

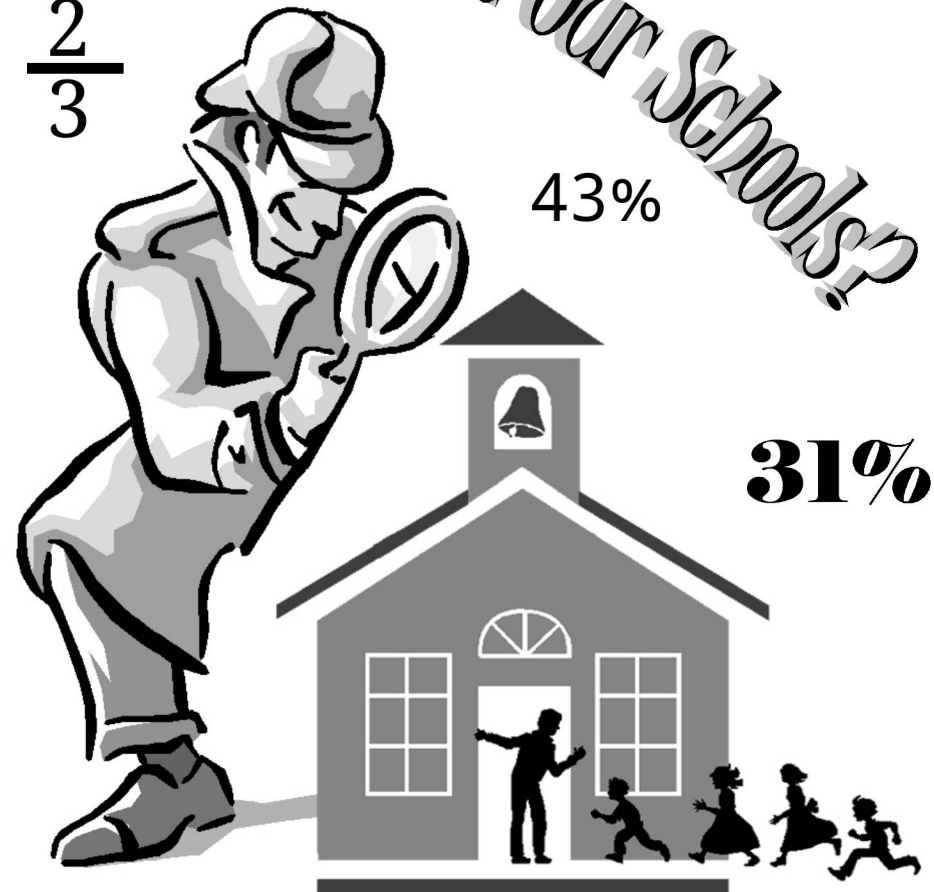


How Good Are Our Schools? 67%

$\frac{2}{3}$

43%

31%



By Francis X. Hezel, S.J.





Giving Ourselves a Grade

For over twenty years now, since self-government began in the late 1970s, we have been running our own school systems. Isn't it time that we stepped back, took a long look at the performance of our education, and asked just how good our schools are?

Some may squirm a little at this question for fear that the answer might prove embarrassing. Yet, regular evaluation is standard procedure for every organization. We assign our students grades and give them report cards periodically during the school year to measure their progress. Why shouldn't we grade our schools on their performance in an effort to determine how the education system under our care is doing?

This may be an especially opportune time to take a long hard look at our school systems inasmuch as FSM and the Marshalls are renegotiating US assistance under the Compact of Free Association. The United States is urging the two nations to establish clear objectives and benchmarks for what they hope to accomplish in the next several years. Reform of education, however, should not be motivated by a desire to satisfy our donor nations. It should be done out of concern for our own young people, whose future will depend in great part on the quality of education they receive. We fail them and ourselves if we don't give them the best education that we can.

Even if we work up the courage to evaluate the performance of our schools, it's not easy to get the information that we need to do so. There is an absence of uniform test data that would permit us to make comparisons across national boundaries. The California Achievement Tests during the late 1960s and the Micronesian Achievement Test Series in the 1970s, both of which allowed regional comparisons, have been

Micronesian Seminar Education Forum

Forum Discussion #8
January—February, 2001

www.micsem.org/edu.htm

What's wrong with our schools?

Last month in our forum discussion on education we asked the question, **Education: What's the Problem?** The question drew a wide range of responses from forum participants.

As our discussion continues, we'd like to assess how our schools have been performing based on the standardized test results publicized in this article, and available online as full school rankings.

In light of these scores, we would like to ask the question once again. **What's wrong with our schools?**

Previous Discussions:

Education: What's the Problem?

When identifying our major educational problems, we have pointed to such things as the poor maintenance of buildings, out-of-date textbooks, lack of opportunities for staff development, and language problems in the classroom. As real as they are, these problems are not the root cause of our educational underachievement. The fundamental problem in education, as in a health services, is a management problem. Once management is improved in our educational system, the other pieces will fall into place.

DECEMBER FORUM DISCUSSION, CURRENTLY OPEN

What Should Our Schools Be Doing?

At present we seem to be undecided on where we are heading in education. The three most common views of education and its goals are these: education as manpower training; education as cultural preservation; and education for academic skills. What do you think our schools should be doing?

OCTOBER—NOVEMBER FORUM DISCUSSION, ARCHIVED ONLINE



many above-average students year after year, we must assume that the reason for this is the reputation for quality education that the school holds. Good students tend to gravitate toward good schools.

We have referred to data used in this paper as indicators of performance, for they suggest rather than prove that some schools and some areas are doing better than others at present. As we work to develop more and surer indicators of the success of our educational programs, we are forced to work with what we have. This paper is a provisional but pioneering effort to gauge the success of our schools, one that we hope sheds some small light on how our schools are doing today. It appears from the data on hand that we have a long way to go before our schools perform up to our own expectations. There is a great deal of room for progress in our education systems. "How good are our schools?" We may not have answered that question satisfactorily here, but we should certainly keep on asking it.



For anyone interested in exploring this further, a list of all schools ranked according to test scores in each state or nation is available on our website at www.nicse.org/edstats.htm. These lists of ranked schools are based on test results for as many years past as are available, using as many standardized tests as are given. When consulting these statistics, be cautious about equating test scores with the quality of a school. They are indicators of quality, but they are not the only indicators.



This is the second of three education articles written in collaboration with PREL, and through PREL's financial assistance.



discontinued. Finding testing data for comparison even within a state or nation can be challenging. The test scores used in this article, while they are the best data available, may be open to different interpretations, sometimes raising as many questions as they answer. Administrators are often reluctant to release test data on the grounds that it can be used for crassly political purposes, but underlying this is the fear that this information will reflect badly on their schools and discredit their own work.

The Public's Need to Know

Educators seem to agree that education reforms will never be accomplished without the full support of the local communities. We have learned in the years since the centralization of education in the early 1960s that even a strong and well-motivated education department is unable to accomplish education reform on its own. Unless the people in these communities take ownership of their schools, there will never be substantial improvement in the village schools. Yet, if we expect the community to assume responsibility for their school, people must have feedback on the performance of the school. They should know not only how their school has improved over recent years, but how it stands in relation to other schools in the area.

Communication between education administrators and the communities is still not what it should be, if we can judge from the complaints heard from parents and community members. They say that they still don't know how the schools are doing and what problems they face today. On the other hand, education administrators sometimes complain that the communities show little interest in attending meetings at which such matters are discussed. If local responsibility is ever to occur, education administrators will have to provide the communities with the information they need to gauge the success of their efforts.



Educators and the politicians who pay their salaries are sometimes nervous that unfavorable comparisons will be made between schools. I've heard this more than once as I made the rounds trying to gather data for this article. As a matter of fact, it would greatly help education reform if comparisons were made—between local schools and between states or nations. Competition has always been a great motivating force in Micronesia. It has driven people to move mountains, quite literally, if you accept the theory that Nan Madol, with its huge basaltic rock walls, was constructed by Pohnpeians not for fear of their master's lash but for fear of being shamed by their rivals.

There are numerous examples of the constructive use of competition in all areas of life—in providing for funerals, for church feasts, and for village celebrations. Competition is a vital force in island life and it can be a potent tool for education reform as well. At a recent education conference one man told how his small island community was galvanized some years ago when, as the results of the high school entrance test were broadcast on the radio, they discovered that their school was ranked near the bottom of the list of schools in Chuuk. The community met to decide what to do about the situation and agreed that for the next several months they would provide food to support the teachers so they could run a remedial program for the island's students after school hours. There was no request for overtime pay, no request for supplementary funds. The community itself took the measures needed to improve the product of their schools. But they probably never would have done it unless they had been embarrassed at discovering how poor their record was.

We acknowledge the importance of prestige and village pride. We use this to goad on communities to perform well in athletic contests. Why don't we use the same motivation to get them to improve their schools?



Table 19. Educational Attainment of the General Population (25+)

Education Level	Palau (1994)	Marshall's (1999)	FSM (1994)
finished ele-	71%	85%	60%
finished high	58%	39%	36%
some college	31%	15%	18%
college degree	10%	4%	5%

SOURCE: censuses for FSM, RMI and Palau

Conclusion

The limitations in this paper are obvious, for we are drawing on sometimes sketchy data to make broad comparisons between schools, not just with language and culture areas but across state and national lines. Even if we make allowance for the lack of uniformity in the test instruments from place to place, test scores are not in themselves sufficient to gauge the quality of the school. Such scores may be good measures of student achievement, but they are not always definitive measures of the performance of schools. It must be understood, therefore, that any of the conclusions offered here must be provisional.

In our eagerness to find some measure of school performance, we have used whatever indicators could be found, even if they were not sure measures of the quality of the schools we were examining. While it is true that students with greater natural ability will score higher in tests, no matter what school they attend, we have assumed that over time the difference in individual ability of the students in most schools will cancel out. If this is the case, then the average test results may, indeed, be said to represent the performance of schools rather than innate intelligence of their students. As for schools enrolling



secondary education that it has tried to implement. Palau, which also has a small population as well as a long history of appreciation of the value of education, has the next best retention rate through primary and secondary school. Yap and the Marshalls get a higher percentage of their eighth-graders into high school than Pohnpei and Chuuk, but they seem to be no more successful in keeping them in high school. All of these places have a high school dropout rate of 40 percent or higher—a far higher rate than the dropout rate during the eight years of elementary school for any of them.

Table 18. School Retention Rates for Micronesia

	1st grade	8th grade	9th grade	12th
Palau	100	78	70	50
Marshalls	100	75	53	28
Kosrae	100	82	77	61
Yap	100	74	60	35
Pohnpei	100	71	44	28
Chuuk	100	67	35	15

SOURCE: Micronesian Seminar

Although not a measure of educational quality as such, the educational attainment of the general population is an indicator of how pervasive education has become in the community. The following table compares education attainment for FSM, Palau, and the Marshalls. Palau stands well above FSM and the Marshalls at every level beyond elementary school education. Over half the Palau population above 25 years of age has their high school diploma, while only slightly more than a third of those in the Marshalls and FSM have completed high school. The gap between Palau and the other two nations is even greater at the college level. A much greater percentage of Palauans (31%) have had some college than those in the FSM (18%) or in the Marshalls (15%).



The Marks of Success

How do we gauge school performance? One way, although surely not the only one, is by assessing the academic achievement of the young people the schools turn out. The problem with this, however, is that an individual's performance on standardized tests may reflect the student's personal ability more than anything that the school did for the student. Xavier High School, for instance, is known to have its pick of some of the brightest youth throughout the entire region. Would high test marks at the end of four years of Xavier reflect the caliber of its student body more than the performance of the school? Private schools often have an appeal to brighter students from families that set a high value on education. For this reason, the balance is already tipped toward private schools in any measure of student performance. In public schools, however, we may presume that such disparities will be minimal. There may be some bias in favor of an urban population, since students living in town would be more likely to come from families that depend on wage employment and thus set a high value on education, families that would be in a better position to assist students with homework, and families that would be more likely to have such amenities as electric power and privacy in the home. Yet, these factors, as important as they may be, do not seem decisive in determining the quality of a school since many of the best schools in each state are in rural areas.

There are other norms besides test scores that could be used to determine the caliber of the school. We found in a study done on a sample of Pohnpei public schools last year that certain indicators seemed to correlate well with the quality of the school. Low teacher absenteeism is one. Another is the cleanliness of the school campus, although not necessarily the state of repair of the school buildings

themselves. This suggests a high degree of community involvement and a sense of ownership of the school. Low dropout rates also seemed to be found in schools that had a reputation for quality. It was as if parents knew that their children were part of an effort that was going somewhere and would have a payoff in the future.

Certain other features, such as the student-teacher ratio, the quantity and quality of textbooks and the percentage of teachers with full accreditation, seem to have little bearing on school performance. To cite just one example, private schools in Pohnpei have an average student-teacher ratio of 25:1, but continually outperform Pohnpei public schools with their average 15:1 ratio. The percentage of Pohnpei private school eighth-graders who pass the high school entrance exam, at 75 percent, is almost three times higher than that of the Pohnpei public schools (28 percent). Per-pupil expenditures on education is another index that can mislead, for private schools have been spending only between one-half to three-fourths of the per-pupil expenditures of public schools. The table below compares select private schools with the average per-pupil costs for the state public schools. Taking stock of the resources we provide for education is an important exercise in its own right, but we should not expect this to shed any real light on the question we are asking ourselves in this paper: How good are our schools?

Table 1. Per-pupil Costs: Private Elementary Schools Compared with Public School Average (1993)

	Per-pupil cost	State per-pupil	Ratio: private
St. Cecilia	\$250	\$421	60%
St. Mary's	\$361	\$888	41%
PCS (Pohnpei)	\$550	\$913	60%
Assumption	\$730	\$910	80%

SOURCES: IRD, Human Resource Development in Micronesia, 245; AED, Toward Self-Reliance; RMI Ten-Year Education Master Plan, II, 45; Catholic School Administrators Reports.

It is always risky to rely too heavily on a single test in drawing any broad conclusions, but the Xavier entrance test seems to confirm many of the findings on the quality of the schools in various places. First of all, public school results are weakest in Chuuk and the Marshalls, with only three public elementary students in each place attaining a qualifying mark of 70 or higher. At the other end of the distribution spectrum stands Pohnpei, where twice as many public school students as private students qualified. All the schools in Kosrae had at least one student passing, while Palau showed a strong success rate for four different public schools.

Palau scored higher than most other places in the test results, with a top mark of 95 and fourteen scoring above 80. Pohnpei, where many more students took the test than in Palau, also did well; thirty-five scored above 80 and the top mark was 90. If this test is indicative, school performance in Palau and Pohnpei surpasses that of other parts of the region.

Finally, Kosrae seems to be the most even of the island groups in school performance. There were no standout schools in the test, just as there were no standout individual performances on the test. The top mark for Kosrae of 77 was the lowest of the island groups.

Other Indicators of Educational Quality

Another possible measure of educational quality is the retention rate, which is the obverse of the dropout rate since it measures the percentage of students remaining in school. The table below, which was put together a year ago from recent education statistics, shows that Kosrae has the highest retention rates through elementary school and high school. This may be owing in some measure to its small and concentrated population and to the policy of universal



Comparisons across National Lines

There are very few common tests used by students in the Marshalls, FSM and Palau, so comparison across boundaries is difficult. A relatively small number from each nation take the US Armed Forces qualifying exam each year, but those who take the exam are few and not necessarily representative of their cohort. Graduating seniors from high school once took the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) to be accepted into college, but this does not seem to be as widely required now as it once was.

One test that is still administered to a fairly large number of eighth graders each year is the entrance test for Xavier High School. There are problems with using the results of this test as a measure of achievement in the different island groups, to be sure. The test is not professionally composed and those who take the test may not be a representative sample of the elementary school graduates in each place. Nonetheless, the test is taken by many of those who would be near the top of their class and so might offer a look at how the top end in each place compares with its counterparts in the other islands. Let’s look at the aggregate results of the Xavier entrance test this year (2000).

Table 17. Xavier High School Entrance Test Results by Island Groups (2000)

	No. Scor- ing Above	Private Schools	Public Schools	Top Mark	No. Scor- ing above
Chuuk	20 (of	17	3	81%	2
Yap	13 (of	8	5	85%	2
Pohnpe	79 (of	26	53	90%	35
Kosrae	14 (of	0	14	77%	0
Mar-	18 (of	15	3	92%	8
Palau	24 (of	15	9	95%	14

SOURCE: Xavier High School, Chuuk



In the same way, we can not assume that sinking more resources into our education system will bring about the improvements that we would all like to see. If we look at the story that is told through the data on the quality of education, we will no longer be able to delude ourselves into thinking that providing more teachers, or better paid teachers, or better trained teachers will solve the education problems we face. Perhaps, at last, we will look to other, more critical factors such as the interest and motivation of teachers and the expectations the community has for its education system.

FSM Elementary Schools

Pohnpei

The state of Pohnpei has amassed good data on the average pass rates on the public high school entrance test for each elementary school over the past thirteen years. Seinwar Elementary School, generally regarded as the strongest public school in the state, has had a 70 percent pass record for its eighth-graders throughout the years. Rohnkiti, now known as Nanpei Elementary School, has the second highest rate over this period. Mokil is the only outer island school with a pass rate of higher than 40 percent. Ohmine and Nett, two other schools with very high reputations, are also among the top five schools in pass rates.

Table 2. Pohnpei Public Schools with Highest Pass Rates on High School Entrance Test (1987-1999)

	No. Passing	% Passing
Seinwar	198 / 283	70%
Rohnkiti	138 / 212	65%
Mokil	67 / 122	55%
Ohmine	617 / 1173	53%
Nett	332 / 772	43%

SOURCE: Pohnpei State Education Department



The six schools at the very bottom of the list of Pohnpei's 31 public elementary schools showed pass rates of less than 20 percent over the past thirteen years. Three of these schools are from Sokehs Municipality, two are from Madolenihmw, and the one at the very bottom is an outer island school with a pass rate of only 12 percent.

There are other schools that the test scores show to be improving. Awak and Sokehs Powe, which have had bursts of glory from time to time, appear to be making steady progress in recent years. Wone School is another that is beginning to make real strides toward quality education.

The private elementary schools on Pohnpei—Seventh Day Adventist Academy, Pohnpei Catholic School, and Calvary Christian Academy—outscored even the highest of the public schools with an average pass rate of 74 percent. Their pass rate is two and a half times as high as the 28 percent average pass rate for all of the Pohnpei public schools.

Yap

In Yap, the exit tests taken by all eighth graders in 1998, 1999 and 2000 show some clear patterns among the elementary schools in that state. The exit tests include math and English reading and writing. Perhaps the most notable finding from these tests is that the Outer Island elementary schools generally score well below the schools on Yap Proper. Outer Island schools average ten points less in the exit test than public schools on Yap Proper, as the following table indicates. The two private schools on Yap—St. Mary's School and Seventh Day Adventist Academy—have an average score that is not much higher than some of the best public elementary schools on Yap. Yap is distinctive in being the only state in which public schools are not thoroughly outclassed by private schools.



Palau High Schools

Palau Community College (PCC) administers a placement test each year for all high school seniors wishing to take it. The test is composed of two parts: English and math. Virtually all seniors take the English part of the test, although only between 65 and 80 percent of all seniors take the math part of the test. The table below shows the cumulative results of the test over the most recent six years (1995-2000) for all high schools in Palau except Palau Mission Academy, which had a mere handful of students take the test just one year. The table shows the percentage of students who passed the test from each high school during this entire six-year period. The first column shows the total number of students taking the English part of the test.

Table 16. Palau High Schools: Results of PCC Placement Test (1995-2000; percentage of students passing)

	No. Tested	English	Math	Total
Mindszenty HS	197	86%	33%	65%
Emmaus HS	82	89%	23%	60%
Palau HS	601	73%	16%	50%
Bethania HS	50	78%	20%	46%
Belau Modekngei	48	54%	8%	34%

SOURCE: Palau Community College

Two private schools, one Catholic and the other Protestant, ranked highest in the results. Mindszenty High School had the best average score on the test, with Emmaus High School not far behind. Palau High School, the only public high school, placed midway down the list. Math scores everywhere were far below English scores in the PCC placement test.



The table below lists the schools that have scored highest on the test over the past four years. The average mean score for the three grades (fourth, sixth and eighth) in each of the three subject areas is shown on the table. The schools listed below are the only public schools that had an overall average of 50 or above on the tests.

Table 15. Palau Public Schools with Highest Scores on PAT (1997-2000)

	Math	English	Palauan	Average
Melekeok	42	59	58	53
Koror	42	59	56	52
Peleliu	44	53	55	51
Angaur	43	56	53	51
Aimeliik	39	58	52	50

Source: RMI Ministry of Education

The spread in the test results in math is not particularly wide—only 10 points between the highest and lowest ranked schools. In language arts, however, the spread opens up greatly to 21 points in English and 22 points in Palauan, with some of the smaller, more remote schools at the bottom of the list. The one remote island school scored lowest of all, 16 points below the best school. One point of interest here is that schools that scored well in English also tended to score well in Palauan, while those with low scores in English usually scored poorly in Palauan. This finding, which mirrors what is seen in the PILLS test results in the Marshalls, suggests that English and local language learning build on rather than interfere with each other.



Table 3. Yap Elementary Schools Exit Test Scores by School Group (1998-2000)

	Avg	1998	1999	2000	Score
Yap Proper	75	74	76	75	82-54
Outer Island	65	68	64	64	79-36
Private	82	82	83	80	89-77

Source: Yap State Education Department

On Yap Proper there seem to be fewer standout schools, either at the top or at the bottom, than in other places. Nine of the eleven schools attained an average score of over 70; another was close, but the last school was significantly lower. A number of schools were bunched together at the top: Fanif with an average score of 80; Gagil, Gilman, and Tamlang with scores of 79; Rumung with a score of 78; Delipebinaw with a score of 77; and Maap with a score of 76. Seventh Day Adventist Academy topped the list with an average of 83, and St. Mary's was also among the leaders with 81.

The best of the outer island schools were Mogmog (78) and Falalop (74) in Ulithi, with Fais (71) and Fassera (71) close behind. Most of the other schools scored in the 60s, but a few of the smaller ones showed averages well below these.

Chuuk

Like Pohnpei, Chuuk administers a test to all eighth-graders to determine who will be admitted to junior high school. The results of the Junior High Entrance Test (JHET) for the last six years, 1995-2000, are used by the Department of Education to rank elementary schools in the state. The figures in the table below measure the mean scores of all students from each school during this six-year period, not the percentage of students passing the test, as on Pohnpei. The top five public schools



include two from Faichuk, an area in the western part of the lagoon that has long been regarded as one of the poorest in the state. Mechetiw, the top scoring school, is a village school on Weno that opened only about ten years ago. Moch, the third-ranked school, has been recognized as one of the leading schools in the state for several years now.

The four private elementary schools in Chuuk, with mean scores ranging between 64 and 75, were among the top ten schools during this period. The highest of them, St. Cecilia's School, had an average score of 75, but was still surpassed by three public elementary schools in the JHET results.

Table 4. Chuuk Public Schools with Highest Average Scores on High School Entrance Test (1995-2000)

School	Avg Score	School	Avg
Mechetiw, Weno	83	Likinioch, Mort-	71
Peniata, Wonei	81	Sino Memorial,	63
Moch, Mortlocks	78	Iras, Weno	63
Sapetiw, Wonei	73	Namoluk, Mort-	62
Pwene, Fefan	73	Munien, Tol	59

SOURCE: Chuuk State Education Department

Kosrae

Although for years Kosrae has had a policy of open admission to high school, the state began testing eighth-graders in 1997. The results of this high school entrance test for 1999 and 2000 were used to gauge the performance of public elementary schools on the island. The average scores in English and math for Kosrae's six elementary schools are given in the table below. Of special interest here is the relatively small gap between the schools on the list, indicating that Kosrae's



Table 14. Marshalls High Schools: Results of CMI Placement Test (1993-1999; percentage of students eligible for degree program)

School	No. Tested	English	Math
Assumption HS	64	66%	34%
Seventh Day Acad	145	15%	25%
Calvary HS	86	7%	13%
Marshall Islands	375	22%	16%
Jaluit HS	111	14%	31%
Majuro Coop HS	117	7%	9%

SOURCE: College of the Marshall Islands

Private high schools, in which over half the high school population is enrolled, are a much more significant factor in the Marshalls than in FSM. The table indicates that private schools seem to vary greatly in the performance of their students. Assumption High School is the highest scoring school in both English and math, but the small number of students tested—an average of only nine a year—indicates that not all graduating seniors took the test. Other private schools placed much lower in both parts of the test. Results for the two public schools—Marshall Islands High School and Jaluit High School—are also varied.

Palau Elementary Schools

The Palau Achievement Test (PAT), which is based on the curriculum framework for Palau, is administered to all students in the fourth, sixth, and eighth grades of elementary schools as well as in the tenth and twelfth grades of high school. The test results for the last four years, 1997-2000, are used here as a basis for comparing the public elementary schools in Palau. Although the test covers five subject areas, we have used only three here: math, English, and Palauan.



surprise to anyone. But the results of the PILLS test also shows that the private schools, despite their relatively large expatriate enrollment and their emphasis on English, are doing better in Marshallese language than the public schools. The gap between public and private schools in Marshallese is not as wide as it is in English and math, but it is significant. Only 21 percent of public school students in the Marshalls have achieved minimal standards of English, but not many more (30 percent) have reached a satisfactory level in their own language.

Table 13. Marshalls Public and Private Schools: Pass Rate in PILLS Test (percentage of students passing)

	Public	Private
Math	37	70
English	21	63
Marshallese	30	45
Total	29	59

SOURCE: RMI Ministry of Education

Marshalls' High Schools

To measure high school performance in the Marshalls, we have nothing other than the results of the placement test for the College of the Marshall Islands (CMI). In this respect, gauging high school performance in the Marshalls is no easier than it is in FSM. The CMI placement test, with its English and math components, is given annually to as many twelfth-graders as wish to take it. Students are sorted into four levels, the first three of which are sub-standard and indicate the need for remedial courses, while the fourth indicates readiness to begin a college degree program. The table below shows the number of students from each high school taking the test and the percentage of these scoring high enough to be eligible for acceptance into a degree program. The table shows the average results, in English and math, for the period 1993-1999.



elementary schools are all at about the same performance level, at least as measured by this test.

Table 5. Kosrae Public Schools with Highest Average Scores on High School Entrance Test (1999-2000)

	Language	Math	Average
Utwe	51	68	60
Lelu	47	70	59
Sansrik	50	62	56
Malem	45	64	55
Tafunsak	45	62	54
Walung	43	64	54

SOURCE: Kosrae State Education Department

Rating the States in FSM

High School entrance tests give us some idea of how elementary schools within each state rank against one another, but they offer us no basis for comparing the states with one another educationally. For this we must turn to the results of the National Standardized Tests (NST) that have been administered in the states since 1995. The test is given uniformly to sixth, eighth, and tenth grade students from select schools in each state. In all, over 650 sixth graders and nearly as many eighth graders are tested. The elementary schools chosen for the test are, with one exception, all public schools; there are no outer island schools among them. At the tenth grade level about 250 students are tested, with all public high schools represented in the testing, including the newly opened Neighboring Islands Middle School on Woleai. NST tests students in language arts and in mathematics. The weighted scores, as shown below, not only give some sense of the progress made by students from one grade level to another, but they also offer us a glimpse of how states measure against one another.

Table 6. FSM: NST Language Arts (1995-1997)
(average score by percentage)

	Yap	Pohnpei	Kosrae	Chuuk
6th	50	53	58	34*
8th	53	60	63	NA
10th	63	64	74	53*

SOURCE: FSM Office of Education;

NOTE: * indicates results based on 1995 test only

In the language arts test results, Kosrae students scored consistently higher than other states. Pohnpei scored higher than Yap, but the only significant higher score was registered in the eighth grade. Chuuk scores were the lowest, trailing Kosrae by about 20 percent and Yap by 10 to 15 percent. All states showed an increase in scores from lower grades to higher grades.

Table 7. FSM: NST Mathematics (1995-1997)
(average score by percentage)

	Yap	Pohnpei	Kosrae	Chuuk
6th	35	41	39	31*
8th	46	55	54	NA
10th	38	44	45	29*

SOURCE: FSM Office of Education;

NOTE: * indicates results based on 1995 test only

The scores on the math exam are less clear-cut than those on the language part of the exam. Pohnpei and Kosrae appear to be neck-and-neck for the highest score. Yap students scored between 5 and 10 percent lower than the top two, while Chuuk students scored another 5 to 10 percent lower than Yap. Surprisingly, scores everywhere drop sharply in tenth grade as if students peaked in math at the end of elementary school.

Table 11. Marshalls Elementary Schools with Best Pass Rates on High School Entrance Test (1993-1999) and Scores on PILLS Test (1994-1998)

School	Entrance Test	PILLS Test
Likiep, Likiep	82	69
Melang, Likiep	64	70
Wotje, Wotje	61	51
Mejit	60	56
Tobal, Aur	59	16
Ajeltake, Majuro	55	30
Namdrik	51	34
Jabor, Jaluit	49	32
Ebon, Ebon	48	59

SOURCE: RMI Ministry of Education

As in FSM, private schools are far outperforming public schools. The percentage of private school students passing the entrance test is 20 points higher than in public schools, and the pass rate on the PILLS test for private school students is nearly double what it is for public school students.

Table 12. Marshallese Private and Public Elementary Schools: Average Pass Rates on Entrance Test and Scores on PILLS Test

	Entrance Test	PILLS Test
Public Schools	31%	29%
Private Schools	51%	59%

SOURCE: RMI Ministry of Education

A breakdown of the PILLS test results over the recent five-year period yields some startling results. That private schools outscore public schools in math and English is no great



Marshalls' Elementary Schools

Two tests are given to eighth graders each year in the Marshalls that can help measure the performance of elementary schools. There is a high school entrance test, as there is in the states of FSM, for which we have cumulative results for the years 1993-1999. In addition, the Pacific Islands Literacy Level Skills (PILLS) test is given each year to determine the number of at-risk students in three subject areas—English, Marshallese, and mathematics. The test is designed to identify students who have failed to achieve the minimal standards in these areas. In the table below we are changing the figures so that they represent the percentage of students who have achieved the minimum standards in these three areas. This will permit easier comparison with the results of the high school entrance test.

The table below shows the test scores for the best of the elementary schools in the Marshalls. The gap between these schools and those at the bottom of the list is great. Over thirty schools in the Marshalls had an average pass rate of less than 20 percent on the high school entrance test, with eleven of these showing an average of less than 10 percent.

The best schools by both standards (entrance test and PILLS Test) are the two schools on Likiep. Wotje and Mejit are the next best according to both criteria. The others listed in the following table are the next highest by entrance test pass rates, although some have poor average scores on the PILLS Test.



FSM High Schools

How are the high schools in FSM performing? As is the case with the elementary schools, there is no test data to show the success rates of individual high schools as measured against state or national standards. For a general picture of how the high school graduates of these schools compare with one another on a single test, we may consult the results of the yearly entrance test administered by the College of Micronesia-FSM. Although high school seniors are not obliged to take the test, nearly all do so in three of the four states: Pohnpei, Kosrae and Yap. Only in Chuuk is there a significant difference between the number of graduates and the number of those taking the test. There between 25 and 30 percent of public high school twelfth graders do not take the test.

Table 8 shows the percentage of twelfth-grade students passing the COM-FSM entrance test each year between 1994 and 2000. The average passing rate of the school over the seven-year period is listed in the last column. During the last two or three years passing rates rose significantly, suggesting either that there has been considerable improvement in recent graduating classes or that the test was adjusted downward to meet the achievement level of the student population.

Three of the public high schools show an average pass rate of between 40 and 50 percent: Pohnpei Islands Central School, or PICS (recently renamed Bailey Olter High School), which leads with 50 percent; Kosrae High School (46%); and Yap High School (41%). Outer Islands High School in Ulithi is significantly lower than these three with an average passing percentage of 28. Standing alone at the bottom of the list is Chuuk High School with an average of only 5 percent passing the test each year.

Table 8. FSM Public High Schools: Pass Rates on COMFSM Entrance Test (1994-2000)

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Aver-
PICS/	38	27	37	44	65	65	72	50
Kosrae	35	40	22	38	40	75	73	46
Yap HS	29	44	25	24	47	59	60	41
OIHS	35	26	11	19	27	39	39	28
Chuuk HS	8	3	1	2	5	8	11	5

SOURCE: FSM Office of Education

The ratings of the public high schools in the states closely mirror the results of the FSM National Standardized Test. There appears to be very little difference in the educational standards, for high schools as for elementary schools, between Yap, Pohnpei and Kosrae. Chuuk, however, scores considerably lower than the other three states at the elementary level and very much lower at the high school level.

Chuuk's low standing is a matter of poor school performance rather than lack of inherent ability in its students, as a look at the passing rate of private schools shows. Saramen Chuuk, a Catholic high school that opened just ten years ago, had an average passing rate of 62 percent, a rate well above that of any of the public high schools in any state. Xavier High School scored even higher (85 percent), but the school draws its student body from the whole of Micronesia, not just Chuuk. Three other private high schools in Chuuk—Berea Christian School, Seventh Day Adventist Academy, and Mizpah—showed passing rates of between 22 and 31 percent. Although well below Yap High School, Kosrae High School, and PICS/BOHS, the rates of these three private schools were much higher than Chuuk High School.

Let us add here a word on how private high schools, which until very recently were found only in Chuuk and Pohnpei, fare in these COM-FSM entrance tests. The four private schools on Pohnpei, which collectively showed almost continual improvement through this seven-year period, recorded an average pass rate of 61 percent. The six private high schools in Chuuk had an average pass rate of 49 percent. In both states private schools showed a pass rate well above the state average.

Table 9. FSM Private High Schools: Pass Rates on COMFSM Entrance Test

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Aver-
Pohnpei	46	36	49	60	78	79	82	61
Chuuk	50	49	44	32	53	58	56	49

SOURCE: FSM Office of Education, compiled by author

When private schools' results are added to public high school performance on the COM-FSM entrance tests, the difference between states is still striking. The following table shows how the states, including both public and private high schools, compare in terms of passing rates on the entrance test. Pohnpei has the highest average passing rate (52 percent), followed by Kosrae (46 percent) and Yap (35 percent). At 24 percent, Chuuk's passing rate is about half of the rate of Pohnpei and Kosrae.

Table 10. FSM States: Pass Rates on COMFSM Entrance Test

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Aver-
Pohnpei	40	29	41	42	69	69	75	52
Kosrae	35	40	22	38	40	75	73	46
Yap	29	36	21	22	40	48	51	35
Chuuk	29	23	23	16	24	28	27	24

SOURCE: FSM Office of Education