

Appendix C.1: Information About the Students Assessed in PIRLS 2011

Reported by National Research Coordinators, except for average age at time of testing

Country	Country's Name for Fourth Year of Formal Schooling*	Average Age at Time of Testing	Information About Age of Entry, Promotion, and Retention
Australia	Year 4	10.0	Varies by state, but children generally must begin school by age 6. Most children actually begin school at the minimum age of 4.5–5, and the age of entry policy has been revised within the past ten years. Policy on promotion and retention varies by state but, generally, there is automatic promotion for Grades 1–8.
Austria	Grade 4	10.3	Children must begin school in the September following their 6th birthday, but parents can request early admission for children who turn 6 by March 1st of the following year. Automatic promotion for Grade 1, but there is retention in Grades 2–4 for students failing one or more compulsory subjects.
Azerbaijan	Grade 4	10.2	Children must be 6 years old by the end of September to begin school on September 15 of that year, but children the Ministry of Education identifies as talented who are born before the end of November can begin school in September of the year they turn 6. Promotion is automatic for Grades 1–4, but is dependent on academic progress for Grades 5–8.
Belgium (French)	Grade 4	10.1	Children must begin school in the September of the calendar year of their 6th birthday. Students can be retained one additional year in Grades 1–2, Grades 3–6, and Grades 7–8.
Bulgaria	Grade 4	10.7	Children begin school the calendar year of their 7th birthday, but they may begin at age 6 at parent or guardian discretion. There is automatic promotion for Grades 1–4, with remedial summer courses instead of retention. There are two chances to pass a supplementary exam before retention for Grades 5–8.
Canada	Grade 4	9.9	Varies by province
Chinese Taipei	Grade 4	10.2	Children must be 6 years old before September 1st to begin school in the September of the same calendar year. There is automatic promotion for Grades 1–8.
Colombia	Grade 4	10.4	Children must be at least 6 years old to begin school, although some students start school somewhat older. Schools define promotion and retention policies.
Croatia	Grade 4	10.7	The age of entry policy, which has changed within the past ten years, says that all children must begin school by 7 years old. Although children must be at least 6 years old by the end of March to begin the following September, children typically begin school at age 7. Student promotion is dependent on meeting minimum standards in Grades 1–8.
Czech Republic	Grade 4	10.4	Compulsory schooling begins at the beginning of the school year (September 1st) following the child's 6th birthday unless granted a postponement, which an increasing number of parents are seeking. Promotion is dependent on academic progress in all compulsory subjects, but is automatic for students who have repeated a year.
Denmark	Grade 4	10.9	Children begin preprimary education the year they turn 6 and primary education the following year. Delaying entry by a year requires municipal board approval, but parents can have their child begin a year early. This policy has changed within the past ten years. There is automatic promotion in Grades 1–8, though in special cases students may be promoted or retained based on individual assessments, with parental consent.
England	Year 5	10.3	Children begin school the term (typically September, January, or April) of their 5th birthday. Many local authorities make provision for all children to begin in the September of the school year in which they will turn 5 and some have changed the discretionary time so that children can begin at a younger age, although all of this is subject to parental discretion. There is no policy on promotion and retention.
Finland	Grade 4	10.8	Children begin school the autumn of the year of their 7th birthday, although it is possible to enter school either one year earlier or one year later than the official policy, following discussions with an expert (e.g., school psychologist). There is automatic promotion for Grades 1–8, with retention only in extreme situations.
France	CM1 = Cours Moyen 1ère année - Average Course 1st year, or 'Second year of the 3rd Cycle' (Deepenings Cycle)	10.0	Children must start school at the beginning of the school year (September) in the calendar year of their 6th birthday, although parents and/or teachers can request that children start early. Promotion and retention are based on academic progress. Aside from exceptional circumstances, students can only be retained once during primary school.
Georgia	Grade 4	10.0	Compulsory schooling begins at age 6 according to the Law on General Education, which has been updated within the past ten years. Promotion is automatic for Grades 1–4, and dependent on academic progress for Grades 5–8.

SOURCE: IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study – PIRLS 2011

* The PIRLS target population is the grade that represents four years of schooling counting from the first year of ISCED Level 1. However, IEA has a policy that students do not fall under the minimum average age of 9.5 years old at the time of testing, so England, Malta, New Zealand, and Trinidad and Tobago assessed students in their fifth year of formal schooling.

Country	Country's Name for Fourth Year of Formal Schooling*	Average Age at Time of Testing	Information About Age of Entry, Promotion, and Retention
Germany	Grade 4	10.4	Compulsory schooling begins the year a child turns 6. Children must be at least 6 years old before a statutory qualifying date (which varies by state; in most states the date falls between June 30th and September 30th) to begin on August 1st. The official policy grants parents the right to request early admission or postponed enrollment, but the school administration has the final decision. The policy on age of entry has been revised within the past ten years. There is automatic promotion in Grade 1, and promotion policies differ between states for later grades.
Hong Kong SAR	Primary 4	10.1	Children begin school the September after they turn 5 years, 8 months old. Representatives of the Education Bureau may prescribe a maximum rate of repetition.
Hungary	Grade 4	10.7	Children begin school during the calendar year they turn 6, if their birthday is before May 31st; however, children may begin during the calendar year of their 6th, 7th, or 8th birthday at parental request. Promotion is automatic in Grades 1–3, and dependent on academic progress for Grades 4–8.
Indonesia	Grade 4	10.4	Children must be 7 years old by the end of June to begin on July 12th, although parents have some choice in starting children at age 6. Promotion is dependent on academic progress for Grades 1–8.
Iran, Islamic Rep. Of	Grade 4	10.2	Children must be 6 years old by September 22nd to begin school September 23rd, although there are few private schools that allow registration at 6.5 years. Students with failing grades in June must take a cumulative exam in September to determine promotion or retention.
Ireland	Fourth class	10.3	The Education (Welfare) Act of 2000 requires children to attend primary schools from the time that they are 6 years old but not before they are 4. In practice, nearly half of 4-year-olds and almost all 5-year-olds are enrolled in infant classes in primary schools. Children only are allowed to repeat a year for educational reasons and in exceptional circumstances.
Israel	Grade 4	10.1	The official policy is that children begin school the calendar year of their 6th birthday, but parents have the final say if they feel their children are not ready to begin. There is retention only in exceptional cases.
Italy	Grade 4	9.7	Children begin school the calendar year of their 6th birthday, but parents can enroll children who will turn 6 years old by April 30th of the following calendar year in the calendar year of their 5th birthday. The age of entry policy has been revised within the past ten years. Promotion is dependent on academic progress for Grades 1–8.
Lithuania	Grade 4	10.7	Children must begin school by the calendar year of their 7th birthday, but parents can enroll children one year early if the child satisfies the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Science. The age of entry policy has been revised within the past ten years. There is no national policy on promotion and retention; decisions are made at the school level.
Malta	Year 5	9.8	Children begin school in late September of the calendar year of their 5th birthday. Students repeat a class only in exceptional circumstances in primary school and on the basis of their academic performance and other factors in exceptional circumstances in secondary school. Students can be retained only once during each education cycle.
Morocco	Grade 4	10.5	Children must be at least 5 years, 6 months old by the beginning of September to begin school, and parents rarely postpone the start. Promotion depends on academic progress for both primary and secondary grades.
Netherlands	Grade 6	10.2	Children must begin kindergarten on the first school day of the month after their 5th birthday. Most children begin kindergarten when they turn 4 and primary education at age 6, although some children begin primary education a year later at age 7. Promotion and retention are decided by the school, dependent on academic progress.
New Zealand	Year 5	10.1	Children must be enrolled in school by their 6th birthday but have the right to begin school at age 5, and nearly all children begin school on or soon after their 5th birthday. There is automatic promotion, with retention only in very special circumstances with school and parental input.
Northern Ireland	Year 6	10.4	Children must be 4 years old by July 1st to begin school in September. The majority of children start and continue with their age group, but some transfer to post-primary a year late or early.
Norway	Grade 4 (4. trinn)	9.7	Children must begin school the calendar year of their 6th birthday. There is automatic promotion for all grades.
Oman	Grade 4	9.9	Children begin school the year of their 6th birthday. Children must be at least 5 years, 9 months old at the start of the academic year (beginning of September), but parents can enroll their children in private schools where the official entry age is 5 years, 5 months. The age of entry policy has been revised within the past ten years. Promotion is automatic for Grades 1–4 and dependent on academic progress for Grades 5–8.
Poland	Grade 3 of primary school	9.9	Children must begin school the calendar year of their 7th birthday, but parents can postpone the beginning of school for medical or psychological reasons. The age of entry policy has been revised within the past ten years. Parental consent is required for retention in Grades 1–6, and promotion is dependent upon academic progress in higher grades.

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Country	Country's Name for Fourth Year of Formal Schooling*	Average Age at Time of Testing	Information About Age of Entry, Promotion, and Retention
Portugal	Grade 4	10.0	Children must begin school the year of their 6th birthday if they turn 6 years old by September 15th. Parents can enroll children who turn 6 years old by the end of December, depending on school availability. The age of entry policy has been revised within the past ten years. Promotion is automatic for Grade 1, and dependent on academic progress for Grades 2–8.
Qatar	Grade 4	10.0	Children must begin school in the September of the calendar year of their 6th birthday, but parents can enroll their children in private schools where the official entry age is 5 years, 5 months. Promotion is dependent on academic progress for Grades 1–8.
Romania	Grade 4	10.9	According to the law of education, which has been revised within the past ten years, children must begin school at age 6, although parents can postpone enrollment for one year. Promotion is automatic for Grade 1, and dependent on academic progress for Grades 2–8.
Russian Federation	Grade 4	10.8	Children must be at least 6 years, 6 months old by the end of August to begin school in September but typically begin at age 7. Promotion is automatic for Grade 1 and dependent on academic progress for Grades 2–8.
Saudi Arabia	Grade 4	10.0	Children must begin school the calendar year of their 6th birthday. There is no policy on promotion and retention.
Singapore	Primary 4	10.4	According to the Compulsory Education Act, children must begin school the calendar year of their 7th birthday, although parents may seek a deferral of registration based on medical grounds. There is automatic promotion for Grades 1–4; retention is at principal's discretion for Grade 5 and dependent on academic progress for Grades 6–8.
Slovak Republic	Grade 4	10.4	Children must begin school in September if they turn 6 years old by August 31st. Children may begin school early or after an approved delay, based on psychological tests and professional recommendations. Promotion is dependent on academic progress. Students failing 1–2 required subjects must pass a makeup exam; students failing more than 2 are retained.
Slovenia	Grade 4	9.9	Children must begin school the calendar year of their 6th birthday, but some children who are 6 years old in January enter school in the September of the calendar year before they turn 6. The age of entry policy has been revised within the past ten years. Generally, there is automatic promotion for Grades 1–8, except for students with learning difficulties.
Spain	Primary Education Year Four	9.8	Children must begin school the calendar year of their 6th birthday. Almost every child begins kindergarten at the age of 3 even though it is not compulsory. Students can be retained for 1 year during Grades 1–6, but students with special needs can be retained twice. Students that do not reach the goals in Grades 7 and 8 can be retained in both grades.
Sweden	Grade 4	10.7	Children begin school in the fall of the calendar year of their 7th birthday but can begin the year they turn 6 or 8 years old for special reasons. There is automatic promotion for all grades.
Trinidad and Tobago	Standard 3	10.3	Children must begin school in September of the calendar year of their 5th birthday. Children may begin at age 4, at parent and preprimary teacher discretion, or at an older age, based on socio-economic position. Promotion is dependent on academic progress for Grades 1–6, with automatic promotion for Grades 7–8.
United Arab Emirates	Basic Stage, Cycle 1, Level 1	9.8	Children can begin school when they are 5.5 years old. Parents or guardians can decide when children begin school, but it must be by age 8. The age of entry policy has been revised within the past ten years. Students in Grades 1–5 are subject to remedial instruction for promotion, and promotion in Grades 6–8 is dependent on academic achievement.
United States	Grade 4	10.2	Varies by state, but children commonly begin kindergarten at age 5 (by parental choice) and typically begin primary school at age 6 (by law).

SOURCE: IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study – PIRLS 2011

Sixth Grade Participants

Botswana	Standard 6	12.8	Children must be 6 years old by the end of June to begin school in the January of the same calendar year, but children from remote areas may begin school later than age 6. There is up to 12.5% retention in each class and accelerated progression is possible after parent consultation.
Honduras	Grade 6	12.7	Children must be 7 years old by the end of January to begin school the following February, but about 30% of children typically begin primary school at age 6, per principals' decisions. Promotion is dependent on academic progress on exams prepared and administered by teachers.
Kuwait	Grade 6	11.9	Children must be 6 years old by March 15th to begin school that calendar year, but typically begin primary school at age 5.5 or 6. The policy does not allow for parental discretion. Promotion is automatic for Grades 1–3, and dependent on academic progress for Grades 4–8.
Morocco	Grade 6	12.7	Children must be at least 5 years, 6 months old by the beginning of September to begin school, and parents rarely postpone the start. Promotion depends on academic progress for both primary and secondary grades.

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Benchmarking Participants[◊]			
Alberta, Canada	Grade 4	9.9	The law requires all children who are 6 years old by September 1 to attend school, although school boards may set their own age requirements for entering school, and many allow children to enter Grade 1 if they are 6 years old by March 1 of the following year. Parental discretion or choice is allowed. School principals make promotion decisions in line with school policies.
Ontario, Canada	Grade 4	9.8	Children must attend school in September if they turn 6 years old by September 1 but also have the right to attend school in September if they will turn 6 by December 31 of that calendar year. Parents may choose to enroll their children in junior kindergarten at age 4 or senior kindergarten at age 5. School principals make promotion decisions, appealable to the school board.
Quebec, Canada	Grade 4	10.1	Children must be 6 years old by September 30th to begin school in the September of that calendar year. School boards determine promotion and the Ministry sets rules for obtaining diplomas.
Maltese - Malta	Year 5	9.8	Children begin school in late September of the calendar year of their 5th birthday. Students repeat a class only in exceptional circumstances in primary school and on the basis of their academic performance and other factors in exceptional circumstances in secondary school. Students can be retained only once during each education cycle.
Eng/Afr (5) - RSA	Grade 5	11.4	Children must be 6 years old by June 30th of the year in which they enroll and children are encouraged to begin at age 7. The age of entry policy has been revised within the past ten years. In principle, students should progress with their age cohort. The norm for repetition is one year per school phase where necessary.
Andalusia, Spain	Grade 4	9.9	Children begin in the September of the year of their 6th birthday and only children considered advanced during preprimary education begin one year early. There is automatic promotion after Grades 1, 3, and 5; teachers may retain students once after Grades 2, 4, or 6 and at any point in Grades 7–8.
Abu Dhabi, UAE	Grade 4	9.7	Children must be 6 years old by October 1st of the school year in which they enroll. Parents sometimes place students in private schools that accept younger students, then transfer them to the public system. The age of entry policy has changed within the past ten years. There is automatic promotion in Grades 1–5, except in special cases and with parental consent. Promotion is dependent on academic progress in Grades 6–8.
Dubai, UAE	Grade 4	9.8	Children can begin school the calendar year of their 5th birthday. The policy on promotion and retention varies by school type.
Florida, US	Grade 4	10.4	Florida law (Section 1003.21 (1) (a)) specifies that children who are 6 or who will be 6 by February 1st of that school year are required to attend school. If a child enters public school at age 6 without completing kindergarten, they will be placed in kindergarten. Children who have attained the age of 5 on or before September 1 of the school year are eligible for admission to public kindergarten during that school year based on rules prescribed by the school board. Statewide, students are retained after Grade 3 if they do not pass the state reading assessment. Otherwise, policies for promotion and retention are determined by districts, based on academic performance.

[◊] Republic of South Africa (RSA) tested 5th grade students receiving instruction in English (ENG) or Afrikaans (AFR).

Country	Country's Name for Fourth Year of Formal Schooling*	Average Age at Time of Testing	Information About Age of Entry, Promotion, and Retention
Botswana	Standard 4	10.6	Children must be 6 years old by the end of June to begin school in the January of the same calendar year, but children from remote areas may begin school later than age 6. There is up to 12.5% retention in each class and accelerated progression is possible after parent consultation.
Colombia	Grade 4	10.4	Children must be at least 6 years old to begin school, although some students start school somewhat older. Schools define promotion and retention policies.
South Africa	Grade 4	10.5	Children must be 6 years old by June 30th of the year in which they enroll and children are encouraged to begin at age 7. The age of entry policy has been revised within the past ten years. In principle, students should progress with their age cohort. The norm for repetition is one year per school phase where necessary.