



## News



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## Two World Leaders in Educational Research Announce Collaboration

**ETS and IEA Unveil Plan for Joint Research and Training Effort to Improve and Advance International Large-Scale Assessment ([www.IERIInstitute.org](http://www.IERIInstitute.org))**

**Princeton, N.J. (Feb. 14, 2007)** – Two of the world’s leading educational research organizations, ETS and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), announced plans today to establish a joint research and training institute. The work of this group will center on improving and advancing the science of international large-scale assessment, training and professional development.

“This project allows ETS to bring its vast research expertise to bear on the important area of international large-scale assessments, an area of growing importance for tracking educational progress worldwide,” says Ida Lawrence, Senior Vice President for Research & Development at ETS. “It also provides the opportunity to collaborate closely with a highly respected international organization that currently has more than 60 member countries and conducts large-scale assessments in about 90 countries, covering all the continents.”

“We see this as an opportunity to collaborate with one of the preeminent educational research institutes to advance not only the science of large-scale assessment but also to improve the ways in which the outcomes of large-scale assessment activities affect educational policy development and reform in countries around the world,” says Hans Wagemaker, Executive Director of IEA. “The institute will also provide significant training opportunities for researchers from a variety of disciplines in the assessment field.”

### Virtual Research Center

The collaboration calls for the creation of a virtual research center designed to facilitate web-based collaboration among researchers involved in work on large-scale assessment, who work either as part of a national or international team, or as independent staff members of IEA or ETS. The research projects will be hosted by the funding institutions.

“We hope this virtual research area will contribute to the science of large-scale assessments so that the best available information is provided to policymakers and researchers from around the world,” says ETS Senior Research Scientist Matthias von Davier, who will manage the research activities in the center. “Projects undertaken in the research area will focus on issues of comparability, accuracy and interpretability of large-scale educational surveys.”

Research activities associated with these issues will be aimed at:

- developing improved test design and scaling methodologies, as well as new methods for studying relationships between proficiency data and other variables
- developing and validating non-cognitive constructs that hold promise for predicting cognitive measures on the level of policy-relevant groups
- developing data-collection methodologies that improve quality of assessments
- addressing issues surrounding international assessments that will help ensure innovation and incremental improvement of these assessment programs over time.

### Training and Professional Development

“Another important goal of the project will be to contribute to the professional development and training of those who participate and are interested in activities relating to large-scale international assessments,” explains Dirk Hastedt, Co-director of the IEA Data Processing Center (IEA-DPC) in Hamburg, Germany. “To achieve this goal, staff from IEA and ETS will explore the use of various technologies for delivering and communicating information relating to the areas of test development, sampling, data collection, scoring, data entry, scaling, analysis and reporting. These technologies may include face to face seminars; use of audio-visual media and the use of web-based technologies.”

The project will also provide consulting and advisory resources to researchers and national centers wishing to conduct policy-

related studies or develop reports using IEA and other international assessment databases. Plans also call for establishing internship and training support for researchers and students interested in pursuing work and careers associated with these methodologies and databases.

### **Dissemination Area**

“While conducting research in areas related to large-scale assessment is a noble goal in and of itself, it is also important to share this information so that it can be used and applied by other professionals in the field,” urges Irwin Kirsch, Distinguished Presidential Appointee and Director of ETS’s Center for Global Assessment. For this reason, it is important that the research and training institute provide an avenue for disseminating this knowledge.”

To achieve this goal, staff from both organizations will collaborate in preparing the upcoming IEA International Research Conference, which is scheduled to take place late in 2008. They will also work with staff from national centers to assist and facilitate the publication of their research results, and collaborate in preparing the data-dissemination strategies for IEA studies, including conceptualizing and adapting or developing an online service that would enable researchers to access data from international assessments through the Internet.

The collaboration will take place under a worldwide brand called the IEA/ETS Research Institute, or IERI ([www.ierinstitute.org](http://www.ierinstitute.org)). Eugene Gonzalez, a Director of Data Analysis and Computational Research at ETS, will be the director of the IERI and will manage the collaboration and the activities of the institute. Gonzalez will spend his time between ETS’s offices in Princeton and the IEA-DPC offices in Hamburg.

### **About the IEA**

The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) is an independent, nonprofit, international cooperative of national research institutions and governmental research agencies. Through its comparative research and assessment projects, IEA aims to:

- provide international benchmarks that may assist policymakers in identifying the comparative strength and weaknesses of their educational systems
- provide high-quality data that will increase policymakers’ understanding of key school- and non-school-based factors that influence teaching and learning
- provide high-quality data that will serve as a resource for identifying areas of concern and action, and for preparing and evaluating educational reforms
- develop and improve educational systems capacity to engage in national strategies for educational monitoring and improvement
- contribute to developing the worldwide community of researchers in educational evaluation

Since its inception in 1958, the IEA has conducted more than 23 research studies of cross-national achievement. The regular cycle of studies encompasses learning in basic school subjects. Examples are the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 1995, TIMSS 1999, TIMSS 2003, TIMSS 2007) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS 2001, PIRLS 2006). IEA projects also include studies of particular interest to IEA members, such as the TIMSS-R Video Study of Classroom Practices, Civic Education, Information Technology in Education (SITES-M1, SITES-M2, SITES 2006), and Preprimary Education. Additional information is available at [www.iea.nl](http://www.iea.nl) and [www.iea-dpc.de](http://www.iea-dpc.de).

### **About ETS**

ETS is a nonprofit institution with the mission to advance quality and equity in education by providing fair and valid assessments, research and related services for all people worldwide. In serving individuals, educational institutions and government agencies around the world, ETS customizes solutions to meet the need for teacher professional development products and services, classroom and end-of-course assessments, and research-based teaching and learning tools. Founded in 1947, ETS today develops, administers and scores more than 24 million tests annually in more than 180 countries, at over 9,000 locations worldwide. Additional information is available at [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org)