

Conclusions for writing performance

Mean writing scores for grade five

Grade five students in Marshall Islands performed better in writing than did those in the region. They gained 492 points and those in the region gained 484 points.

Mean writing scores for grade seven

The performance of grade seven students is comparable to the performance in writing for the region. Marshall Islands grade seven students gained 508 points and the region gained 507 points.

Gender

The grade five girls performed better than the boys with 500 points scored by girls and 483 points by the boys.

In grade seven, girls performed better than boys by 16 points. The girls scored 517 points and the boys scored 501 points.

School authority

Grade five students in non-government schools showed higher mean scores (514) than did those in government schools (486). Grade seven students in non-government schools had higher mean scores (531) than students in government schools (504).

School location

The mean performance for grade five and grade seven students in urban and non-urban schools continued to increase over the three cycles of PILNA.

Trends

The performance of grade five students has been increasing over the three cycles of PILNA from 424 points in 2015 to 453 points in 2018 and then to 492 points in 2021.

Grade seven student's performance decreased between 2015 and 2018 attaining 492 points and 488 points respectively, but then increased to 508 points in 2021.

Coding

For the PILNA writing assessment at grade five and seven, students were required to write a story based on either of the two prompts provided. The prompts were provided to encourage ideas and engagement in the process. The criteria for the narrative task encompass the two main features of writing – content and language elements – as can be seen in the writing rubric. Six writing skills are assessed in PILNA: quality of ideas, structure and organisation, grammar and syntax, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation.

Coding data allow for an interpretation of how students have performed. A code is assigned for each criterion according to how well the student has performed. Code 0 is assigned when there is insufficient evidence to assess.

Grade 5 coding

Quality of ideas (Codes 1–8): This criterion measures the quality of the students' ideas and how well those ideas have been developed to produce an entertaining story. Around 45% of grade five students in Marshall Islands were awarded Code 4 or higher in this criterion, indicating they had an awareness of the task and had written stories that ranged from a simple storyline to a well-developed plot that was closely related to the prompt. Thirty-six per cent of grade five students received Code 3 or lower in this criterion indicating that they had written random words or words that may have been copied from the question itself.

Structure and organisation (Codes 1–5): This criterion measures the students' ability to shape a story, or to produce a coherent story, with ideas that relate to each other and are logically sequenced. Nearly half of grade five students in Marshall Islands received Code 3 or above this criterion. These students were aware of the mechanics in writing and were able to write stories that had incorporated the prompts well.

Grammar and syntax (Codes 1–4): This criterion measures the students' ability to produce a range of sentence structures with accuracy. Around 56% of grade five students in Marshall Islands received Code 2 or lower in this criterion, showing that students may have attempted to use a variety of sentence structures but had made significant errors in grammar.

Vocabulary (Codes 1–4): This measures the variety of students' vocabulary used in telling the story. Around 54% of grade five students in Marshall Islands received Code 2 or lower in this criterion, indicating that the writers had limited vocabulary and so lacked clarity in their expression.

Spelling (Codes 1–2): This measures the students' ability to spell both basic and more difficult words. Almost 80% of grade five students in Marshall Islands received Code 1 or higher in this criterion, indicating that they were able to accurately spell basic and difficult words in their writing test.

Punctuation (Codes 1–3): This measures the range and precision of punctuation used in telling the story. More than 50% of grade five students in Marshall Islands received Code 1 or below in this criterion, indicating that they had mostly used commas and full stops but had made some errors using them. A reasonable proportion (49%) of grade five students in Marshall Islands received Code 2 or 3, which showed mastery in the use of a variety of punctuation marks.

Grade 7 coding

Quality of ideas (Codes 1–8): This criterion measures the quality of the students' ideas and how well those ideas have been developed to produce an entertaining story. Sixty-six per cent of the grade seven students in Marshall Islands knew what to do in the writing test and wrote stories that related to a prompt. These students were awarded Code 4 or above.

Structure and organisation (Codes 1–5): This measures the students' ability to shape a story, or to produce a coherent story, with ideas that relate to each other and are logically sequenced. Sixty-two per cent of the grade seven students in Marshall Islands were awarded Code 3 or higher in this criterion, indicating that they were aware of a story structure, and their stories were introduced, well developed and had a clear conclusion.

Grammar and syntax (Codes 1–4): This measures the students' ability to produce a range of sentence structures with accuracy. Seventy-two per cent of grade seven students in Marshall Islands wrote using correct grammar conventions in a variety of sentence structures and so were awarded Code 3 or higher.

Vocabulary (Codes 1–4): This measures the variety of students' vocabulary used in telling the story. Seventy per cent of grade seven students in Marshall Islands used the correct words to effectively bring out their ideas and express themselves. They were awarded Code 2 or higher in this criterion.

Spelling (Codes 1–2): This measures the students' ability to spell both basic and more difficult words. Eighty-five per cent of grade seven students in Marshall Islands were awarded Code 1 or 2, the top two codes in this criterion, indicating that they had mastered how to spell basic and multisyllabic words correctly in their writing test.

Punctuation (Codes 1–3): This measures the range and precision of punctuation used in telling the story. Eighty-one per cent of grade seven students in Marshall Islands received Code 1 or higher, indicating that they had used a variety of punctuation marks quite effectively in their writing.