Children Reading in the Digital World

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Abstract

Every five years since 2001, IEA's PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) has provided internationally comparative data on how well children read at a key stage in their reading development: the transition from learning to read to reading to learn. PIRLS 2026 completes the study's transition to a fully digital assessment, integrating what was previously referred to as ePIRLS, a simulated internet environment for assessing online reading. PIRLS data are recognized by UNESCO as a solid evidence base for researchers, educators, and policymakers monitoring progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on quality education for all. For example, the PIRLS Low International Benchmark is recognized as a key data source for monitoring SDG indicator 4.1.1 on minimum proficiency in reading. As described in the PIRLS 2026 Assessment Framework, students who achieve this level in PIRLS can "locate, retrieve, and reproduce explicitly stated information from a text, make straightforward inferences, and begin to interpret story events and central ideas." As reading increasingly shifts to digital devices, teaching reading comprehension needs to encompass digital environments. This poster presents IEA work rooted in the PIRLS assessment and data dedicated to educators, which empowers teachers to integrate digital text reading into their curriculum.

Drawing on research into effective digital reading instruction, we will document how scientific research can be translated into practical, ready-to-use lesson ideas. We will also highlight evidence-based teaching principles for digital reading along with teaching practices from selected countries participating in PIRLS.

Keywords: Assessment; Comprehension; Didactic Principles; PIRLS; Teacher Snippets