

# **A longitudinal appraisal of South Africa's participation in the PIRLS studies**

**LITASA ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

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# Presentation Outline

- ❑ Background to Educational Change in South Africa
- ❑ Background to PIRLS Studies in South Africa
- ❑ South African Education System
- ❑ South African Social/Societal & Educational Challenges
- ❑ South African's Participation in IEA PIRLS Studies
- ❑ Snippets of SA PIRLS Results
- ❑ Snippets of PIRLS Studies and Learning/Educational Contexts

# Background to Educational Change in South Africa

- 1994 – SA became a democratic state
  - Policy formulation process
- 1997 – New education system, Curriculum 2005 (C2005)
- 2000 – Revision of C2005 due to implementation challenges
- 2003 – Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)
- 2008 – Foundations of Learning Campaign (FLC)
- 2012 – Curriculum & Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)



# Some SA Educational Challenges

- A Bifurcated Education System:
  - School Differences: Affluent vs Marginalised Populations
- 12 Official languages: Multilingual & Multicultural Citizenry
  - English and Afrikaans (**historically dominant**) **VS**
  - 9 Indigenous languages (**historically marginalised**) & SA Sign Language
- Dominant Approach to Teaching, Learning & Assessment:
  - Multilingualism: Parallel Monolingualisms
- Low Levels of Learner Achievement:
  - Evidence from National Tests: SE, ANA
  - International / Trans-National Studies: TIMSS, SEACMAQ



# South African Education System

General Education & Training Band – GET			Further Education & Training Band – FET
Foundation Phase	Intermediate Phase	Senior Phase	
Lower Primary	Higher Primary	Lower Secondary	Higher Secondary
Grades R to 3	<b>Grades 4 to 6</b>	Grades 7 to 9	Grades 10 to 12
School-Based Assessment	School-Based Assessments plus Examinations		
<b>NB: ENTRENCHED TESTING OR GRADING CULTURE ACROSS THE SYSTEM</b>			

# South African Social/Societal Challenges

## ❖ MAIN SOCIAL / SOCIETAL CHALLENGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

### TRIPLE CHALLENGES

- INEQUALITY
- POVERTY
- UNEMPLOYMENT

### ❑ RAMPANT CORRUPTION

# South African's Participation in IEA PIRLS Studies

- 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle: 2001 [Before SA Entry]
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle: **PIRLS 2006:** [SA Baseline](#) - Grades 4 & 5 [Howie et al. 2008]
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle: **PIRLS 2011:** Grade 4 prePIRLS & Grade 5 PIRLS
  - [Howie et al. 2012]
- 4<sup>th</sup> Cycle: **PIRLS 2016:** Grade 4 PIRLS Literacy & Grade 5 PIRLS
  - [Howie et al. 2017]
- 5<sup>th</sup> Cycle: **PIRLS 2021:** Grades 4 & 6 [COVID-19] Reporting in Progress
  - [CEA-DBE et al. 2023]

# PIRLS PARTICIPANTS: 2006 - 2021

- **LEARNERS: GRADES 4, 5 & 6**
- **TEACHERS**
- **SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**
- **PARENTS**



# PIRLS PARTICIPANTS: 2006 - 2021

## READING TESTS:

- LEARNER READING TESTS

## CONTEXTUAL INSTRUMENTS:

- LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE
- TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE
- SCHOOL PRINCIPAL QUESTIONNAIRE
- PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

# WHAT DOES PIRLS MEASURE?

ASSUPMTION: LEARNING TO READ VS READING TO LEARN

## Purpose for Reading

- Literary Experience
- Acquire and Use Information

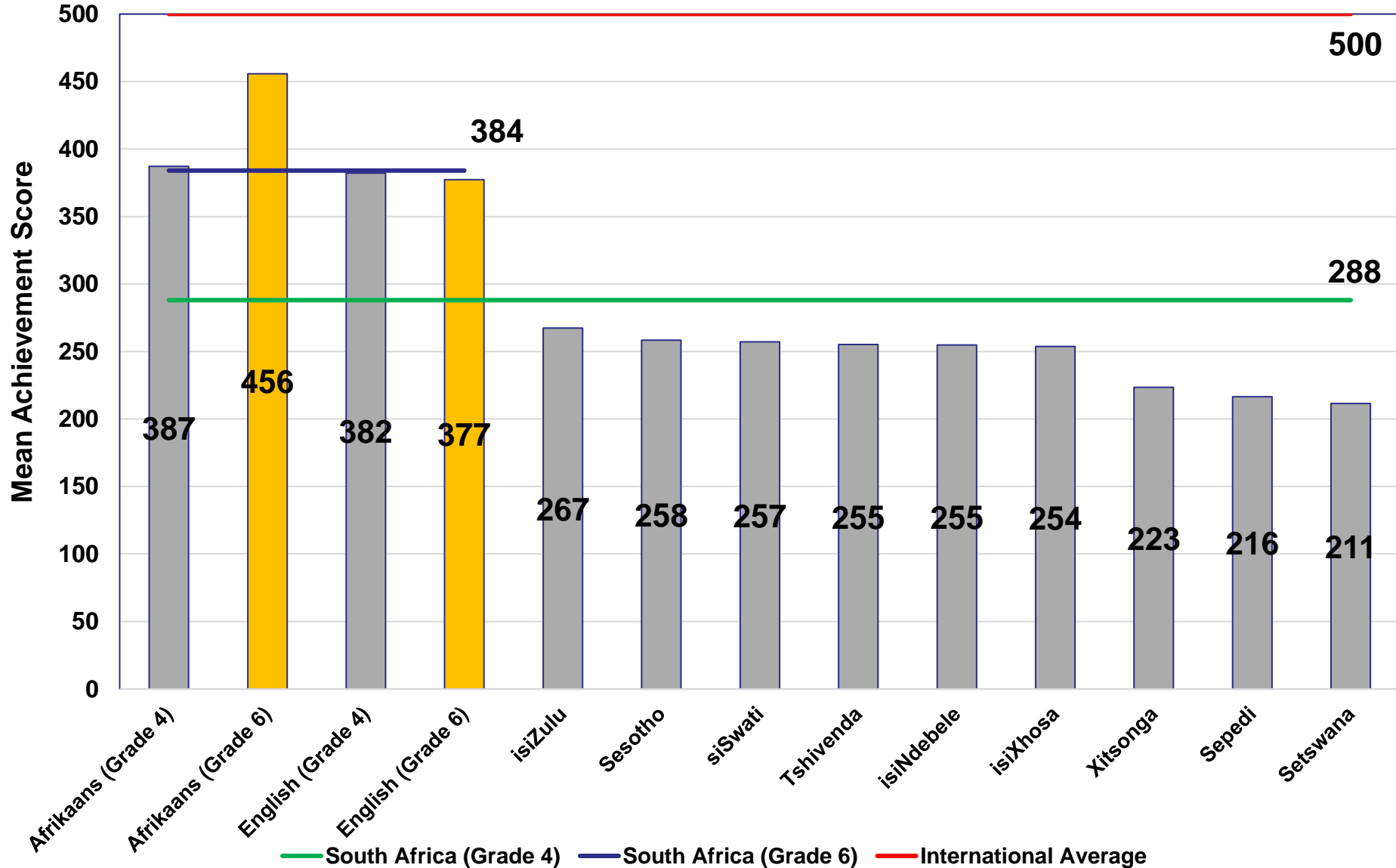
## Reading Comprehension Processes

- Focusing on and retrieving explicitly stated information
- Making straightforward inferences
- Interpreting and integrating ideas and information
- Evaluating and critiquing content and textual elements

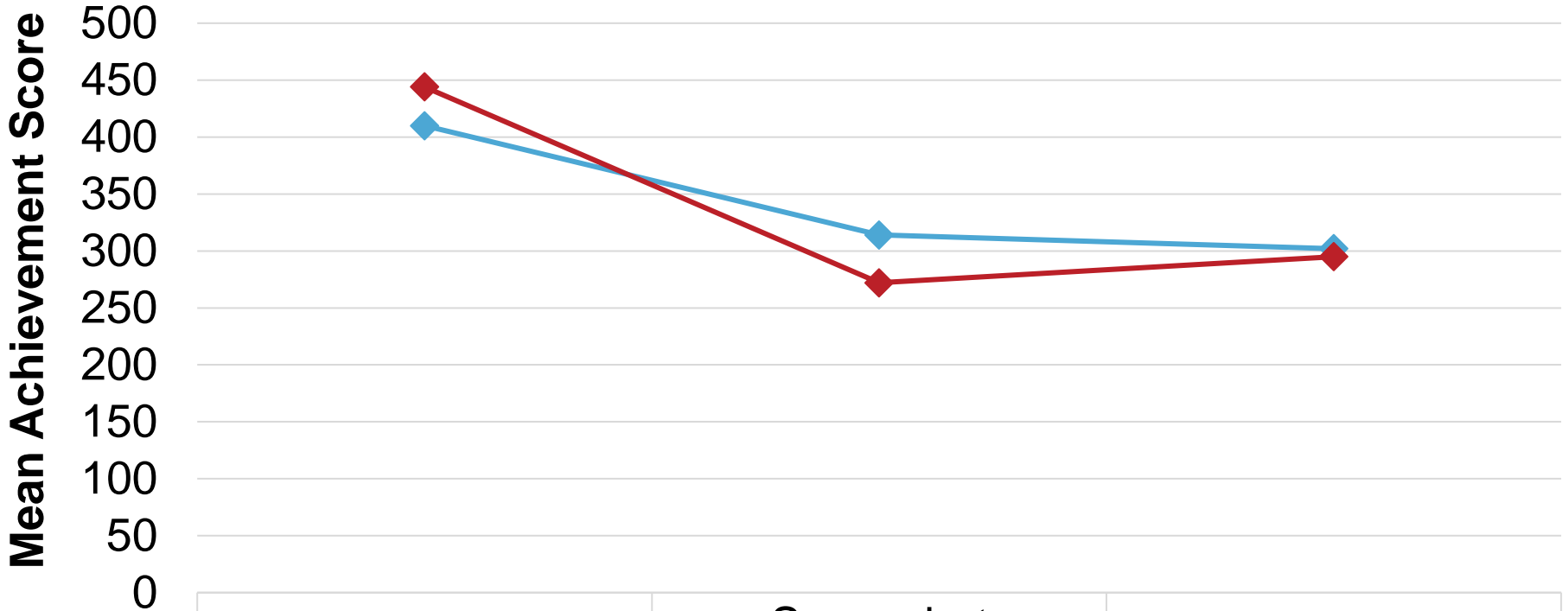
# PIRLS READING SCORES: 2006 to 2021

SA PIRLS Cycles	Learner Participants	International Mean	SA Mean	SA Performance By Gender	
				Boys	Girls
PIRLS 2001	—	—	—	—	—
PIRLS 2006 SA BASELINE	Grade 4	500	253	235	271
	Grade 5		302	283	319
PIRLS 2011	Grade 4 [prePIRLS]	500	461	446	475
	Grade 5 [PIRLS]		421	408	434
PIRLS 2016	Grade 4 [PIRLS Literacy]	500	320	295	347
	Grade 5 [PIRLS]	500	320	295	347
PIRLS 2021	Grade 4 [PIRLS Literacy]	500	288	260	317
	Grade 6 [PIRLS]		384	359	408

# 2021 PIRLS READING SCORES BY LANGUAGE



# LEARNING & SCHOOL RESOURCE SHORTAGES, TREND (SCORE)



◆ 2016

◆ 2021

# 2016 GRADE 4 READING SCORES BY SCHOOL QUINTILE

School Quintile Rank	Reading School
Quintile 1	288
Quintile 2	299
Quintile 3	303
Quintile 4	328
Quintile 5	426

# TEACHER WORKING CONDITIONS AT SCHOOL

Working Condition	Responses	Scores
Hardly had a problem	11%	389
Minor to moderate problem	76%	314
Serious problem	13%	293

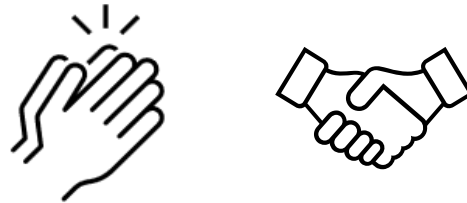
# SOME REMARKS & OBSERVATIONS

1. From the outset, the PIRLS studies proved to be cognitively challenging for SA learners. The passages or texts used for literary and informational reading purposes were difficult for our learners and more demanding than current CAPS requirements.
2. The scores on reading comprehension in African home languages observed across the different PIRLS cycles were lower than expected.
3. The complexity of learners learning in multi-lingual contexts is evident in the assessment data.
4. While the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated SA educational challenges, it has also bought forth an opportunity for stock-taking and resetting/rebooting the system for the better.





# IN ELEVEN OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF SOUTH AFRICA



**BAIE DANKIE!** - Afrikaans

**THANK YOU!** - English

**NGIYABONGA** - IsiNdebele

**ENKOSI!** - IsiXhosa

**NGIYABONGA!** - IsiZulu

**KE A LEBOHA!** - Sesotho

**KE A LEBOGA!** - Sesotho sa Leboa

**KE A LEBOGA!** - Setswana

**NGIYABONGA!** - Siswati

**NDZI KHENTSE NGOFU!** - Xitsonga

**NDI A LIVHUWA!** - Tshivenda



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