

BACKGROUND

For immediate release: Friday 10 December 2004

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 2002/03)

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 2002/03) is the latest in a series of international studies of mathematics and science, conducted under the auspices of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

The present study is the third combined mathematics and science study that Australia has participated in since 1994; others being the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 1994/95), and the partial repeat of TIMSS at Year 8 in 1998/99 (TIMSS 1998/99).

TIMSS 2002/03 tested student achievement in mathematics and science of students in Year 4 and Year 8. The study took place in 46 countries. Year 8 students were assessed in all countries while Year 4 students were assessed in 25 of the participating countries. The testing took place in late 2002 in southern hemisphere countries and early 2003 in the northern hemisphere.

In Australia, 10,030 students from 414 schools were tested. Students completed tests in mathematics and science and answered questionnaires on their background and experiences in learning mathematics and science at school. School principals and the students' mathematics and science teachers also completed detailed questionnaires.

In mathematics, test items assess students in four content areas of *measurement, geometry, data, patterns and relationships* and *number*.

In the science assessment, the test items balance across five content domains of *life science, chemistry, physics, earth science* and *environmental science* and three cognitive domains, *factual knowledge, conceptual understanding* and *reasoning and analysis*.

Australia's participation in the study is managed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in conjunction with the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) with funding from the Commonwealth and state and territory governments.

There are a number of benefits for Australia in participating in TIMSS. In particular, Australia's participation in TIMSS provides an opportunity to continue to build a comprehensive picture of trends in, and patterns of, achievement in mathematics and science for students in Year 4 and Year 8.

Australia's results from TIMSS 2002/03 will be reported in two volumes (*Summing it up: Mathematics achievement in Australian schools in TIMSS 2002* and *Examining the evidence: Science achievement in Australian schools in TIMSS 2002* both by Sue Thomson and Nicole Fleming) to be released concurrently at 02:00am Wednesday 15 December.

Results are reported as average scores with the standard error, as distributions of scores, and as percentages of students who attain the international benchmarks, for countries and specific groups within Australia.

The release of the Australian results will coincide with the release of the international report by the IEA in Boston.

Further information about TIMSS is available on the ACER website at http://www.acer.edu.au/research/timss/timss_index.htm

*****ENDS*****

Media enquiries:

Louise Reynolds -Corporate Publicity & Communications manager (03) 9277 5582 or 0419 340 058