

Conclusions for writing performance

Writing scores

Year four and year six students in Tuvalu scored lower in writing compared to the region and Small Island States. For year four, the students' average writing score was 471 points compared with the regional average of 484 points and the Small Island States average of 481 points. Similarly, year six students scored an average of 500 points compared to the regional average of 507 points and the Small Island States average of 509 points.

Gender

Year four girls scored higher than boys in writing, with an average of 482 points compared to boys' 459 points. Similarly, year six girls scored higher with an average of 510 points, compared to boys' 491 points.

School authority

In year four, students in non-government schools scored higher, with 483 points, than those in government schools with 467 points. Similarly, in year six, students in non-government schools scored 508 points, while those in government schools scored 499 points.

School locality

In year four, students in urban and non-urban schools showed similar performance. Students in urban schools scored 469 points and those in non-urban schools scored 473 points.

The performance of year six students in urban and non-urban schools was about the same, approximately 500 points each.

Trends

Writing scores have increased over the past three PILNA cycles: 388 points in 2015, 408 points 2018, and 470 points in 2021.

Similarly, scores for year six students have increased: 443 points in 2015, 457 points in 2018, and 500 points in 2021.

Coding

PILNA writing assessment at year four and six. 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 to each criterion according to how well the student has performed. A Code 0 is assigned when there is insufficient evidence to assess.

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. Around 50% of year four students in Tuvalu 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. The highest proportion (28%) of year four students received Code 3 in this criterion, indicating that they had showed some awareness of story writing but have not written a clear storyline.

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 four students in Tuvalu received Code 3 or above for 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 measures the students' ability to produce a range of sentence structures with accuracy. Up to 60% of year four students in Tuvalu 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 in telling the story. Up to 60% of year four students in Tuvalu received Code 2 or lower in this criterion, indicating that they had limited vocabulary and 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 year four students in Tuvalu received Code 1 or higher in this criterion, indicating that they were able to accurately spell basic and more 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 year four students in Tuvalu received Code 1 or below in this criterion. This indicates that they had mostly used commas and full stops but also made some errors using them. Forty-one per cent of year four students showed mastery in the use of 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. Seven out of ten year six students in Tuvalu 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. Seven out of ten year six students in Tuvalu were awarded the top three codes 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. Eight out of ten year six students in Tuvalu were awarded the top three codes in this criterion, as they used correct grammar conventions in a variety of sentence structures.

Vocabulary (Codes 1–4): This measures the variety of students' vocabulary in telling the story. Eight out of ten year six students in Tuvalu showed they used the correct words to effectively bring out their ideas and express themselves.

Spelling (Codes 1–2): This measures the students' ability to spell both basic and more difficult words. Almost all the year six students in Tuvalu were awarded the top two codes in this criterion, indicating that they had mastered how to spell basic and more difficult words correctly in their writing test.

Punctuation (Codes 1–3): This measures the range and precision of punctuation used in telling the story. Nine out of ten year six students in Tuvalu received the top three codes in this criterion. This indicates that they had used a variety of punctuation marks quite effectively in their writing.