the fall of 2021. I am writing to ask [DioceseParish] to support the participation of [School Name/s].

### Benefits of Your Support and of Participation

- While participation in this study is voluntary, your support of school participation in your [DioceseParish] is invaluable so that the United States has a nationally representative sample of schools across the country.
- Private schools account for about 25 percent of U.S. schools and educate about 10 percent of U.S. schoolchildren. Thus, without private schools and their students participating in PIRLS, PIRLS data cannot accurately describe schooling in the United States or continue to measure U.S. trends.
- Participating schools will receive \$800, and each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time. / We understand that we are asking schools to participate in PIRLS later in the school year when school calendars are set, <or> We understand that we are asking some schools to participate in PIRLS in addition to participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and therefore are offering each school <up to \$800> as a thank you for participation. In addition, each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time and effort.
- Teachers will receive \$20 as a thank you for completing the questionnaire.
- Each student who participates will receive a small gift as a token of appreciation.

### Next Steps

Please include the PIRLS assessment window—[Assessment Window Dates]—on the [DioceseParish] test calendar. [Name of representative], a PIRLS representative, will contact your staff with additional information. Additionally, [the principal/principals] at [the] selected school[s] will be notified in the next two weeks to allow them to get the assessment date on their school calendars and incorporate PIRLS into the planned school program.

## More Information

PIRLS is described in more detail in the enclosed materials. In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, and its data collection is administered by Westat in Rockville, Maryland. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB#1850-0645.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose significant challenges for districts and schools, while also affecting us all personally. / The recent coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to have an impact on the way districts and schools operate. NCES recognizes these challenges and the flexible approaches needed to administer PIRLS in 2021. As in previous years, PIRLS representatives will provide significant support to schools by administering the assessment and bringing all necessary materials and equipment, including sanitized tablets on which students take the assessment. PIRLS representatives' top priority is to protect the health and safety of students and school staff. For more information about PIRLS administration COVID-19 protocols, please see the enclosed COVID-19 Protocols document.

If you have questions about PIRLS, please do not hesitate to call the PIRLS Help Desk at 1-855-951-1215 or send an email to [PIRLS@westat.com](mailto:PIRLS@westat.com). You may also get more information about this study by contacting Dr. Sheila Thompson at NCES at (202) 245-8330 or [sheila.thompson@ed.gov](mailto:sheila.thompson@ed.gov), or by visiting the PIRLS website at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls>.

I know that I can count on you to help accomplish our goal of 100 percent participation. Thank you for your time and support of this important international study.

Sincerely,

Peggy G. Carr, Ph.D.  
Associate Commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics

**Enclosures/Attachments: PIRLS Folder / PIRLS Brochure, PIRLS COVID-19 Protocols**

*The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3) (iii) and 99.35). All of the information you provide may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by NCES, part of the U.S. Department of Education, and the data are being collected by Westat. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0645.*

## PIRLS 2021 Main Study School Letter [First Tier/Second Tier, Optional COVID-19 Clause]

(yellow highlight for mail merge; red for customization)

[Date]

[Title] [Name First] [Name Last]

[School District]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

I am writing to inform you that [school name] has been randomly selected to represent schools across the United States by participating in an important international study in 2021: the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). PIRLS has measured trends in reading achievement in countries around the world since 2001 and will be administered digitally for the first time in 2021. To bridge both versions of the assessment, most students will take PIRLS on supplied tablets with keyboards, while others will take it on paper with pencils. Results from PIRLS are used by researchers and policymakers to chart national progress against international standards and other countries around the world, informing national discussions about international competitiveness.

### Benefits of Your Support and of Participation

- While participation in this study is voluntary, it is important for each selected school to participate in the study in order to ensure that the United States has an accurate picture of what our students can do in reading.
- Participating schools will receive \$200, and each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time. / We understand that we are asking schools to participate in PIRLS later in the school year when school calendars are set, <or> We understand that we are asking some schools to participate in PIRLS in addition to participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and therefore are offering each school <up to \$800> as a thank you for participation. In addition, each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time and effort.
- Teachers will receive \$20 as a thank you for completing the questionnaire.
- Each student who participates will receive a small gift as a token of appreciation.

### Next Steps

Your scheduled assessment date is [Assessment date]. Within the next few days, I will contact you to discuss your participation. <or> Within the next few days, [Name of representative], a representative from PIRLS, will contact you to discuss your participation. Should there be a conflict on this date, a PIRLS representative will work with you to identify an alternative time. Within the next few weeks, I will ask you to identify a school coordinator and will provide detailed information about the assessment. PIRLS representatives will provide significant support to schools, bring all necessary materials, including tablets and all equipment, and administer the assessment.

### More Information

PIRLS is described in more detail in the enclosed materials. In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, and its data collection is administered by Westat in Rockville,



Maryland. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB#1850-0645.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose significant challenges for schools, while also affecting us all personally. / The recent coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to have an impact on the way districts and schools operate. NCES recognizes these challenges and the flexible approaches needed to administer PIRLS in 2021. As in previous years, PIRLS representatives will provide significant support to your school by administering the assessment and bringing all necessary materials and equipment, including sanitized tablets on which students take the assessment. PIRLS representatives' top priority is to protect the health and safety of students and school staff. For more information about PIRLS administration COVID-19 protocols, please see the enclosed COVID-19 Protocols document.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the PIRLS Help Desk at 1-855-951-1215, or send an email to PIRLS@westat.com. You may also get more information about this study by contacting Dr. Sheila Thompson at NCES at (202) 245-8330 or sheila.thompson@ed.gov, or by visiting the PIRLS website at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls/>.

Your participation in PIRLS 2021 is very important to its success. We need to ensure that students in schools like yours are represented in our evaluation of assessment items and questionnaires. Thank you for your time and for supporting this important international study.

Sincerely,

[Name of Coordinator] <or> Peggy G. Carr, Ph.D  
NAEP State Coordinator <or> Associate Commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics

cc: [District Test Coordinator]

Enclosures/Attachments: PIRLS Folder / PIRLS Brochure, PIRLS COVID-19 Protocols

*The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3) (iii) and 99.35). All of the information you provide may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by NCES, part of the U.S. Department of Education, and the data are being collected by Westat. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0645.*

## PIRLS 2021 Main Study Private School Letter [**First Tier/Late Sub or NAEP Overlap, Optional COVID-19 Clause**]

(yellow highlight for mail merge; red for customization)

[Date]

[Title] [Name First] [Name Last]

[School District]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

I am writing to inform you that [school name] has been randomly selected to represent schools across the United States by participating in an important international study in 2021: the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). PIRLS has measured trends in reading achievement in countries around the world since 2021 and will be administered digitally for the first time in 2021. To bridge both versions of the assessment, most students will take PIRLS on supplied tablets with keyboards, while others will take it on paper with pencils. Results from PIRLS are used by researchers and policymakers to chart national progress against international standards and other countries around the world, informing national discussions about international competitiveness.

Private schools account for about 25 percent of U.S. schools and educate about 10 percent of U.S. schoolchildren. Thus, without private schools and their students participating in PIRLS, PIRLS data cannot accurately describe schooling in the United States or continue to measure U.S. trends.

### **Benefits of Your Support and of Participation**

- While participation in this study is voluntary, it is important for each selected school to take part in the study in order to ensure that the United States has an accurate picture of what our students can do in reading.
- Private schools account for about 25 percent of U.S. schools and educate about 10 percent of U.S. schoolchildren. Thus, without private schools and their students participating in PIRLS, PIRLS data cannot accurately describe schooling in the United States or continue to measure U.S. trends.
- Participating schools will receive \$800, and each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time. / We understand that we are asking schools to participate in PIRLS later in the school year when school calendars are set, <or> We understand that we are asking some schools to participate in PIRLS in addition to participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and therefore are offering each school <up to \$800> as a thank you for participation. In addition, each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time and effort.
- Teachers will receive \$20 as a thank you for completing the questionnaire.
- Each student who participates will receive a small gift as a token of appreciation.

### **Next Steps**

Your scheduled assessment date is [Assessment date]. [Name of representative], a representative from PIRLS, will contact you within the next few weeks to discuss your participation.

### **More Information**

PIRLS is described in more detail in the enclosed materials. In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, and its data collection is administered by Westat in Rockville, Maryland. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB#1850-0645.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose significant challenges for schools, while also affecting us all personally. / The recent coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to have an impact on the way districts and schools operate. NCES recognizes these challenges and the flexible approaches needed to administer PIRLS in 2021. As in previous years, PIRLS representatives will provide significant support to your school by administering the assessment and bringing all necessary materials and equipment, including sanitized tablets on which students take the assessment. PIRLS representatives' top priority is to protect the health and safety of students and school staff. For more information about PIRLS administration COVID-19 protocols, please see the enclosed COVID-19 Protocols document.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the PIRLS Help Desk at 1-855-951-1215, or send an email to [PIRLS@westat.com](mailto:PIRLS@westat.com). You may also get more information about this study by contacting Dr. Sheila Thompson at NCES at (202) 245-8330 or [sheila.thompson@ed.gov](mailto:sheila.thompson@ed.gov), or by visiting the PIRLS website at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/PIRLS>.

Your participation in PIRLS 2021 is very important to its success. Thank you for your time and for supporting this important international study.

Sincerely,

Peggy G. Carr, Ph.D.  
Associate Commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics

**Enclosures/Attachments: PIRLS Folder / PIRLS Brochure, PIRLS COVID-19 Protocols**

*The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3) (iii) and 99.35). All of the information you provide may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by NCES, part of the U.S. Department of Education, and the data are being collected by Westat. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0645.*

## **PIRLS 2021 Main Study Brochure Content: 8 ½ X 11in Tri-fold**

**Title page:** IES Logo

Map of world

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2021

### **Inside panels:**

#### **What is PIRLS?**

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international assessment and research project designed to measure reading achievement at the fifth-grade level, as well as school and teacher practices related to instruction. PIRLS was previously assessed in 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016 with the United States participating in all past assessments. In 2021, PIRLS will involve students from more than 50 countries, including the United States. For the first time, PIRLS will be completely electronic and administered on a tablet with a keyboard. This new format for the assessment is called *digitalPIRLS*.

PIRLS is sponsored by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and conducted 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 of U.S. fifth-grade students with that of their peers in countries around the world. PIRLS 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.

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

#### **What type of assessment is PIRLS?**

PIRLS is developed through an international consensus-building process involving input from U.S. and international experts in reading 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 provide written answers. Examples of PIRLS items are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls/released.asp>.

#### **Key findings from PIRLS 2016**

At grade 5, the U.S. average reading score (549) was higher than the PIRLS scale centerpoint of 500. The U.S. was among the top 13 education systems (12 education systems had higher averages and 15 were not measurably different) and scored higher, on average, than 30 education systems.

In the new 2016 ePIRLS online assessment the U.S. average score was 557, which was lower than the averages for 3 education systems, higher than the average for 10 education systems, and not measurably different from the averages for 2 education systems.

## Back panels:

### Other information collected by PIRLS

PIRLS is more than an assessment of student knowledge in reading. PIRLS 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, PIRLS provides each country with a rich source of information on the factors related to reading achievement.

### Countries that participated in PIRLS and ePIRLS in 2016

Country	2016 PIRLS	ePIRLS
Australia	●	
Austria	●	
Azerbaijan	●	
Bahrain	●	
Belgium (Flemish)-BEL	●	
Belgium (French)-BEL	●	
Bulgaria	●	
Canada	●	●
Chile	●	
Chinese Taipei	●	●
Czech Republic	●	
Denmark	●	●
Egypt	●	
England-GBR	●	
Finland	●	
France	●	
Georgia	●	●
Germany	●	
Hong Kong-CHN	●	
Hungary	●	
Iran, Islamic Republic of	●	
Ireland	●	●
Israel	●	●
Italy	●	●
Kazakhstan	●	
Kuwait	●	
Latvia	●	
Lithuania	●	
Macao-CHN	●	
Malta	●	
Morocco	●	
Netherlands	●	
New Zealand	●	
Northern Ireland-GBR	●	
Norway	●	●
Oman	●	
Poland	●	
Portugal	●	●
Qatar	●	
Russian Federation	●	
Saudi Arabia	●	
Singapore	●	●
Slovak Republic	●	

Slovenia	●	●
South Africa	●	
Spain	●	
Sweden	●	●
Trinidad and Tobago	●	
United Arab Emirates	●	●
United States	●	●

### Study Authorization and Confidentiality

All of the information collected is protected as required by law. NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3)(iii) and 99.35). Information collected will help the U.S. Department of Education's ongoing efforts to benchmark student achievement in the United States.

Participation is voluntary. All of the information provided by school staff and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0645. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

IES logo goes here

For questions about PIRLS 2021, contact the PIRLS Help Desk at 1-855-951-1215 or email [PIRLS@westat.com](mailto:PIRLS@westat.com).

# PIRLS 2021 Main Study FAQ

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

## IES Logo

## Frequently Asked Questions

PIRLS 2021

### What is PIRLS?

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international assessment and research project designed to measure trends in reading achievement at the fifth-grade level as well as school and teacher practices related to instruction. Since 2001, PIRLS has been administered every 5 years. PIRLS 2021, the fifth study in the series, will involve students from more than 50 countries, including the United States. For the first time, PIRLS will be completely electronic and administered on a tablet with a keyboard. This new format for the assessment is called *digitalPIRLS*.

### Why was my school selected for participation?

Your school was randomly selected so that the overall U.S. sample will be 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.

### Why should my school and students participate?

PIRLS informs national discussions about education policy as well as international competitiveness. It is important for selected schools to participate because they represent similar U.S. schools across the country. When students participate and give their best effort, PIRLS gets the most accurate measure possible of student achievement in the U.S. to compare with other countries.

### Will all our fifth-grade students be asked to participate?

It depends on the number of fifth-grade classrooms in the school. In schools with only one or two such classrooms, all students will be asked to participate. In schools with more than two such classrooms, only students in two randomly selected classrooms will be asked to participate. In addition, some students with special needs or who are English language learners may be excused from the assessment as needed.

### Who conducts the PIRLS assessment?

The entire assessment process will be administered by trained staff from Westat, a research organization under contract with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education. All of the information collected is protected as required by law. NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3)(iii) and 99.35), and approval of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget under OMB # 1850-0645.

### How are the teacher and school questionnaires administered?

The teacher and school questionnaires are administered either online from a secure website or via a hardcopy form. Teacher questionnaires take about 30 minutes to complete and ask teachers questions about their experience, available resources, and instructional practices. School questionnaires take about 35 minutes to complete and ask about school practices and resources.

**Do teachers need to help administer the assessment?**

No, Westat PIRLS staff will visit the school on the day of the assessment. The Westat PIRLS staff will administer the assessments to students.

**Do schools need to provide computer equipment for the test?**

No, Westat PIRLS staff will bring all the equipment needed for the test, including tablets, styluses, and keyboards.

**When will the assessment be conducted?**

PIRLS 2021 will be conducted between October XX and November XX, 2021. Each school will be notified of its scheduled assessment date in summer/fall of 2021. Westat PIRLS staff will work with schools to identify an alternate date should there be a conflict on the given date.

**Where will the assessment be conducted?**

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

**How long does the assessment take?**

The amount of time spent with students will be approximately 2.5 hours, including time for directions and two breaks. Westat PIRLS staff will need access to the testing area for a total of around 4.25 hours, including time to set up and break down equipment before and after the assessment.

**What will happen with the collected data?**

The data from the assessment will be used to evaluate how the knowledge and skills of the U.S. students compare to those of their peers in other participating countries. All of the information provided by school staff and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). Reports of the findings from the assessment will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those of other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

**Are schools required by federal law to participate?**

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 are the benefits?**

The nation as a whole benefits from PIRLS by having a greater understanding of how the reading knowledge and skills of U.S. students compare with students from other countries. To thank participating schools and individuals for their time and effort, we offer tokens of appreciation: schools that participate in PIRLS will receive \$200 and the school coordinator (staff person designated to assist with the study) will receive \$100. Teachers who complete a survey will receive \$20 Amazon gift cards, and each student who participates will receive a small gift.

**Where can I find more information about PIRLS?**

Visit the PIRLS website at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls/index.asp>.

For additional information about PIRLS 2021, contact the PIRLS U.S. Help Desk at 1-855-951-1215 or email [PIRLS@westat.com](mailto:PIRLS@westat.com).



## Summary of School Activities: PIRLS 2021 Main Study

IES Logo Summary of School Activities: PIRLS 2021				
	Summer/Fall 2021	August-October 2021 Prior to assessment day	October-November 2021 Assessment day	Benefits
<b>Principal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Designate a school coordinator</li> <li>▪ Have the school coordinator register on <a href="http://www.MyPIRLS.com">www.MyPIRLS.com</a> and complete the Provide School Information (PSI) page</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complete a brief school questionnaire on the characteristics of the school, its enrollment, resources, policies, and learning environment (available online or hardcopy)</li> <li>▪ Share the importance of in the study with school staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support assessment day activities</li> <li>▪ Encourage students to participate and do their best on the assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Represent other similar U.S. schools</li> <li>▪ Receive a \$200 check on behalf of the school</li> </ul>
<b>School coordinator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Confirm an assessment date convenient for your school</li> <li>▪ Register on <a href="http://www.MyPIRLS.com">www.MyPIRLS.com</a> and complete the Provide School Information (PSI) page</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reserve assessment location for the PIRLS sessions</li> <li>▪ Confirm dates and location with Westat PIRLS staff</li> <li>▪ Provide class list, student list, and contact information for grade 5 teachers through the secure PIRLS portal (<a href="http://www.MYPIRLS.com">www.MYPIRLS.com</a>)</li> <li>▪ Notify teachers, selected students, and students' parents of the study and benefit of participating</li> <li>▪ Work with Westat staff to identify students needing accommodations</li> <li>▪ Coordinate the principal's completion of the school questionnaire (online or hardcopy)</li> <li>▪ Coordinate the teachers' completion of the teacher questionnaire (online or hardcopy)</li> <li>▪ Collect parental consent forms where required and submit to PIRLS staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Confirm spaces for assessment are problem-free</li> <li>▪ Collect completed school and teacher questionnaires (if not completed online) and give to Westat PIRLS staff</li> <li>▪ Ensure all sampled students attend the assessment sessions</li> <li>▪ Meet with Westat PIRLS staff and provide feedback about the assessment process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Receive a \$100 personal check</li> </ul>
<b>Teachers of eligible courses</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complete Teacher Questionnaire and return to school coordinator prior to assessment day (if not completed online)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Represent the United States in the international study</li> <li>▪ Receive a \$20 Amazon gift card</li> </ul>
<b>Selected Students</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attend the assessment session, complete the assessment and student questionnaire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Represent the United States in the international study</li> <li>▪ Receive a small thank-you gift</li> </ul>
<b>Westat's assessment staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work with the school to confirm assessment dates</li> <li>▪ Help school coordinator with assessment details and logistics</li> <li>▪ Protect school and student confidentiality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Call the school coordinator to discuss assessment day location(s) and student participation</li> <li>▪ Select classroom sample and notify school of selected classes</li> <li>▪ Provide school and teacher questionnaires to the school coordinator for distribution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Administer assessments from start to finish</li> <li>▪ Furnish all assessment equipment or materials (e.g., tablets, pencils, and test booklets)</li> <li>▪ Meet with the school coordinator to debrief at the end of the assessment</li> <li>▪ Maintain security of all materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure quality and uniformity of data collected across the United States</li> </ul>

For additional information, go to <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls/>.

OMB# 1850-0645 (expires 05-31-23)



# COVID-19 Protocols

**The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose significant challenges for state agencies, districts, and schools, while also affecting us all personally. PIRLS representatives' top priority is to protect the health and safety of students and school staff.**

Our COVID-19 mitigation protocol has been developed using CDC guidelines with the input of health professionals. These protocols are intended to be flexible to adapt to the changing landscape presented by COVID-19. PIRLS representatives will work with districts and schools to ensure that their COVID-19 protocols are also followed.



## Provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PIRLS will provide field staff with PPE:



Disposable  
Masks



Face  
Shields



Disposable  
Gloves



Hand  
Sanitizer



Sanitizing Wipes  
& Spray

To the extent federal, state, or local agencies recommend the use of additional PPE, PIRLS will ensure that field staff are provided with the same.



## Sanitizing and PPE Protocols

Multiple times during the assessment day, field staff will follow protocols to:



sanitize testing  
equipment and  
equipment cases



replace gloves and  
masks between  
assessment sessions

All used PPE will be discarded in PIRLS-supplied trash bags and removed from the school by field staff.





## Field Staff COVID-19 Protocol Training

All field staff will be trained on COVID-19 protocols, including the following:



Donning and removal of PPE



Proper disposal of used PPE



Social distancing requirements



Sanitizing equipment and equipment cases



Other school protocols



## Health Monitoring and Testing Protocols

Health monitoring and testing protocols will include the following:



Field staff will be tested for COVID-19 before assessments begin in **October 2021** and regularly throughout the field period assuming commercial availability nationwide.

Field staff will be expected to perform a COVID-19 Daily Checklist of their health and symptoms before reporting for work at a school. Any field staff who do not successfully pass the daily health assessment will not report to school that day, and will be required to either:

- 1** Test negative for COVID-19 in accordance with CDC guidelines.
- 2** Be free of COVID-19 symptoms for a 14-day period before conducting any assessments in school.
- 3** Provide written documentation from their healthcare provider releasing their return to work.

Before entering school buildings, field staff will take their temperature using a non-contact thermometer, and acknowledge that they are symptom-free.



## School Protocols

Field staff will follow any and all school-specific required COVID-19 protocols, which may include but not limited to the following:

- 1** Temperature checks and other symptom assessments by the school upon arrival at the school
- 2** Additional school-required PPE
- 3** Social distancing guidelines of staff and students
- 4** Additional sanitizing requirements

## REVISED PIRLS 2021 Main Study School District Letter [**First Tier/Second Tier, Optional COVID-19 Clause**]

(yellow highlight for mail merge; red for customization)

[Date]

[Title] [Superintendent First Name] [Superintendent Last Name]

[School District]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Superintendent Last Name]:

The United States is participating in an important international study in 2021: the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). PIRLS has measured trends in reading achievement in countries around the world since 2001 and will be administered digitally for the first time in 2021. To bridge both versions of the assessment, most students will take PIRLS on supplied tablets with keyboards, while others will take it on paper with pencils. Results from PIRLS are used by researchers and policymakers to chart national progress against international standards and other countries around the world, informing national discussions about international competitiveness.

I am writing to notify you that one or more schools in your district have been randomly selected to participate in PIRLS in the fall of 2021 and ask for your support of selected schools.

### **Benefits of Your Support and of Participation**

- While participation in this study is voluntary, your support of school participation in your district is invaluable so that the United States has a nationally representative sample of schools across the country.
- Participating schools will receive \$200, and each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time. / We understand that we are asking schools to participate in PIRLS later in the school year when school calendars are set, <or> We understand that we are asking some schools to participate in PIRLS in addition to participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and therefore are offering each school <up to \$800> as a thank you for participation. In addition, each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time and effort.
- Each student who participates will receive a small gift as a token of appreciation.

### **Next Steps**

The list of selected schools in your district is attached. I ask for your support of participation in PIRLS. Please include the PIRLS assessment window dates - [Assessment Window Dates] - on your district test calendar. [NAEP State Coordinator], your NAEP State Coordinator, will contact your staff with additional information.

### **More Information**

PIRLS is described in more detail in the enclosed materials. In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, and its data collection is administered by Westat in Rockville, Maryland. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB#1850-0645.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose significant challenges for districts and schools, while also affecting us all personally. / The recent coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to have an impact on the way districts and schools operate. NCES recognizes these challenges and the flexible approaches needed to administer PIRLS in 2021. As in previous years, PIRLS representatives will provide significant support to schools by administering the assessment and bringing all necessary materials and equipment, including sanitized tablets on which students take the assessment. PIRLS representatives' top priority is to protect the health and safety of students and school staff. For more information about PIRLS administration COVID-19 protocols, please see the enclosed COVID-19 Protocols document.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact [NAEP State Coordinator], call the PIRLS Help Desk at 1-855-951-1215, or send an email to PIRLS@westat.com. You may also get more information about this study by contacting Dr. Sheila Thompson at NCES at (202) 245-8330 or sheila.thompson@ed.gov, or by visiting the PIRLS website at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/PIRLS>.

I know that I can count on you to help accomplish our goal of 100 percent participation. Thank you for your time and support of this important international study.

Sincerely,

[Name of Chief State School Officer]

Enclosures/Attachments: PIRLS Folder / PIRLS Brochure, PIRLS COVID-19 Protocols

cc: [State Testing Director]  
[District Test Coordinator]  
[NAEP State Coordinator]

*The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3) (iii) and 99.35). All of the information you provide may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by NCES, part of the U.S. Department of Education, and the data are being collected by Westat. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0645.*

## REVISED PIRLS 2021 Main Study Private School District Letter [First Tier/Late Sub or NAEP Overlap, Optional COVID-19 Clause]

(yellow highlight for mail merge; red for customization)

[Date]

[Title] [Superintendent First Name] [Superintendent Last Name]

[School District]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Superintendent Last Name]:

The United States is participating in an important international study in 2021: the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). PIRLS has measured trends in reading achievement in countries around the world since 2001 and will be administered digitally for the first time in 2021. To bridge both versions of the assessment, most students will take PIRLS on supplied tablets with keyboards, while others will take it on paper with pencils. Results from PIRLS are used by researchers and policymakers to chart national progress against international standards and other countries around the world, informing national discussions about international competitiveness.

In [DioceseParish], [School Name] has/have been randomly selected to participate in PIRLS in the fall of 2021. I am writing to ask [DioceseParish] to support the participation of [School Name/s].

### Benefits of Your Support and of Participation

- While participation in this study is voluntary, your support of school participation in your [DioceseParish] is invaluable so that the United States has a nationally representative sample of schools across the country.
- Private schools account for about 25 percent of U.S. schools and educate about 10 percent of U.S. schoolchildren. Thus, without private schools and their students participating in PIRLS, PIRLS data cannot accurately describe schooling in the United States or continue to measure U.S. trends.
- Participating schools will receive \$800, and each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time. / We understand that we are asking schools to participate in PIRLS later in the school year when school calendars are set, <or> We understand that we are asking some schools to participate in PIRLS in addition to participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and therefore are offering each school <up to \$800> as a thank you for participation. In addition, each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time and effort.
- Each student who participates will receive a small gift as a token of appreciation.

### Next Steps

Please include the PIRLS assessment window—[Assessment Window Dates]—on the [DioceseParish] test calendar. [Name of representative], a PIRLS representative, will contact your staff with additional information. Additionally, [the principal/principals] at [the] selected school[s] will be notified in the next two weeks to allow them to get the assessment date on their school calendars and incorporate PIRLS into the planned school program.

### More Information

PIRLS is described in more detail in the enclosed materials. In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, and its data collection is administered by Westat in Rockville, Maryland. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB#1850-0645.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose significant challenges for districts and schools, while also affecting us all personally. / The recent coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to have an impact on the way districts and schools operate. NCES recognizes these challenges and the flexible approaches needed to administer PIRLS in 2021. As in previous years, PIRLS representatives will provide significant support to schools by administering the assessment and bringing all necessary materials and equipment, including sanitized tablets on which students take the assessment. PIRLS representatives' top priority is to protect the health and safety of students and school staff. For more information about PIRLS administration COVID-19 protocols, please see the enclosed COVID-19 Protocols document.

If you questions about PIRLS, please do not hesitate to call the PIRLS Help Desk at 1-855-951-1215 or send an email to [PIRLS@westat.com](mailto:PIRLS@westat.com). You may also get more information about this study by contacting Dr. Sheila Thompson at NCES at (202) 245-8330 or [sheila.thompson@ed.gov](mailto:sheila.thompson@ed.gov), or by visiting the PIRLS website at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls>.

I know that I can count on you to help accomplish our goal of 100 percent participation. Thank you for your time and support of this important international study.

Sincerely,

Peggy G. Carr, Ph.D.  
Associate Commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics

**Enclosures/Attachments: PIRLS Folder / PIRLS Brochure, PIRLS COVID-19 Protocols**

*The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3) (iii) and 99.35). All of the information you provide may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by NCES, part of the U.S. Department of Education, and the data are being collected by Westat. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0645.*



## REVISED PIRLS 2021 Main Study School Letter [First Tier/Second Tier, Optional COVID-19 Clause]

(yellow highlight for mail merge; red for customization)

[Date]

[Title] [Name First] [Name Last]

[School District]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

I am writing to inform you that [school name] has been randomly selected to represent schools across the United States by participating in an important international study in 2021: the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). PIRLS has measured trends in reading achievement in countries around the world since 2001 and will be administered digitally for the first time in 2021. To bridge both versions of the assessment, most students will take PIRLS on supplied tablets with keyboards, while others will take it on paper with pencils. Results from PIRLS are used by researchers and policymakers to chart national progress against international standards and other countries around the world, informing national discussions about international competitiveness.

### Benefits of Your Support and of Participation

- While participation in this study is voluntary, it is important for each selected school to participate in the study in order to ensure that the United States has an accurate picture of what our students can do in reading.
- Participating schools will receive \$200, and each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time. / We understand that we are asking schools to participate in PIRLS later in the school year when school calendars are set, <or> We understand that we are asking some schools to participate in PIRLS in addition to participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and therefore are offering each school <up to \$800> as a thank you for participation. In addition, each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time and effort.
- Each student who participates will receive a small gift as a token of appreciation.

### Next Steps

Your scheduled assessment date is [Assessment date]. Within the next few days, I will contact you to discuss your participation. <or> Within the next few days, [Name of representative], a representative from PIRLS, will contact you to discuss your participation. Should there be a conflict on this date, a PIRLS representative will work with you to identify an alternative time. Within the next few weeks, I will ask you to identify a school coordinator and will provide detailed information about the assessment. PIRLS representatives will provide significant support to schools, bring all necessary materials, including tablets and all equipment, and administer the assessment.

### More Information

PIRLS is described in more detail in the enclosed materials. In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, and its data collection is administered by Westat in Rockville,

Maryland. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB#1850-0645.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose significant challenges for schools, while also affecting us all personally. / The recent coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to have an impact on the way districts and schools operate. NCES recognizes these challenges and the flexible approaches needed to administer PIRLS in 2021. As in previous years, PIRLS representatives will provide significant support to your school by administering the assessment and bringing all necessary materials and equipment, including sanitized tablets on which students take the assessment. PIRLS representatives' top priority is to protect the health and safety of students and school staff. For more information about PIRLS administration COVID-19 protocols, please see the enclosed COVID-19 Protocols document.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the PIRLS Help Desk at 1-855-951-1215, or send an email to PIRLS@westat.com. You may also get more information about this study by contacting Dr. Sheila Thompson at NCES at (202) 245-8330 or sheila.thompson@ed.gov, or by visiting the PIRLS website at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls/>.

Your participation in PIRLS 2021 is very important to its success. We need to ensure that students in schools like yours are represented in our evaluation of assessment items and questionnaires. Thank you for your time and for supporting this important international study.

Sincerely,

[Name of Coordinator] <or> Peggy G. Carr, Ph.D  
NAEP State Coordinator <or> Associate Commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics

cc: [District Test Coordinator]

Enclosures/Attachments: PIRLS Folder / PIRLS Brochure, PIRLS COVID-19 Protocols

*The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3) (iii) and 99.35). All of the information you provide may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by NCES, part of the U.S. Department of Education, and the data are being collected by Westat. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0645.*

## REVISED PIRLS 2021 Main Study Private School Letter [First Tier/Late Sub or NAEP Overlap, Optional COVID-19 Clause]

(yellow highlight for mail merge; red for customization)

[Date]

[Title] [Name First] [Name Last]

[School District]

[Address 1]

[City], [State] [Zip code]

Dear [Title] [Name Last]:

I am writing to inform you that [school name] has been randomly selected to represent schools across the United States by participating in an important international study in 2021: the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). PIRLS has measured trends in reading achievement in countries around the world since 2021 and will be administered digitally for the first time in 2021. To bridge both versions of the assessment, most students will take PIRLS on supplied tablets with keyboards, while others will take it on paper with pencils. Results from PIRLS are used by researchers and policymakers to chart national progress against international standards and other countries around the world, informing national discussions about international competitiveness.

Private schools account for about 25 percent of U.S. schools and educate about 10 percent of U.S. schoolchildren. Thus, without private schools and their students participating in PIRLS, PIRLS data cannot accurately describe schooling in the United States or continue to measure U.S. trends.

### Benefits of Your Support and of Participation

- While participation in this study is voluntary, it is important for each selected school to take part in the study in order to ensure that the United States has an accurate picture of what our students can do in reading.
- Private schools account for about 25 percent of U.S. schools and educate about 10 percent of U.S. schoolchildren. Thus, without private schools and their students participating in PIRLS, PIRLS data cannot accurately describe schooling in the United States or continue to measure U.S. trends.
- Participating schools will receive \$800, and each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time. / We understand that we are asking schools to participate in PIRLS later in the school year when school calendars are set, <or> We understand that we are asking some schools to participate in PIRLS in addition to participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and therefore are offering each school <up to \$800> as a thank you for participation. In addition, each school's PIRLS school coordinator (the school staff person designated to work with PIRLS staff) will receive \$100 as a thank you for his or her time and effort.
- Each student who participates will receive a small gift as a token of appreciation.

### Next Steps

Your scheduled assessment date is [Assessment date]. [Name of representative], a representative from PIRLS, will contact you within the next few weeks to discuss your participation.

### More Information

PIRLS is described in more detail in the enclosed materials. In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S.

Department of Education, and its data collection is administered by Westat in Rockville, Maryland. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB#1850-0645.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose significant challenges for schools, while also affecting us all personally. / The recent coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to have an impact on the way districts and schools operate. NCES recognizes these challenges and the flexible approaches needed to administer PIRLS in 2021. As in previous years, PIRLS representatives will provide significant support to your school by administering the assessment and bringing all necessary materials and equipment, including sanitized tablets on which students take the assessment. PIRLS representatives' top priority is to protect the health and safety of students and school staff. For more information about PIRLS administration COVID-19 protocols, please see the enclosed COVID-19 Protocols document.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the PIRLS Help Desk at 1-855-951-1215, or send an email to [PIRLS@westat.com](mailto:PIRLS@westat.com). You may also get more information about this study by contacting Dr. Sheila Thompson at NCES at (202) 245-8330 or [sheila.thompson@ed.gov](mailto:sheila.thompson@ed.gov), or by visiting the PIRLS website at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/PIRLS>.

Your participation in PIRLS 2021 is very important to its success. Thank you for your time and for supporting this important international study.

Sincerely,

Peggy G. Carr, Ph.D.  
Associate Commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics

**Enclosures/Attachments: PIRLS Folder / PIRLS Brochure, PIRLS COVID-19 Protocols**

*The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3) (iii) and 99.35). All of the information you provide may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). In the United States, PIRLS is conducted by NCES, part of the U.S. Department of Education, and the data are being collected by Westat. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0645.*

## REVISED PIRLS 2021 Main Study Brochure Content: 8 ½ X 11in Tri-fold

**Title page:** IES Logo

Map of world

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2021

### **Inside panels:**

#### **What is PIRLS?**

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international assessment and research project designed to measure reading achievement at the fifth-grade level, as well as school practices related to instruction. PIRLS was previously assessed in 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016 with the United States participating in all past assessments. In 2021, PIRLS will involve students from more than 50 countries, including the United States. For the first time, PIRLS will be completely electronic and administered on a tablet with a keyboard. This new format for the assessment is called *digitalPIRLS*.

PIRLS is sponsored by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and conducted 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 of U.S. fifth-grade students with that of their peers in countries around the world. PIRLS 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.

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

#### **What type of assessment is PIRLS?**

PIRLS is developed through an international consensus-building process involving input from U.S. and international experts in reading 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 provide written answers. Examples of PIRLS items are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls/released.asp>.

#### **Key findings from PIRLS 2016**

At grade 5, the U.S. average reading score (549) was higher than the PIRLS scale centerpoint of 500. The U.S. was among the top 13 education systems (12 education systems had higher averages and 15 were not measurably different) and scored higher, on average, than 30 education systems.

In the new 2016 ePIRLS online assessment the U.S. average score was 557, which was lower than the averages for 3 education systems, higher than the average for 10 education systems, and not measurably different from the averages for 2 education systems.

## Back panels:

### Other information collected by PIRLS

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

### Countries that participated in PIRLS and ePIRLS in 2016

Country	2016 PIRLS	ePIRLS
Australia	●	
Austria	●	
Azerbaijan	●	
Bahrain	●	
Belgium (Flemish)-BEL	●	
Belgium (French)-BEL	●	
Bulgaria	●	
Canada	●	●
Chile	●	
Chinese Taipei	●	●
Czech Republic	●	
Denmark	●	●
Egypt	●	
England-GBR	●	
Finland	●	
France	●	
Georgia	●	●
Germany	●	
Hong Kong-CHN	●	
Hungary	●	
Iran, Islamic Republic of	●	
Ireland	●	●
Israel	●	●
Italy	●	●
Kazakhstan	●	
Kuwait	●	
Latvia	●	
Lithuania	●	
Macao-CHN	●	
Malta	●	
Morocco	●	
Netherlands	●	
New Zealand	●	
Northern Ireland-GBR	●	
Norway	●	●
Oman	●	
Poland	●	
Portugal	●	●
Qatar	●	
Russian Federation	●	
Saudi Arabia	●	
Singapore	●	●
Slovak Republic	●	

Slovenia	●	●
South Africa	●	
Spain	●	
Sweden	●	●
Trinidad and Tobago	●	
United Arab Emirates	●	●
United States	●	●

### Study Authorization and Confidentiality

All of the information collected is protected as required by law. NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3)(iii) and 99.35). Information collected will help the U.S. Department of Education's ongoing efforts to benchmark student achievement in the United States. Participation is voluntary. All of the information provided by school staff and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved the data collection under OMB # 1850-0645. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

IES logo goes here

For questions about PIRLS 2021, contact the PIRLS Help Desk at 1-855-951-1215 or email [PIRLS@westat.com](mailto:PIRLS@westat.com).

# REVISED PIRLS 2021 Main Study FAQ

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

## IES Logo

## Frequently Asked Questions

PIRLS 2021

### What is PIRLS?

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international assessment and research project designed to measure trends in reading achievement at the fifth-grade level as well as school practices related to instruction. Since 2001, PIRLS has been administered every 5 years. PIRLS 2021, the fifth study in the series, will involve students from more than 50 countries, including the United States. For the first time, PIRLS will be completely electronic and administered on a tablet with a keyboard. This new format for the assessment is called *digitalPIRLS*.

### Why was my school selected for participation?

Your school was randomly selected so that the overall U.S. sample will be 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.

### Why should my school and students participate?

PIRLS informs national discussions about education policy as well as international competitiveness. It is important for selected schools to participate because they represent similar U.S. schools across the country. When students participate and give their best effort, PIRLS gets the most accurate measure possible of student achievement in the U.S. to compare with other countries.

### Will all our fifth-grade students be asked to participate?

It depends on the number of fifth-grade classrooms in the school. In schools with only one or two such classrooms, all students will be asked to participate. In schools with more than two such classrooms, only students in two randomly selected classrooms will be asked to participate. In addition, some students with special needs or who are English language learners may be excused from the assessment as needed.

### Who conducts the PIRLS assessment?

The entire assessment process will be administered by trained staff from Westat, a research organization under contract with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education. All of the information collected is protected as required by law. NCES is authorized to conduct this study under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002, 20 U.S.C. §9543), and to collect students' education records from educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of evaluating federally supported education programs under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR §§ 99.31(a)(3)(iii) and 99.35), and approval of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget under OMB # 1850-0645.

### How is the school questionnaire administered?

The school questionnaire is administered either online from a secure website or via a hardcopy form. School questionnaires take about 35 minutes to complete and ask about school practices and resources.



**Do teachers need to help administer the assessment?**

No, Westat PIRLS staff will visit the school on the day of the assessment. The Westat PIRLS staff will administer the assessments to students.

**Do schools need to provide computer equipment for the test?**

No, Westat PIRLS staff will bring all the equipment needed for the test, including tablets, styluses, and keyboards.

**When will the assessment be conducted?**

PIRLS 2021 will be conducted between October XX and November XX, 2021. Each school will be notified of its scheduled assessment date in summer/fall of 2021. Westat PIRLS staff will work with schools to identify an alternate date should there be a conflict on the given date.

**Where will the assessment be conducted?**

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

**How long does the assessment take?**

The amount of time spent with students will be approximately 2.5 hours, including time for directions and two breaks. Westat PIRLS staff will need access to the testing area for a total of around 4.25 hours, including time to set up and break down equipment before and after the assessment.

**What will happen with the collected data?**

The data from the assessment will be used to evaluate how the knowledge and skills of the U.S. students compare to those of their peers in other participating countries. All of the information provided by school staff and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20 U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151). Reports of the findings from the assessment will not identify participating districts, schools, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those of other participants to produce summary statistics and reports.

**Are schools required by federal law to participate?**

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 are the benefits?**

The nation as a whole benefits from PIRLS by having a greater understanding of how the reading knowledge and skills of U.S. students compare with students from other countries. To thank participating schools and individuals for their time and effort, we offer tokens of appreciation: schools that participate in PIRLS will receive \$200 and the school coordinator (staff person designated to assist with the study) will receive \$100. Each student who participates will receive a small gift.

**Where can I find more information about PIRLS?**

Visit the PIRLS website at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls/index.asp>.

For additional information about PIRLS 2021, contact the PIRLS U.S. Help Desk at 1-855-951-1215 or email [PIRLS@westat.com](mailto:PIRLS@westat.com).

## REVISED Summary of School Activities: PIRLS 2021 Main Study

IES Logo Summary of School Activities: PIRLS 2021				
	Summer/Fall 2021	August-October 2021 Prior to assessment day	October-November 2021 Assessment day	Benefits
<b>Principal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Designate a school coordinator</li> <li>▪ Have the school coordinator register on <a href="http://www.MyPIRLS.com">www.MyPIRLS.com</a> and complete the Provide School Information (PSI) page</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complete a brief school questionnaire on the characteristics of the school, its enrollment, resources, policies, and learning environment (available online or hardcopy)</li> <li>▪ Share the importance of in the study with school staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support assessment day activities</li> <li>▪ Encourage students to participate and do their best on the assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Represent other similar U.S. schools</li> <li>▪ Receive a \$200 check on behalf of the school</li> </ul>
<b>School coordinator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Confirm an assessment date convenient for your school</li> <li>▪ Register on <a href="http://www.MyPIRLS.com">www.MyPIRLS.com</a> and complete the Provide School Information (PSI) page</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reserve assessment location for the PIRLS sessions</li> <li>▪ Confirm dates and location with Westat PIRLS staff</li> <li>▪ Provide class list, student list, and contact information for grade 5 teachers through the secure PIRLS portal (<a href="http://www.MYPIRLS.com">www.MYPIRLS.com</a>)</li> <li>▪ Notify teachers, selected students, and students' parents of the study and benefit of participating</li> <li>▪ Work with Westat staff to identify students needing accommodations</li> <li>▪ Coordinate the principal's completion of the school questionnaire (online or hardcopy)</li> <li>▪ Collect parental consent forms where required and submit to PIRLS staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Confirm spaces for assessment are problem-free</li> <li>▪ Collect completed school questionnaire (if not completed online) and give to Westat PIRLS staff</li> <li>▪ Ensure all sampled students attend the assessment sessions</li> <li>▪ Meet with Westat PIRLS staff and provide feedback about the assessment process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Receive a \$100 personal check</li> </ul>
<b>Selected Students</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attend the assessment session, complete the assessment and student questionnaire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Represent the United States in the international study</li> <li>▪ Receive a small thank-you gift</li> </ul>
<b>Westat's assessment staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work with the school to confirm assessment dates</li> <li>▪ Help school coordinator with assessment details and logistics</li> <li>▪ Protect school and student confidentiality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Call the school coordinator to discuss assessment day location(s) and student participation</li> <li>▪ Select classroom sample and notify school of selected classes</li> <li>▪ Provide the school questionnaire to the school coordinator for distribution (if not completed online)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Administer assessments from start to finish</li> <li>▪ Furnish all assessment equipment or materials (e.g., tablets, pencils, and test booklets)</li> <li>▪ Meet with the school coordinator to debrief at the end of the assessment</li> <li>▪ Maintain security of all materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure quality and uniformity of data collected across the United States</li> </ul>

For additional information, go to <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls/>.

OMB# 1850-0645 (expires 05-31-23)