



Program for International Student Assessment

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Information for Schools

What is PISA?

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international assessment of 15-year-old students, conducted every three years, that measures how well students apply their knowledge and skills in science, reading, and mathematics to solve problems in real-life contexts. In 2015, students from more than 70 countries and education systems, including the United States, will participate. PISA is coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and managed in the United States by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the U.S. Department of Education.

The entire assessment process will be undertaken by trained staff from Westat, a research organization under contract to NCES. NCES is conducting this study under authorization of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C., § 9543) and with the approval of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget under OMB # 1850-0755.

What does participating in PISA entail?

Each school is asked to designate a school coordinator to work with Westat and to submit a list of all students born between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000 and teachers eligible to teach 10th grade (the modal grade of 15 year olds). Up to 42 students in each school will be sampled to participate in the core PISA assessment, which takes about 3 hours of total time, including instructions, breaks, and a questionnaire. A sub-sample of up to 11 students in each school will be asked to return for an additional 1-hour assessment in financial literacy that will be held on the same day as the core assessment. Up to 25 teachers in each school will be asked to complete a 30-minute online teacher questionnaire about their background, education, and teaching experiences. The principal of each school will also be asked to complete a 30-minute online questionnaire about school and student body characteristics and policies.

Why should my school participate?

The participation of selected schools in the United States is vital to ensuring an accurate representation of the overall 15-year-old student population across the country. Although participation is voluntary, we rely on school and student participation to ensure the results are complete and accurate. We cannot do that without the support of schools like yours. By participating in PISA, your school will have the opportunity to impact the bigger picture of education in the United States and across the world.

In addition to receiving a U.S. national report with PISA 2015 results, schools may also receive a school-level report. The school report presents comparisons of your school's average scores with the average scores of participating education systems including the United States. The report also provides comparisons of your school with other similar U.S. schools based on specific school-level characteristics.

PISA offers a modest token of appreciation for schools, the school coordinator, students, and teachers who participate.

What school resources are required on assessment day?

All that is required from a school resource perspective is a space for up to 42 students that can be used for the entire day and that has accessible power outlets. PISA 2015 is completely computer-based, and Westat field staff will bring laptops and all necessary equipment to the school on assessment day. The assessment does not require network or internet access. No IT staff or resources will be needed from your school.

PISA 2015



PISA 2015

Will all of our 15-year-old students be asked to participate?

Probably not. In each school, all 15-year-old students will have an equal chance of selection, but only 42 will be selected to participate. Student selection is not based on any student characteristic other than being 15 years old. Only in very small schools with less than 42 15-year-old students enrolled will the sample include all available students. While PISA does allow accommodations for students with special educational needs, some students with disabilities or limited English proficiency may be excused from the assessment.

How long does the assessment take?

The PISA assessment session is approximately 3 hours for students, including time for instructions, the assessment, and a student questionnaire. Up to eleven students will be asked to return in the afternoon to take an additional 1-hour financial literacy assessment. In total, the assessment location will be used for about 5 hours for the main assessment, and about 2 hours for the financial literacy assessment, including setup and breakdown by Westat staff. All assessment activities will take place in one day.

Do teachers need to help administer the assessment?

No, no teachers or other staff from your school are required to administer PISA. Westat staff will come to your school on the day of the assessment and will bring all materials required including laptops for administering PISA. Westat staff will handle the entire administration from start to finish.

How are teacher and school questionnaires administered?

The teacher and school questionnaires are both administered online from a secure website. Up to 25 teachers (10 science and 15 non-science) will be sampled to complete an online 30-minute questionnaire that asks about their education and teaching experience, among other topics. The school questionnaire, which looks at school characteristics, such as enrollment and school practices, is also administered online and takes about 30 minutes to complete. Principals and teachers will receive login and password information via email or from their school's PISA school coordinator.

What will happen with the collected data?

By law, data provided by schools, staff, and students may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law [Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA 2002), 20 U.S. Code, Section 9573]. Reports of the findings will not identify participating districts, students, or individual staff. Individual responses will be combined with those from other participants to produce summary statistics and reports. For a recent example of how PISA data are reported, please visit <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014024rev.pdf>.

When will the assessment take place?

PISA will be conducted October 5 - November 13, 2015. Westat will work with schools to identify a convenient date during that time period.

Where can I find more information?

If you have any questions, please contact the PISA U.S. home office at 1-888-638-2597 or email PISAHelp@westat.com.

For more information on PISA, including results from previous data collections, please visit <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa>.

