PIRLS 2021
20 Years of PIRLS
Conducting the Field Test
Finalizing the Assessment

Ina V.S. Mullis and Michael O. Martin

61st IEA General Assembly – Online
September 2020
PIRLS – a Great Success Story

• International “gold standard” for reading comprehension at 4th grade
  – Assessing reading comprehension every 5 years since 2001
  – 20 years of trends
  – 60+ countries in 2021
  – Inaugurated ePIRLS in 2016

• Transitioning to digital assessment in 2021

• Conducted field test March-April 2020

• Ready for data collection in southern hemisphere countries
Developed 12 Visually Attractive and Engaging Reading Passages – Field Test

- Matching digitalPIRLS and paperPIRLS versions
- 3 difficulty levels (easy, medium, difficult)
- Literary passages (6) – variety of stories
  - Contemporary, fables, historical events, biography
- Informational passages (6) – variety of content and ideas
  - Science, environmental issues, personal experiences
Also in Field Test

- 2 ePIRLS online reading tasks (digital countries only)
- Context Questionnaires
  - Home
  - School
  - Teacher
  - Student
New PIRLS 2021 Group Adaptive Design for digital and paper

• Three levels of passage difficulty
  - Difficult (6) – Medium (6) – Easy (6)

• Passages combined into two levels of booklet difficulty
  - More difficult booklets (9)
    • Composed of difficult and medium passages
  - Less difficult booklets (9)
    • Composed of medium and easy passages
Design Essentials

All countries administer all 18 booklets

• Higher performing countries:
  – Proportionally more of the more difficult booklets

• Lower performing countries:
  – Proportionally more of the less difficult booklets

Goal is a better match between assessment difficulty and student achievement in each country
Training for Field Test Scoring  
- Belgrade, Serbia, March 1-6, 2020

• Last PIRLS 2021 in-person meeting due to pandemic
• Most NRCs attended the scoring training in person, but it also was video recorded
• Revised and posted final field test scoring guides and training materials for constructed-response scoring
PIRLS 2021 Field Test  
– March 15 – April 30

• Many countries expressed concerns to us about the field test during the pandemic
  – Surveyed countries about their situations

• Decided to continue with field test

• Despite the Pandemic, Where Schools Were Open, Field Test Successful

• Data from 12,000 students for field test analysis
3-Step Field Test Review Process

1. Review of field test data by staff of TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center – all passages, items, questionnaires – June

2. Review by expert committees – July (Online)
   - Reading Development Group (RDG) review of passages and items
   - Questionnaire Development Group (QDG) review of questionnaires

3. Final review by National Research Coordinators
   - 5th NRC meeting, Warsaw (Online)
Data Collection Contingency Plans

• Continue to monitor the situation in each country
  - Began one-by-one consultations following the 5th NRC meeting, will keep in continuous contact

• Goal is to maintain original schedule, but adapt as necessary
  - If countries have to interrupt data collection, will work to minimize disruption
  - Second wave: 4 southern hemisphere countries on 1-year delay and other countries may join, should be able to catch up
  - If some northern hemisphere countries have to delay into 2022, will consider extended publication plan

• Would be in 2nd edition, later in 2023
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