

## **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRESS IN INTERNATIONAL READING LITERACY STUDY (PIRLS)**

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is a large international comparative study of the reading literacy of young students conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Progress (IEA).

Reading literacy is one of the most important abilities students acquire as they progress through their early school years. It provides the foundation for learning across all subjects, and can be used for recreation and for personal growth. It equips young children with the ability to participate fully in their communities and the larger society.

PIRLS measures trends in children's reading literacy achievement and provides trends and international comparisons on:

- Fourth graders' (Standard Three) reading achievement
- Students' competencies in relation to goals and standards for reading education
- The impact of the home environment and how parents can foster reading literacy
- The organisation, time, and materials for learning to read in schools
- Curriculum and classroom approaches to reading instruction

The PIRLS framework calls for students to be able to demonstrate their understanding of a wide variety of texts classified under two major purposes for reading: to acquire and use information; and for literary purposes. Students are required to engage in a full repertoire of reading skills and strategies, which include:

- Focusing on and retrieving specific information
- Making straight forward inferences
- Interpreting and integrating ideas
- Examining and evaluating text features.

Reading Literacy of children ages 9 to 10 was chosen, as it is an important transition point in children's development as readers. Typically, at this point, students have learned how to read and are now reading to learn.

Participation of Trinidad and Tobago in PIRLS 2006, apart from allowing a comparative analysis of participating countries' education systems, can extend and enrich the national

picture by providing a larger context within which to interpret national results. The PIRLS report will help policymakers and practitioners in the Ministry of Education to reassess their programmes, re-examine and revise existing practices in curricular provision, textbooks, teacher preparation, school organization and classroom instruction in reading.

PIRLS 2006 will collect baseline data about students' levels of reading achievement, as well as home, school and classroom influences on that achievement. The data will also inform, complement and evaluate current reading programmes being implemented by the Ministry of Education.