

## THE ROLE OF PIRLS IN IMPROVING READING LITERACY IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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**Introduction.** Reading literacy is one of the most important skills in modern education. It plays a key role in students' academic success, personal development, and future opportunities. Children who can read well are able to understand information, think critically, and express their ideas clearly. In primary education, reading is especially important because it forms the foundation for learning in all school subjects.

In today's rapidly changing world, education systems are expected to prepare students for lifelong learning. Reading literacy is essential for this purpose because it helps learners become independent and confident. For this reason, many countries carefully evaluate how well their students develop reading skills at an early age. International assessment programs are used to measure reading achievement and improve education quality. One of the most important and widely recognized programs in this field is PIRLS.

PIRLS stands for Progress in International Reading Literacy Study. It is an international assessment that measures reading comprehension skills of primary school students, mainly those in the fourth grade. PIRLS does not only focus on students' test results but also examines teaching practices, school environments, and family support. This article discusses the role of PIRLS in improving reading literacy in primary education. It explains what PIRLS is, how it works, what skills it assesses, and why it is important for students, teachers, schools, and education systems.

### **Why PIRLS Focuses on Fourth Grade**

Fourth grade is considered a crucial stage in a child's reading development. In the early grades, children mainly focus on learning letters, sounds, and basic reading skills. By the fourth grade, they are expected to read fluently and use reading as a tool for learning new information. This stage is often described as the transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn."

If students experience reading difficulties at this level, they may face serious challenges in later grades. Subjects such as science, mathematics, and history require students to read and understand complex texts. Poor reading skills can limit students' academic progress and reduce their motivation to learn. PIRLS helps identify reading problems early so that schools and teachers can provide appropriate support.

### **Types of Texts Used in PIRLS**

PIRLS uses two main types of texts: literary texts and informational texts. Literary texts include short stories, narratives, and fictional texts. These texts are used to assess students' ability to understand characters, events, emotions, and themes. Reading literary texts helps develop imagination, creativity, and emotional understanding.

Informational texts include articles, reports, and factual texts that provide information about real-world topics. These texts assess students' ability to understand facts, explanations, and logical ideas. Informational reading is especially important for learning in academic subjects and for understanding everyday information.

### **Reading Comprehension Skills Assessed by PIRLS**

PIRLS assesses several important reading comprehension skills. These skills are divided into four main comprehension processes. The first process is retrieving explicitly stated information. This involves finding information that is clearly written in the text, such as names, dates, or specific details.

The second process is making straightforward inferences. In this case, students must understand information that is not directly stated but can be easily inferred from the text. This skill requires attention and logical thinking.

The third process is interpreting and integrating ideas and information. Students need to connect different parts of the text and understand the overall meaning. This level of comprehension requires deeper thinking and analysis.

### **Importance of PIRLS for Students**

PIRLS plays an important role in supporting students' reading development. By participating in PIRLS-style assessments, students become familiar with different types of texts and comprehension questions. This helps them develop effective reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, and careful reading.

Strong reading skills support success in all school subjects. Students who can read well are better able to understand instructions, solve problems, and learn independently. Reading literacy also supports personal development by helping students gain knowledge, build vocabulary, and express their ideas clearly.

In addition, reading skills are essential for lifelong learning. In a world where information is constantly changing, the ability to read and understand new information is very important. PIRLS encourages education systems to focus on developing these essential skills from

early age.

### **Importance of PIRLS for Teachers**

Teachers benefit greatly from PIRLS because it provides valuable feedback about students' reading abilities. The results help teachers identify which reading skills students have mastered and which skills need more attention. For example, if students struggle with interpreting texts, teachers can include more discussion and comprehension activities in their lessons.

PIRLS questionnaires also provide information about teaching methods and classroom practices. Teachers can reflect on their instructional strategies and make improvements where necessary. This supports professional development and helps improve teaching quality.

By using PIRLS data, teachers can create more effective reading lessons and better support students' learning needs.

### **Role of Schools and Education Systems**

At the school level, PIRLS results help school leaders improve reading programs and allocate resources more effectively. Schools may introduce reading clubs, libraries, and additional support for struggling readers. These initiatives help create a positive reading culture within schools.

At the national level, PIRLS supports educational planning and policy development. Governments can compare their results with those of other countries and learn from successful education systems. International comparisons encourage cooperation and the sharing of best practices.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, PIRLS is a powerful international assessment that plays a vital role in improving reading literacy in primary education. It supports students, teachers, schools, and education systems by providing reliable

data and valuable insights. PIRLS helps identify strengths and weaknesses in reading instruction and encourages the development of effective teaching strategies.

### **References**

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