

REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

Information-Analytic Center

Language and Literacy

There are approximately 130 ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. Kazakhs comprise 66 percent of the population, and Russians comprise 21 percent. Uzbeks, Ukrainians, Uighurs, Tatars, Germans, Koreans, Azerbaijanis, Belorussians, Turks, Dungans, Poles, Kurds, Chechens, Tajiks, Bashkirs, and other nationalities total a combined 13 percent.¹

The state language of Kazakhstan is Kazakh. Nevertheless, state agencies and local authorities use both Kazakh and Russian languages officially. English is used in an international context.

Language policy in educational organizations is carried out in accordance with the Constitution and state legislation on languages.² Parents have the freedom to choose the language of instruction for their children.

In Kazakhstan, education is provided by 3,777 schools in Kazakh, 1,262 schools in Russian, 2,088 schools in both Kazakh and Russian, and 33 schools in other languages (e.g., Uzbek, Uighur, Tajik).

A network of schools offers scientific and mathematical modules in English, and trilingual education is being developed in Kazakhstan. At present, there are 107 such schools, including the Autonomous Educational Organisation's *Nazarbayev* Intellectual Schools.

Overview of the Education System

In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the state guarantees free education up to the secondary level (Grades 1 to 11 or 12) in public schools for all citizens.³

The main principles of state educational policy are the equal right of all citizens to quality education and access to education at all levels, with consideration for the intellectual development and psychophysiological and individual characteristics of every student.⁴

The Ministry of Education and Science implements unified state educational policy, facilitates cross-sector coordination, and develops and implements state programs in the sphere of education and science.⁵ Public educational institutions are financed from the state budget in accordance with state legislation.

The education system in the Republic of Kazakhstan is based on the principles of consistency and continuity and includes the following levels:

- Early childhood education and care—Preschool education is mandatory and is provided at home, by preschool organizations, or in preschool classes of secondary schools, *lyceums*, and *gymnasiums*; preschool education provided by public organizations is free of charge

- Primary education (Grades 1 to 4)
- Basic secondary education (Grades 5 to 9)
- General secondary education (Grades 10 to 11)—Technical and professional education
- Post-secondary education
- Higher education
- Postgraduate education

In accordance with the *Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Education*, the content of primary, basic secondary, and general secondary education is determined by general educational programs, which are based on the State Mandatory Standards of Education (SMSE).⁶ These standards regulate the curriculum, maximum academic workload, and level of preparation of students.

In order to facilitate the full development of gifted individuals' potential, special academic programs have been developed. There are 115 specialized schools for gifted children, *lyceums*, and *gymnasiums* that implement programs for specialized and in-depth education.

In the 2015–2016 academic year, there were 8,834 preschools in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The coverage of children ages 3 to 6 with early childhood education and training amounted to 81.6 percent. Educational services are provided by 7,511 organizations of general secondary education, including 7,160 public and 111 private schools.

Kazakhstan is a country of large territory. Functioning of small schools is guaranteed in localities with small populations. The number of such schools is 3,161 units, or 44.1 percent of secondary schools. In addition, 20 *Nazarbayev* Intellectual Schools of the Autonomous Educational Organisation have been established.⁷ These schools implement two educational models for students with high intellectual abilities: the Integrated Educational Programme, which has a scientific and mathematical focus, and the International Baccalaureate Programme. The gross enrollment rate in primary education stood at 110.56 percent and secondary at 109.11 percent.

The educational policy of the country is implemented under the State Programme for Education and Science Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016–2019 (SPESD).⁸ The main priority areas include ensuring equal access of all children and adolescents to the best educational resources and technologies and high quality education to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

SPESD plans include gradual transition to new content of school education. The implementation of curricula and programs based on updated content in accordance with SMSE 2015 began in the 2016–2017 academic year for first grade teachers and students.

Updated educational programs include specific training objectives that describe the skills students need to master at each level, grade, subject, and topic. Features of these programs include an integrated approach to learning, intra-subject communication, a spiral approach to building the training objectives, and inclusion of cross-cutting themes. A distinctive feature of new educational programs is their focus on shaping not only subject knowledge and skills, but also a wide range of additional skills (e.g., functional and creative application of knowledge, critical thinking, research, Information and

Communications Technology, the use of different methods of communication, the ability to work in a group and individually, problem solving, decision making).

Language/Reading Curriculum in the Fourth Grade

Reading Policy

Policy on developing reading competencies of the population is implemented at the national level. Starting in 2010, Kazakhstan implemented the Reading Kazakhstan program, the purpose of which is to introduce people to reading as a necessary tool of spiritual and intellectual breakthrough of the nation. The program is a set of measures in the following areas:

- Promotion of family reading
- Expanding the repertoire of the publishing industry of Kazakhstan
- Addition of attractive literary texts (entertaining, popular scientific, fiction, documentary [nonfiction], interactive)
- Development of the film industry in the area of screening the best examples of world literature
- Revival of the reading tradition at the workplace
- Development of a network of libraries for children, leisure, and educational centers
- Organization of salons for children’s reading in large shopping malls
- Promotion of writers’ work and the institution of literary prizes
- Involvement of the media in making reading attractive through the regular publication of book reviews, literary criticism, and readers’ reviews

According to the National Book Chamber of Kazakhstan, about 3,500 book titles with 1.5 million to 2 million volumes are issued annually.

Summary of National Curriculum

Participants of PIRLS 2016 studied on the basis of:

- The State Mandatory Standard of Preschool and Secondary Education (SMSE RK 1.4.002-2012) that covers primary, basic secondary, and general secondary education⁹
- Standard educational programs in general subjects, electives, and extracurricular courses approved by the Ministry of Education and Science

In addition, primary school children are trained based on “We Go to School” (2010) special education programs.

General curricula for primary education focuses on development of a child’s individual abilities and skills in reading, writing, numeracy, language communication experience, and creative self-realization for further acquisition of educational programs of basic school.

Content of primary education is divided into seven educational areas: Language and Literature, Mathematics, Science, Human and Society, Art, Technology, and Physical Culture.

The standard educational program (curriculum) for the subject of literary reading at the primary level was developed in accordance with SMSE RK 1.4.002-2012. This program takes into account individual development of a child and potential acquisition of the reading competence for use in various situations. A key aspect of learning outcomes is the formation of general educational skills of analysis, synthesis, and generalization.¹⁰ The content of the program is made up of Kazakh, Russian, and world literature for children, selected based on aesthetic and educational value of the literary work and its comprehensibility to students based on their age.

The main goal of the literary reading subject is the formation of functional literacy for the moral and patriotic personality of a student through his reading activity, the ability to accept the text emotionally, and to understand and reproduce what has been read.¹¹ The objectives of this subject include:

- A lucid, correct, fluent, and expressive reading level and an understanding of the thematic and ideological content of the work
- Formation of readers' horizons and expansion of students' knowledge about the social realm based on works of Russian, Kazakh, and foreign literature
- Developing and enriching coherent speech, creative imagination, and creative thinking; emotional responsiveness when reading fiction; commitment to productive and creative comprehension of what is read; creating texts of their own composition
- Instilling sustainable interest in independent and systematic reading of children's world literature comprehensible to their age; gaining experience of a conscious choice of books for independent reading

The program structure of the literary reading subject for each class of primary school includes the following sections:

- Listening skills and reading
- Themes and a range of readings
- Theory of literature (propaedeutics)
- Analysis of the text
- Productive and creative activity

The academic workload of the literary reading subject is four hours per week at 136 hours per academic year in Grades 2, 3, and 4.

The process of teaching literary reading is connected with:

- Language—Work on basic linguistic analysis of the text, formation of an expressive, correct, logically competent speech, improvement of writing skills, coherent speech, mastering the skill of constructing texts of different types of speech

- Knowledge of the World—Use of scientific and popular works on the subject, use of life experience, material discovery in the process of analyzing a literary work
- Mathematics—Use of counting in games, works of folklore, enrichment of speech with mathematical terms
- Fine Arts—Enrichment of the vocabulary based on the material of the drawings, formation of aesthetic ideas and feelings; development of “verbal drawing” skills, comparing and matching what is read and seen, development of skills to describe possible illustrations to the read text
- Music—Use of musical works in reading texts, development of coherent speech based on the comparison of literary and musical works
- Handicraft Training—Development of fingers, and use of artwork for illustrating the read works
- Physical Education—The use of physical movements to accompany rhymed texts, and organization of role playing games based on the material of read works

Interdisciplinary connections within the school subject contribute to the creation of a strong succession framework for further study of literature in the secondary education stage. The core content of this academic subject for Grade 4 includes the following components:¹²

- Listening skills and reading
 - Attentive listening to texts, understanding of theme and main idea of the work
 - Synthetic reading, characterized by merging of the reading skills and understanding of what is being read
 - Reading tempo at the end of the year should reach 75 to 90 words and characters per minute
 - Development of detailed, annotated reading, reading for specific information, conscious and rapid reading to yourself; representation of informational reading (“reading for yourself”); reading for details (“reading to myself”); expressive reading aloud (intonation, logical stress, pauses)
 - Further development of the types of reading: independent reading, reading with a specific task, selective reading, choral and annotated reading, etc.
 - Continued use of various types of exercises to increase reading speed, intonation’s expressiveness, the development of operational fields of reading, flexibility in reading
- Theory of literature
 - Determination of themes and ideas in art; titling the read parts; making up a plan
 - Theme and idea of the artwork; the main characters of the work; their overall assessment
 - General notion of composition
 - General concept of the types and genres of folklore: tale, myth, heroic epic, epic tale; development of the concepts of genres: poem, story
 - Concept of hyperbole

- Portrait and character of the work hero (identifying the author’s attitude toward the hero and assessing his feelings and character through the description of a portrait or landscape)
- Repetition and deepening of information: descriptive and expressive means (epithets and similes) in literary fiction
- Text analysis
 - Awareness of the themes and ideas in the literary work; artistic retelling with preservation of expressive language means of the works
 - Understanding the moral and ethical issues of the work; statement of his own attitude towards its solution
 - Establishing cause-effect relationships in text
 - Finding figurative and expressive means of language in the text, definition of their role to characterize the literary characters, understanding the author’s position
 - Characteristics of the hero through the description of his portrait
 - Development of attention to detail of the artistic image; ability to speculate about the significance of this detail for characterizing the character
 - Detailed answers to questions on the content of the text; constructing own questions; organization of search for answers to problems; titling parts of the text; plan for retelling of the text
 - Oral opinion of what has been read
- Productive and creative activity
 - Writing tales, stories, poems based on prop words, and parts of text based on the texts read and on personal life experiences
 - Oral description of the heroes’ portraits in the literary work; thinking of comparisons; epithets for portrait characteristics of characters
 - Writing their own episodes in the development of the literary work’s plot
 - Compiling of tales and stories, and staging of the read works
 - Drawing verbal pictures to the text
 - Work on creative writing: tales, stories, riddles (based on the sample of the read work and illustrative material)

At the completion of Grade 4, students should know:

- Genres of folklore: tale, epic tale, fable, parable (a common term)
- Literary concepts: the portrait and the character of the literary work; the landscape in the literary work
- Figurative and expressive means (epithets, comparisons, personification, hyperbole) in the literary work

- A certain amount of vocabulary that allows them to reproduce the text that has been read; engage in heuristic conversation; discuss what has been read
- The content of the literary works that are a part of the curriculum and their genre
- How to recite 12 to 14 poems and two to three excerpts from prose works

Students should be able to:

- Understand and articulate the theme and idea of the literary work
- Distinguish between the genres of orature: Kazakh heroic epics, legends, epic tales, riddles, fairy tales (folk and literary), poems
- Find in the text descriptive and expressive means of language (epithet, comparison, hyperbole) to analyze character, portrait, landscape of the read works
- Read correctly, observing the orthoepic norm and intonation; read expressively, following the formulation of logical stresses and pauses, choosing the pace and power of voice in accordance with the content of what is being read; read 75 to 90 words per minute; understand the meaning of what has been read
- Have skills of detailed, annotated reading; reading for specific information; reading to yourself (90 to 110 words per minute)
- Be able to find in the text answers to questions; retell the content of the text
- Name literary works they have read, their authors, and have an idea about their biographies
- Use language in figurative and expressive means of language to communicate their feelings, thoughts, and assessment of what has been read
- Convey the sequence of events; establish a causal connection in the narrative
- Be able to evaluate the actions and behavior of the characters to express their attitude to what they have read, to explain the motives for their actions, to find similar examples in real life situations
- Creatively interpret the content of the texts, to create their own texts
- Master the norms of speech etiquette and culture of interethnic communication
- Express and justify their attitude to the read literary works (what I liked and why)
- Distinguish landscape, portrait, and speech of the hero in the text; find the means for artistic expression (comparisons, epithets, impersonation, hyperbole)

Students must demonstrate:

- A sense of love and respect for the state symbols of the Republic of Kazakhstan; know and obey the Hymn of the Republic; love and cherish their native land; know and respect the traditions and culture of the multinational people of Kazakhstan and the national holidays

- The ability to evaluate moral character of literary characters: honesty, truthfulness, justice, generosity, compassion, attentiveness, respect for elders and parents, ability to come to the aid of the weak, be kind, caring, and bold
- The ability to recognize and identify (name) their emotions and the emotions of characters in the literary works; support other people; empathize with characters
- The ability to perceive the beauty of nature and care for everything living; to feel the beauty of artistic expression, and seek to improve their own speech
- Their feelings and evaluation in essays about friends, family, and acquaintances; compare them with the heroes of the books read

Students should apply the following systemic and activity results:¹³

- Educational and organizational skills—Formulate the topic and the purpose of the lesson, assess their learning activities at the end of the lesson, participate in heuristic conversation, solve tasks
- Training and information skills—Obtain information through listening and reading the text, analyzing it; the ability to allocate the main aspects of the text to determine the reasons of heroes' actions; make a plan of the text; master different ways of retelling the text (detailed, concise, creative)
- Training and logical skills—Basic types and methods of analysis and synthesis; monitoring the actions of the characters; comparison of portrait characteristics; establishing causality in the actions of the hero
- Training and communication skills—Communicate in groups or in pairs when performing learning tasks; cooperation in the analysis of the text, when discussing the nature of the characters; use different ways of searching for educational information in reference books, dictionaries, and the Internet; in accordance with communicative and cognitive tasks, express their own assessment of the text, to be able to defend it in a debate

Teachers, Teacher Education, and Professional Development

In Kazakhstan, pedagogical colleges and universities provide education for prospective primary school teachers. Pedagogical colleges offer a two year program for general secondary education graduates and a four year program for basic secondary education graduates. Graduates of pedagogical colleges typically continue their education at a pedagogical university.

Pedagogical universities provide education for prospective primary school teachers, including courses in science and mathematics, in accordance with Kazakhstan's Classification of Specialties in Higher and Postgraduate Education. Model curricula for pedagogy and methodology of elementary education, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, and geography are based on the State Mandatory Standards of Higher Education.

The theoretical component of Kazakhstan's teacher education programs consists of 129 credits (206 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, or ECTS, credits). Programs provide additional

types of training, such as a professional internship (20 credits) and physical training (16 credits). Graduates obtain a bachelor's degree in education and a corresponding qualification (e.g., primary school teacher, mathematics teacher, physics teacher, chemistry teacher, biology or geography teacher).

Teacher education is provided in two forms: full time and part time. Full time programs last four years for students who have completed general secondary education and three years for students who graduated from a college. Part time programs run three years for students who graduated from a college and two years for students who have completed higher education.

All pedagogical programs include subjects such as history of Kazakhstan, philosophy, foreign language, Kazakh (Russian) language, informatics, environment and sustainable development, introduction to the teaching profession, ethno-pedagogy, psychology and human development, and methods of teaching mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, and geography. Depending on their chosen major, prospective teachers may choose to take the following courses: Fundamentals of Educational Work, Fundamentals of Modern Kazakh (Russian) Language, Elementary Mathematics, Astronomy, Chemical Ecology, or Introduction to Biology.

Within the framework of the Professional Guidance for Teachers course, prospective teachers are introduced to new teaching approaches, develop critical thinking skills, learn to use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching, and study leadership and management of change in education. Prospective elementary school teachers study core subjects including Fundamentals of Natural Science and Methods of Teaching Knowledge of the World.

Prospective teachers are required to complete a professional internship organized according to the specifics of their specialization. For example, internships for prospective teachers in the pedagogy and methodology of elementary education include educational and pedagogical training (Introduction to Pedagogical Activity), educational and introductory training (Fundamentals of Natural Science), pedagogical training (Pedagogical Diagnostics of Juniors, Methods of Educational Work, Trial Lessons, and The First Days of a Child at School), a pedagogical internship, and a diploma internship.

Teacher education programs use conventional and unconventional technologies and education techniques. These include interactive technologies, critical thinking development technologies, dialogue training, case studies, smart cards, basic schemes, conceptual tables, graphic representations of information, solving situational and practical tasks, and laboratory workshops.

Certification of teachers is governed by the *Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Education of 2007*. Certification defines the qualification requirements by complex analytic generalization of their professional competence. Qualification classification of teaching staff is retained for five years throughout Kazakhstan.¹⁴

Requirements for Ongoing Professional Development in Reading for Teachers

According to the *Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Education*, teachers should participate in active professional development at least once every five years.¹⁵ Kazakhstan has developed a system to support teacher professional development. Professional development of teachers is provided by professional development courses on the basis of 16 regional branches (14 regions and two cities of national status)

of the JSC National Center for Professional Development “Orleu.” Teachers in Kazakhstan may take additional online courses. Methodological support and opportunities for professional development is provided by the Center of Excellence of the Autonomous Educational Organisation’s *Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools*.

Increasing the prestige of the teaching profession and teachers’ professional growth is motivated by annual competitions such as Best Teacher, Rural Teacher, Best Class Teacher, “Altyn Disc for ICT Teachers,” and contests on authorial teaching programs. There are financial and moral incentives for winning.

Reading Instruction in the Primary Grades

Instructional Materials

One effective approach for improving the quality of textbooks and teaching materials was forming authoring teams by including the best teachers and experts from the International Materials Development Association.

New approaches to expert evaluation of educational literature have been established. A multilevel expertise system was adopted: internal expertise in publishing offices, and scientific and pedagogical expertise at the National Academic and Research Center for textbooks. The Ministry of Education and science approves an annual list of course materials to be used in the educational process.

In addition, teachers may select books and materials depending on their professional preferences, abilities and interests of their students, and parental opinion.

Textbooks, educational literature, educational and methodical kits, and handbooks for educational organizations are tailored to educational training programs and the age and psychological characteristics of students.

Local executive bodies of the cities of Astana and Almaty make the purchase of textbooks based on the choice of educational organizations.

Use of Technology

The use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in education is a key principle of the national education system. In recent years, the provision of computers, software, interactive boards, and Internet access in schools has improved significantly. Access to broadband Internet is provided in 76 percent of schools in Kazakhstan. On average, there is 1 computer per 15 students for instructional use. Approximately 73 percent of schools are equipped with interactive boards.

The use of ICT in literature lessons enhances the creative potential of the personality, stimulating the attention of students and forming vigilance in spelling.

In 2011, Kazakhstan launched an e-learning project aiming to provide equal access to the best educational resources and technologies for all students. The project also aimed to equip all schools with digital educational content by 2020. The e-library provides the educational process with digital educational resources available to all students.¹⁶

Second Language Instruction

Most schools provide instruction in Kazakh and Russian. There are mixed schools that provide instruction in two or three languages. Parents may choose the language of instruction for their children. Children of Kazakh nationality generally study in the Kazakh language, while children of different nationalities (e.g., Russians, Kazakhs, Uighurs, Uzbeks, Koreans) generally study in Russian.

In educational organizations that use language of instruction of the ethnic groups, the educational area Language and Literature further includes Native Language and Literature of the ethnic group. The solution to an issue of studying the language of a particular ethnic group is within the competence of Local Executive Bodies of Education. The subjects of native language (e.g., Uighur, Uzbek, Tajik) and literature (e.g., Uighur literature, Uzbek literature, Tajik literature) are included in the invariant component of the standard curriculum. The subject of literary reading also provides for the application of communicative approaches to the development of skills in four kinds of speech activity.

Exhibit 1 shows the distribution of students' workload.

Exhibit 1: Distribution of Workload

Grade	Hours Per Week	Hours Per Year
2	2	68
3	2	68
4	2	68

The principles of the curriculum development for schools with Uzbek, Uighur, and Tajik as languages of instruction are identical to the principles of curriculum development for schools with the state and Russian languages of instruction.

Students with Reading Difficulties

The basic principles of state policy in education in Kazakhstan are equal rights for all to quality education and its accessibility regardless of the psycho-physiological and individual characteristics of each student.

Inclusive education implies inclusion of children with special educational needs in the regular educational environment and their integration into society. Persons with special educational needs include children with disabilities, migrant children, children of repatriated families, ethnic minorities, and children with difficulties in social adaptation in society.

In Kazakhstan there are preschool organizations and secondary schools that implement the program of inclusive education.

In accordance with Standard Rules for Operation of Educational Organizations of Primary, Basic Secondary, and General Secondary Education and consistent with interests of parents in educational institutions, classes are provided for children with developmental disabilities and regular children

(there can be no more than two children with developmental disabilities in one class) or special classes according to the type of disability.¹⁷

According to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Education, individual training at home free of charge is organized for citizens whose health condition does not allow them to attend the secondary education for long periods of time.¹⁸

Educational organizations can independently carry out the educational process using distance learning technologies. It is regulated by the Rules on Organization of Educational Process Using Distance Learning Technologies.¹⁹

Seminars for teachers and professionals working with blind and visually impaired children are organized at various levels around the country. They undergo special training on braille technique and methods of teaching children reading and writing based on embossed fonts. There are special books written in braille in school libraries. Educational institutions are equipped with specialized equipment for writing and studying and sets of special braille training and instructional materials.

The National Scientific and Practical Centre of Correctional Pedagogy includes a Montessori room. The center's specialists are developing a training course on the Montessori method with the inclusion of video materials and practical exercises. The course is for teachers, speech pathologists, psychologists, and other specialists of correctional educational institutions. Training is held annually in the framework of the state system of professional development.

Monitoring Student Progress in Reading

To monitor student performance in general educational programs, educational organizations conduct ongoing and interim assessments. Educational organizations independently determine the method, order, and frequency of assessments.

Monitoring of students' progress is conducted by teachers in all academic subjects and is conducted from the first quarter (semester) of the academic year at Grades 2 to 11 or 12.²⁰

The final mark for subjects in Grades 5 to 11 or 12 is given on the basis of quarterly and annual examination marks.

Interim assessments of students are carried out in Grades 5 to 8 (or 9) and Grade 10 (or 11) at the end of the school year. The subjects (not more than two), forms, and timing of interim assessment are decided by the school's pedagogical council. Students in these grades with unsatisfactory final marks on one or two subjects must repeat the interim assessment on these subjects. During summer vacation, students are given assignments in the respective subjects.

Currently, the criteria of the system of evaluation of student achievement (summative evaluation with scoring, and formative assessment with feedback provision) is being adopted as part of the transition to the updated content of education.

In the 2016–2017 academic year, the format of the final school examination was revised, and the State Graduation Examination was conducted in schools. One of the proposed forms of the examination is essay writing. Essay requirements are outlined in a guidance letter. For applying to



higher educational institutions in the country, a test on the basis of universities will be conducted.

The annual External Evaluation of Educational Achievements (EEEA) of basic secondary education graduates was introduced in 2012 at the national level. In 2015, the testing was conducted for Grade 4 students as well. The aim is to determine the level of curricula acquisition in primary and secondary education. The list of subjects of testing and a list of the participating schools is determined by the Ministry of Education and Science. Test tasks are developed in line with the curriculum.

EEEA is administered as a paper test (i.e., answer sheets and test booklets, with the use of online computer technologies). The test is 70 minutes long for Grade 4 and 130 minutes for Grade 9. Testing is conducted at the place of study.

Subject-specific knowledge and functional literacy of students is being examined (mathematics, science, reading, and Information and Communications Technology [ICT] literacy).

Special Reading Initiatives

It has become a tradition throughout the country to conduct the One Country—One Book campaign every year, which deservedly enjoys great popularity. The campaign’s purpose is support and development of reading culture; the preservation of historical, cultural, and spiritual heritage; and careful attitude to the native language. The campaign was founded by the Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan, the National Academic Library of Kazakhstan, the Library Association of Kazakhstan, the Kazakhstan Association of Reading, and the Youth Congress of Kazakhstan.

The motto of the unique campaign The Reading City is “Opening the book—open world!”

Kazakhstani children take part in an international campaign called We Read to Kids about War, which takes place in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Children read aloud literary works describing the events of 1941 to 1945 and can listen to the best works about the Great Patriotic War in libraries of Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States countries. Every year the project becomes more popular. This project develops a sense of patriotism and pride and an understanding of heroism and the horrors of war.

The Autonomous Educational Organisation’s *Nazarbayev* Intellectual Schools are implementing a national project called 100 Books. Within the calendar year, each student independently reads works of fiction: 60 in Kazakh, 20 in Russian, and 20 in English.²¹

School libraries are part of the national education system and occupy a special position in the library networks of Kazakhstan. They are accessible to all young citizens of the country and create conditions for a comfortable reading environment. Currently, there are various software programs that help carry out technological functions of the library.

Kazakhstani schools and libraries hold events for fostering the interests of students in reading such as exhibitions, readers’ conferences, literary salons, literary tours, meetings with poets and writers, journalists and philologists of the republic and regions, and competitions of readers’ theater groups. Special literary tours are being organized. At the monuments to famous writers and poets, students get acquainted with the work of the Kazakh and Russian classics.

The Drop Everything—Start to Read! campaign has become a tradition in schools. On this day, teachers and students of Grades 1 to 11 as well as school staff members read fiction within 30 minutes. Class teachers at all schools conduct a weekly extracurricular class called One Hour Story, in which students talk about what they read during the week (the best way to learn is to listen). To generate interest in books and develop reading literacy, students keep reading diaries in which they record the author, title, and number of pages read.

Once a year, “Book Week” is conducted. In the framework of this event readers hold conferences, reader theater competitions, and campaigns such as Give a Book, Journey with a Book, My Friends Read, My Family and the Book, the Wonderful World of Libraries, and People and Books.

Every half year or quarter year, meetings with the participation of family members such as Favorite Books of my Family are held in Grades 1 to 4 and 5 to 9 to involve families in the reading process. The books that are read by parents and siblings are discussed, and they prepare a presentation or review of the books read within a certain period.

In the online electronic environment, texts become a source for reading, for seeking information, and a source that links with a traditional book. For upper secondary students, the initiative Our School E-library shares compact discs containing a decorated cover and abstracts of literary works they read with libraries.

The Ministry of Education and Science developed and implemented the project Kazakhstan’s Map of Children’s Reading, in which a list of literary works in Kazakh, Russian, and English was identified with the aim of developing children’s multilingualism.

In the framework of the countrywide campaign We are Your Children, Kazakhstan! We Live in a New World! dedicated to the International Children’s Day, the annual festival Writers of Kazakhstan to Children is held. It includes book exhibitions on various topics and meetings with the best local authors.

It has become a tradition to hold theatrical performances such as Book is Our Friend, It’s Quite Helpless Without and contests of children’s illustrations for favorite books in which winners are awarded. The main gift for children is a book.

Annual charity events aimed at collecting books for school libraries and orphanages are organized among the population.

In the contest The Leader of Reading, each library analyzes the library forms and finds the most active readers in various age categories.

Use and Impact of PIRLS

International comparative studies play a key role in the modernization of Kazakhstan’s education system. Kazakhstan’s participation in TIMSS, PIRLS, the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS), the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) is defined in the State Programme for Education Development and is funded by the national budget. The significance of the country’s participation in



these studies is invaluable. It not only allows the country to obtain objective data but gives a realistic assessment of the achievements and problems of education in the country.

This is the first time Kazakhstan has participated in PIRLS. Participation in PIRLS 2016 will allow Kazakhstan to obtain an independent, objective assessment of the level of primary school students' reading skills formation. The strengths and weaknesses of educational programs will be analyzed, and new methods and technologies for formation of reading competence of students in the leading countries will be explored.

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