In all three school systems mean and median scores improved between 6% and 27% from pre- to posttest. Additionally, the percentage of passing and high scores increased between 4% and 57% and the percentage of low scores decreased from 29% to 3% on pre- to posttest among the districts. Students participating in the Foundations program in all districts showed progress in writing ability.

**USING COMPUTER-ASSISTED GRADE PROFILES TO EVALUATE ESL STUDENT PLACEMENT IN FRESHMAN WRITING COURSES**

Marc Maitre and Linda T. Calandrillo, University of South Alabama

This session focused on a research project aimed at reviewing evaluation of the skills of ESL writers. Administrators of freshman writing programs often receive complaints from instructors about the poor writing skills of ESL students. These administrators need to determine whether problems with ESL students are significant enough to warrant separating them from native language students in freshman writing courses. The University of South Alabama used a review of computerized records to assess the nature and severity of difficulties evident in ESL writing. The data revealed great variability in the performance of ESL students, with differences in performance strongly associated with both academic records and social background characteristics of ESL students.

Session participants seemed to reach consensus about the heterogeneous nature of the ESL student population and the need for careful assessment of students, rather than wholesale treatment of large categories of students. Additional comments concerned the limitations of data available for ESL students and the need for more complete information.

**ASSESSING THE WRITING OF ESL STUDENTS IN A WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM PROGRAM**

James Dean Brown, University of Hawaii at Manoa

The presentation described a study of the placement of English as a second language (ESL) students in a writing across the curriculum program. Using placement tests, the University of Hawaii at Manoa assigns incoming freshmen to one of six composition courses: accelerated composition, regular composition, regular composition with required laboratory, remedial composition, regular ESL composition, or preparatory ESL composition. The five hour Manoa Writing Placement Test (MWPT) requires students to write on two topics and revise each essay later in the day. At least two raters per topic assessed each student's work for a minimum of four raters per student. The data for this study were based on the MWPT administered for an entire academic year to all incoming freshmen, i.e., both native speakers of English and ESL students. We require ESL students to sit the 3-hour English Language Institute Placement Test (ELIPT), which has two subtests each for ESL listening, reading, and writing skills.

The results were described in terms of cultural tendency, dispersion, and reliability for each of the groups of students on the MWPT, the ELIPT and all subscores for each. As would be expected, the position of the ESL students is clearly low in the overall distribution of MWPT scores.

**TESTING TESTING: THE POLITICS AND PRACTICE OF LARGE-SCALE WRITING ASSESSMENTS**

Thomas Flynn, Ohio University, Belmont

This session examined state minimum-competency exams used to determine graduation which arbitrarily limit access to education (and thereby limit access to jobs and prosperity). Within the last fifteen years, twenty-one states have instituted such tests. The rise of these tests seems to have been prompted by the effects of three forces on state policy makers: