

# Conclusions for writing performance

## Mean writing scores

Students in Niue performed better than the regional average in writing. This was true for both year four and year six students. For year four, average writing performance in Niue was 524 points compared to 484 for the region. For year six, students in Niue scored 541 compared to the regional average of 507.

## Gender and performance

For year four students, there was no gender difference in the average performance of boys (522) and girls (527) in 2021 although the gender gap was smaller in 2021 compared to previous years. For year six students, girls performed better than boys in 2021. While girls in year six consistently improved over time, boys' performance decreased between 2015 and 2018 and increased in 2021.

## Trends

The average writing performance of year four students in Niue has consistently improved in the past three PILNA cycles, 2015 (440), 2018 (470) and in 2021 (524). Year six students performed about the same between 2015 (508) and 2018 (508) and better in 2021 (541 points).

## Coding

In the PILNA writing assessment, students were required to write a story based on either of two provided prompts. 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. A Code 0 is assigned when there is insufficient evidence to assess. The higher the code, the better the student performed in a particular area.

## Year four 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. The largest proportion (26%) of year four students in Niue received either Code 4 or Code 5. With Code 4, students understood the task and related their stories to the prompt, but also had a setting, a plot and some characters that

did not quite develop. Those who received Code 5 had a simple storyline that may be descriptive rather than a narrative, but events were detailed. Year four students did well in writing, considering no one had Codes 0 to 2; they all received Code 3 and above for this criterion.

### **Structure and organisation: (Codes 1–5)**

This measure the students' ability to shape a story, or to produce a coherent story, with ideas that relate to each other and are logically sequenced. The largest proportion of year four students in Niue received Code 3, which shows that they had an awareness of story structure by including some story elements, but there was an overall lack of coherence or sequence, such as gaps in logic or irrelevant detail in their writing. There was a reasonable proportion of year four students with Code 4, demonstrating a better ability to begin a coherent narrative, but the story may be incomplete.

### **Grammar and syntax: (Codes 1–4)**

This measures the students' ability to produce a range of sentence structures with accuracy. More than 60% of year four students in Niue received Code 3, the second highest code in this criterion, indicating that they had written their stories using a variety of sentence structures but with some errors.

### **Vocabulary: (Codes 1–4)**

This measures the variety of their vocabulary in telling the story. More than half of the year four students in Niue received Code 3. This shows that they had used a good range of vocabulary in their stories, which allowed them to express themselves well at times.

### **Spelling: (Codes 1–2)**

This measures the students' ability to spell both basic and more difficult words. More than 70% of year four students in Niue received Code 2, the highest code in Spelling, indicating that they were able to spell basic words correctly in their writing test but made errors in spelling difficult monosyllabic words.

### **Punctuation: (Codes 1–3)**

This measures the range and precision of punctuation used in telling the story. Around 35% of year four students in Niue received Code 1 in this criterion. A substantial proportion also received Code 2, indicating that students used commas and full stops correctly in their stories and had good control over a variety of punctuation marks.

## **Year six 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. The largest proportion (33%) of year six students in Niue had Code 6, the third highest code in this criterion. This indicates that they had written stories that clearly incorporated the prompt, bringing out the main events, characters, and settings.

### **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. Nearly half of year six students in Niue received Code 4, one code less than the highest code in this criterion, which shows that they had written stories that were well shaped and coherent, with clear logic in events.

### **Grammar and syntax: (Codes 1–4)**

This measures the students' ability to produce a range of sentence structures with accuracy. The highest proportion of year six students (39%) received Code 2 in this criterion, indicating that they had written a variety of sentence structures but with notable errors in grammar conventions. A high proportion also received Code 3, indicating they had a better mastery of grammar rules in the variety of sentences that they had used to tell their stories.

### **Vocabulary: (Codes 1–4)**

This measures the variety of students' vocabulary in telling the story.

Almost half of year six students in Niue received Code 3, indicating that they had used a range of vocabulary in their stories which allowed them to express a lot of ideas, but these ideas lacked clarity at times.

### **Spelling: (Codes 1–2)**

This measures the students' ability to spell both basic and more difficult words. More than half of the year six students in Niue received Code 2 in this criterion, indicating that they were able to spell basic and difficult words correctly in their writing test but made minor errors in spelling monosyllabic words.

### **Punctuation: (Codes 1–3)**

This measures the range and precision of punctuation used in telling the story. The highest proportions of year six students in Niue received Code 1 and Code 3 in this criterion. This indicates that many students had good control of punctuation, but a similar number may have made simple errors in the use of commas or full stops.