

Monday, December 29, 2008

[Reading in Georgia | PIRLS International Student Achievement in Reading](#)

In 2006 Georgia participated for the first time in the PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) assessment. PIRLS began in 2001 and looks at literacy trends and reading education for 4th graders in 40 different countries around the world (Armenia and Azerbaijan did not participate) and is administered every five years.

In terms of Reading Achievement, Georgia -- with an average of 471 -- fell below the PIRLS international average of 500. However it did score better than some post-communist countries like Macedonia (442). But Georgia's giant neighbor to the north fared much better. The highest performing country assessed in Reading Achievement was Russia with 565 followed closely by Hong Kong SAR (564), Singapore (558), Luxembourg (557) and several Canadian provinces (the Canadian provinces have traditionally taken the exam as separate entities).

Interestingly, the scores and rankings of the countries of the former Soviet Union varied greatly. While these countries had the same education system during Soviet times their current systems produced very different results in the PIRLS assessment. It would be interesting to add several Central Asian countries to the mix as well.

Country	Score	Ranking
Russia	565	1
Latvia	541	17
Lithuania	537	21
Moldova	500	33
Georgia	471	37

Across the board, girls had higher reading achievement than boys in every country and province in the assessment and Georgia was no different. In Georgia girls outscored boys by 17 points, 480 to 463. The international average difference between the genders was also a 17 point difference. On the theme of gender, 100% of the 4th grade reading teachers surveyed in Georgia were female.

PIRLS presents a wide variety of data related to literacy and reading achievement. According to PIRLS, a large percentage of Georgian students, 33%, come from homes that have less than 10 children's books. And very few have access to technology; only 10% of students go to schools where there are computers available for student usage and only 3% have internet access in their schools.

On a positive note, Georgian teachers were some of the most educated of the countries surveyed with 98% having university degrees -- though what that degree means of course is open to interpretation. Interestingly, despite the low wages, Georgian teachers are among the most satisfied with their career, with 83% reporting that they had a "high level of career satisfaction." Only Norway reported higher levels of teacher career satisfaction than Georgia. Perhaps this has to do with the ability of teachers to earn significant incomes from outside of school tutoring? It would be interesting to find out more.

PIRLS provides an interesting insight into literacy in Georgia and the Georgian education system. However, unlike in some other countries where the assessment was given in multiple languages in order to assess all 4th grade students, in Georgia only Georgian-speaking students were tested. This leaves out a significant population of Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian schools. Most likely including these schools would have changed the results.