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A status report on middle school mathematics assessment and student achievement in the Pacific Region

Summary

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Prepared by

Roger Chesswas, PhD
Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

Lesley Lee, PhD
Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

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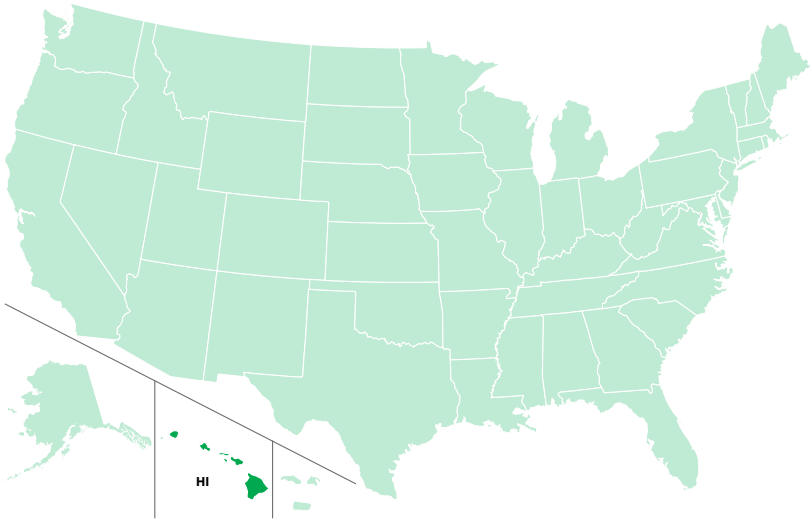

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Issues & Answers is an ongoing series of reports from short-term Fast Response Projects conducted by the regional educational laboratories on current education issues of importance at local, state, and regional levels. Fast Response Project topics change to reflect new issues, as identified through lab outreach and requests for assistance from policymakers and educators at state and local levels and from communities, businesses, parents, families, and youth. All Issues & Answers reports meet Institute of Education Sciences standards for scientifically valid research.

January 2008

This report was prepared for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) under Contract ED-06-CO-0024 by Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific administered by Pacific Resources for Education and Learning. The content of the publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Chesswas, R., and Lee, L. (2008). *A status report on middle school mathematics assessment and student achievement in the Pacific Region* (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2008–No. 043). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs

This report is available on the regional educational laboratory web site at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs.

Summary

A status report on middle school mathematics assessment and student achievement in the Pacific Region

This study answers one basic question: What is the status of student achievement in middle school mathematics in the Pacific Region jurisdictions? The findings provide a portrait of the types of mathematic assessments used in grades 7 and 8 and of how well students are performing.

In addressing the question of mathematics achievement in middle school in the Pacific Region jurisdictions, Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory researchers found that student achievement data are not uniformly available.

This study relied on two main sources of data: state education agency web sites in the Pacific Region and, when online data were not available, structured interviews with key state education agency testing and assessment staff.

Analysis of these data suggests that student achievement in middle grade mathematics is below the national average, confirming a U.S. Department of Education (2002) study that indicates that student achievement in mathematics is lower in the Pacific Region than in most other parts of the United States.

More specifically, in assessment procedures,

- State education agencies vary in the grades in which they assess mathematics achievement, but all jurisdictions assess mathematics achievement in either seventh or eighth grade—or both.
- Hawai'i and the territories use established standardized tests or items from these tests, such as the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT–10), while the freely associated states use state-developed assessments or a combination of both.
- Where mathematics achievement data are available, most jurisdictions have data for three or more years.

while in assessment results,

- In jurisdictions with data for several years student achievement scores show little improvement in recent years.
- Little is known about what factors influence mathematics achievement in the Pacific Region.
- If policymakers' desire to understand possible variations in mathematics achievement across the Pacific Region is to be addressed, a necessary first condition is to develop more consistent, comparable measures of mathematics achievement across the jurisdictions.

January 2008