

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011

Summary of Results for British Columbia

WHAT IS PIRLS?

- The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international assessment that measures trends in the reading achievement of Grade 4 students. PIRLS is currently the only international program that assesses the reading achievement of Canadian students in the early years of education.
- PIRLS is administered every five years and is carried out by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). In Canada, PIRLS is coordinated by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). The first PIRLS assessment took place in 2001, the second in 2006, and the third in 2011. BC participated in 2006 and 2011.
- In 2011, 45 countries participated in PIRLS. In Canada, 9 provinces took part: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick French, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Internationally, approximately 325,000 students took part in PIRLS 2011. In BC, approximately 2,600 students from 148 schools participated.

HOW DID BC STUDENTS DO?

- BC students performed very well in PIRLS 2011, achieving a mean score significantly above both the international and the Canadian averages. BC was the only province to perform above the Canadian average. In total, 4 jurisdictions statistically outperformed BC, 10 jurisdictions performed in the same range as BC, and 37 jurisdictions performed below BC:

Performing statistically above BC	Finland, Hong Kong SAR, Russian Federation, Singapore
Performing statistically in BC's range	Alberta, British Columbia, Chinese Taipei, Croatia, Denmark, England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, United States
Performing statistically below BC	Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium (French), Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Iran, Islamic Rep. Of, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Morocco, Netherlands, New Brunswick French, New Zealand, Newfoundland and Labrador, Norway, Oman, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Quebec, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates

Note: Jurisdictions are listed in alphabetical order within each box.

- There was no significant difference between BC's results on PIRLS 2011 and PIRLS 2006. However, while BC's performance remained stable since the last PIRLS assessment, the performance of several other jurisdictions, including a number of high-performing jurisdictions, did significantly increase since the 2006 assessment.
- PIRLS results are also reported in terms of four International Benchmarks, which show the range of student performance within jurisdictions. In BC, 15% of students reached the Advanced Benchmark and 55% of students reached the High Benchmark. BC has a relatively high percentage of students achieving the Advanced and the High Benchmarks compared to the international median.
- In BC, students in English-language schools performed at the Canadian average for English-language schools, while students in French-language schools performed below the Canadian average for French-language schools. In most Canadian provinces, students enrolled in a majority-language school system significantly outperform those enrolled in a minority-language school system.
- Consistent with previous studies, the PIRLS 2011 results show that girls continue to perform better than boys in reading in BC, and this is consistent across the Canadian provinces and most of the international jurisdictions.
- In BC, students performed better in literary reading than in informational reading. The same was true for Canada overall. Internationally, however, there was variability among jurisdictions as to whether students performed better in literary or informational reading.



WHAT FACTORS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH READING PERFORMANCE?

- Questionnaires were completed by students, parents, teachers, and principals in order to better understand factors associated with reading performance.
- BC students reported high levels of enjoyment of reading and self-confidence in reading compared to the Canadian and international averages. High levels of enjoyment of reading and self-confidence in reading were both associated with higher achievement scores.
- In BC, as well as Canada overall, parents reported engaging in high levels of literacy-related activities with their child before he or she started school, and this high level of engagement translated into higher levels of student achievement, demonstrating that parental involvement in early literacy is very important.
- In Canada, the more often students read stories or novels, the better they tended to perform in reading. Among the Canadian provinces, BC had the highest percentage of students (51%) who read stories or novels every day or almost every day. It is interesting to note that the frequent reading of other materials, such as books that explain things, magazines, comic books, poems, and things found on the Internet, did not show a consistently positive effect on reading achievement.
- PIRLS results suggest that BC schools are doing a good job of helping put English Language Learners on equal footing with native speakers in terms of reading skills. In BC, a considerable number of students (26%) reported only sometimes or never speaking the language of the test at home. In most Canadian provinces, students who reported always speaking the language of the test at home performed significantly better in reading than students who sometimes or never speaking the test language. However, in BC there was no significant difference between the performances of the two groups.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

BC Ministry of Education webpage: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/nat_int_pubs.htm

FAQs on National and International Assessments: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/nat_int_FAQ.pdf

Email questions to: NatIntQuestions@gov.bc.ca