



WELCOME

This newsletter shares with you some of the common questions and issues raised from the First Assessment. This newsletter also provides you with an opportunity to **win your school \$200 towards the cost of using PIPS in 2004*** by completing the questionnaire. We appreciate the time you spend completing the survey. The information is useful for us to determine your opinion about PIPS and your thoughts about future developments.

Please feel free to obtain extra copies of this newsletter for additional staff by downloading a copy at the PIPS website <http://www.education.murdoch.edu.au/pips/>

ISSUES

Why is it important to return data on time?

For 2003, about two-thirds of the First Assessment data disks were returned for analysis by the specified date. It is important that disks are returned by the date specified in the 2003 PIPS Manual as we require about 75% of data from each cohort before data can be standardised. So as you can see, every school's cooperation to provide data on time is appreciated as this ensures that schools in your cohort (including your own school) receive the feedback on time. If your school provides data much later than specified, the data can still be analysed but this means that your school's data will not be used as part of the standardisation process.

What happens if a "pre-primary or equivalent" student is marked as "Year 1 in the PIPS Assessment?"

Schools are responsible for entering student details correctly in PIPS. If you mistakenly indicate in PIPS that a student is a Year One student, when the student is actually in the year prior to Year One (i.e. "pre-primary or equivalent" in PIPS) then that student will be standardised with students from an incorrect year group. If this has happened, it is important that you contact the PIPS Project Coordinator in WA so that the data can be reanalysed. Otherwise you may be making decisions about a particular student based on incorrect data.

Why do I need one floppy disk per computer used to administer PIPS?

By clicking-on the *Transfer Data* button in the program, all PIPS data is copied on to the floppy disk. In this process, the new data copies over any existing data on the disk. Therefore if you have more than one computer and you use only one disk, the data from the second computer will copy over the data already transferred from the first computer. It is not possible for us to determine how many computers were used by your school to administer PIPS, so it is important you provide the correct number of disks and indicate by labelling each floppy disk separately (for example "1 of 3" "2 of 3" and "3 of 3").

Why do we display extreme scores as "over 75" and "under 25" for the maths, reading and total in the results table?

No test gives an exact score every time. If a student sat the test several times they may get several scores, sometimes a little higher, sometimes a little lower. For students who score around the average range, a few points difference in the raw score may move the standardised score at most a point each way (for example, a total raw score of 86 may match a standardised score of 55.2, and 3 raw points either way give a standardised score of 54.1 and 56.2. However, if a student has a very high or low score, a few points either way could make a large difference to the standardised score. For example a total

raw score of 236 may correspond to a standardised score of 82.4, and 3 points either way may give standardised scores of 79.6 and 85.4 – a larger range. So "above 75" and "below 25" are used as a way of not implying more accuracy than is possible.

What does "x" represent in the box-and-whisker plot?

The "x" represents an usual score for that particular class. Therefore if two or more classes were assessed with PIPS it is possible to have an "x" for a student who received a score of 65 for one class and the same score represented by a circle in another class, if this is not considered an unusual score for that particular class.

Are the words "cash", "cosmetics" and "toadstool" appropriate for the Australian setting, or are they too 'British'?

First, these words are included as difficult words. PIPS is designed so that the assessment gets more challenging the further one moves through it. Second, preliminary analysis shows that in 2001, WA students using PIPS found the words "yacht", "cash", "jewellery" and "saxophone" slightly easier than students in the UK. ACT students found "cash", "microphone", "jewellery", "saxophone" and "cosmetics" a little easier than students in the UK. This analysis has not taken into account the age of Australian students, so there might be slight adjustments. However overall, there is not much difference in item difficulty between students from these countries.

Why does PIPS not display all questions in all sections?

The program is tailored to each student's ability and if a student starts to falter in a given section, the program automatically moves on to the next section. In this way the student is not presented with a fixed number of questions that must be attempted, to the detriment of the student who is aware he or she cannot answer correctly.

Are the letters in the letters section presented in a particular order?

The first letter asked is the same as the first letter of the student's first name. The second letter asked is "S". This is considered the most widely recognised letter by children when they start school. There are letters that are in general better recognised than others such as S, o, A, C, and K. These are presented earlier in the assessment than other letters. In this way a student has quite a few chances to answer questions before PIPS "cuts" to the next section.

REMINDER

The Final Assessment period is:

WA, NSW, NT and SA 13 – 31 October

QLD 6 – 17 October

TAS 29 September – 17 October

*** Conditions of Entry**

1. All schools using PIPS in 2003 from WA, NT, SA, QLD, NSW and TAS are eligible to enter.
2. Questionnaires must be completed in full and returned by 30 June 2003 for entry into the competition.
3. A school will be randomly chosen from the entries completed in full to win the prize.
4. If your school funds the cost to use PIPS, the prize is a \$200 discount off the 2004 PIPS cost. If your education system funds the cost for your school to use PIPS, the prize will be \$200 cash to your school.
5. Cost is defined as school and per student assessment fee only.
6. The prize is not transferable to another school.
7. The school receiving the prize will be notified later in 2003.
8. The prize is only valid in 2004.