

FOURTH-GRADE TEACHERS' STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH STUDENTS FALLING BEHIND IN READING

Key Findings: Canada, England, France, Germany, Italy, Russian Federation, Scotland, United States

The most common strategies for U.S. teachers to help fourth-graders who were falling behind in reading were to work individually with the student and have other students help the student.

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2001 was an assessment of the reading literacy of fourth-graders in 35 countries. In assessing fourth-graders learning experiences, PIRLS asked teachers about the strategies they use to help children who are having trouble with reading at the fourth-grade level.

In 2001, teachers in G8 countries reported using a combination of strategies to varying degrees. The most common strategy reported by teachers was to spend time working individually with students who are falling behind in reading (table 7). The second most common reported strategy in the majority of reporting countries was to have such students work with other students. In the U.S. no difference was detected between the use of these two strategies: 86 percent of fourth-graders were taught by teachers who reported using the first strategy, and 84 percent of fourth-graders were taught by teachers who reported using the second strategy.

Definitions and Methodology

Teachers reported whether or not they had employed the following strategies: waiting to see if student performance improved with maturation; working with students individually; having other students work with students; having students work with a teacher aide; and having students work with remedial or reading specialists. Teachers could endorse multiple strategies

In the United States, the third most common strategy was to have a remedial or reading specialist work with students falling behind (51 percent). Waiting to see if such students' performance improved with greater maturity and having a teacher aide help such students were the next two most commonly employed strategies in the United States.

PIRLS 2001 also asked fourth-grade teachers about their access to remedial or reading specialists and other professionals. In the United States, 26 percent of fourth-graders had teachers who reported having remedial or reading specialists always available, 39 percent had teachers who reported having such specialists sometimes available, and 35 percent had teachers who reported never having any available (figure 11). Teachers in the United States were more likely than teachers in other countries, with the exception of Scotland, to report that a remedial or reading specialist was always available.

Thirty-five percent of U.S. fourth-graders had teachers who reported never having any access to a remedial or reading specialist. The corresponding numbers in other reporting countries ranged from 23 percent in England to 94 percent in Italy.

and there was no rank ordering of preference for one strategy over another.

Teachers were asked if they always, sometimes, or never had a remedial or reading specialist available. Furthermore, they were asked if other specialists were available always, sometimes, or never.

Table 7. Percentage of fourth-graders whose teachers reported employing specific strategies for assisting students falling behind in reading, by country: 2001

Country	Work with students individually	Have other students work with student	Wait to see if performance improves with maturation	Have students work with teacher aide	Have students work with remedial or reading specialist
Canada (O, Q) ^{1,2}	83	72	36	20	49
England ^{3,4}	87	55	28	71	59
France	80	53	43	20	21
Germany	82	65	20	6	21
Italy	93	83	47	23	10
Russian Federation ⁴	95	74	47	27	18
Scotland ³	95	40	26	44	54
United States ³	86	84	34	31	51

¹National Desired Population (all 9-year-olds with some national exclusions) does not cover all of International Desired Population (all 9-year-olds) because coverage falls below 65 percent.

²Canada is represented by the provinces of Ontario and Quebec (O,Q) only.

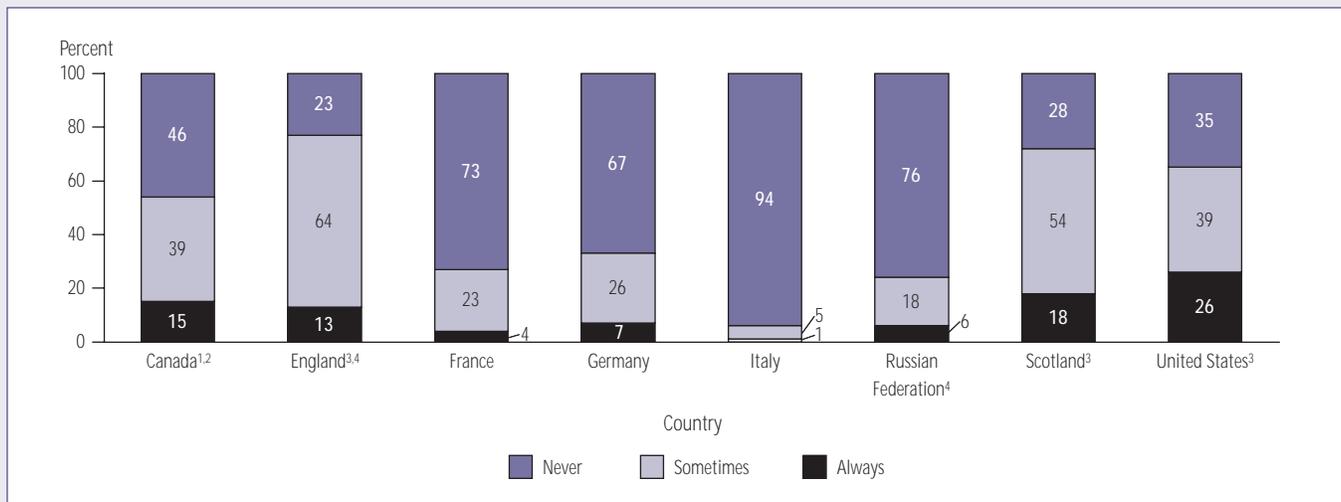
³Met guidelines for sample participation rates after replacement schools were included.

⁴National Defined Population (weighted sample size) covers less than 95 percent of National Desired Population (all 9-year-olds).

NOTE: PIRLS 2001 assessed students in the upper of the two grades with the most 9-year-olds. In the United States and most other countries, this corresponds with the fourth grade. However, in England and Scotland, this refers to students who have received 5 years of formal schooling.

SOURCE: Mullis, I.V.S., Martin, M.O., Gonzalez, E.J., and Kennedy, A.M. (2003). *PIRLS 2001 International Report: IEA's Study of Reading Literacy Achievement in Primary Schools in 35 Countries*, Exhibit 5.23. Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College.

Figure 11. Percentage distribution of fourth-graders, by teacher reports of availability of remedial or reading specialists and country: 2001



¹National Desired Population (all 9-year-olds with some national exclusions) does not cover all of International Desired Population (all 9-year-olds) because coverage falls below 65 percent.

²Canada is represented by the provinces of Ontario and Quebec (O,Q) only.

³Met guidelines for sample participation rates after replacement schools were included.

⁴National Defined Population (weighted sample size) covers less than 95 percent of National Desired Population (all 9-year-olds).

NOTE: The target population was the upper of the two adjacent grades with the most 9-year-olds. In most countries, this was the fourth grade. However, in England and Scotland, this refers to students who have received 5 years of formal schooling. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: Mullis, I.V.S., Martin, M.O., Gonzalez, E.J., and Kennedy, A.M. (2003). *PIRLS 2001 International Report: IEA's Study of Reading Literacy Achievement in Primary Schools in 35 Countries*, Exhibit 5.22. Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College.