

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

MINISTRY PAPER *SS*

THE NATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION

Members are asked to note that the Ministry of Education (MoE) is implementing the National Comprehensive Literacy Programme which is aimed at improving advancements in Literacy and Language Arts at the primary level.

BACKGROUND

The National Comprehensive Literacy Programme was initiated in March 2007 as a direct response to one of the recommendations of the Task Force Report on Education in Jamaica (2004), that the MoE should address the low levels of literacy among school aged children, particularly at the primary level of the education system. **Appendix 1** provides details on students' performance in Literacy in Grade 4 over the period 1999 to 2013.

While students' performance in literacy has been improving over the years, efforts are to be sustained if the goal of achieving 85% literacy by 2015 is to be achieved. Though the expectation is that all students will master the Grade 4 Literacy Test (national measure of literacy attainment at the Primary level) at the first sitting in June of each year, for various reasons, all students will not be successful at the initial sitting. Importantly, many of those who do not master at the first attempt, are in the almost mastery category, which means that they have well developed competencies in one or two of the three sub skills assessed by the test.

When the cumulative data of the first and second sitting of the test are considered, between 80-85% of the Grade 4 cohort that have transitioned into Grade 5 have mastered the Grade 4 Literacy Test by the end of the first term of Grade 5. This is an indication that most students in Grades 5 and 6 in any given year have mastered the Grade 4 Literacy Test.

Table 1: NATIONAL RESULTS for GSAT Language Arts (2009 – 2013)

YEAR	NATIONAL GSAT RESULTS
2009	57
2010	58
2011	57
2012	60
2013	62

Though the GSAT Language Arts assessment is not used by the MoE to determine literacy levels at the Primary level, it does provide some indication of the percentage of the Grade 6 cohort that enters secondary education, with readiness to do the subject. More support is necessary at the

GSAT level to further improve students' performance in Language Arts. The National Literacy Team has increased its focus in this regard, in light of the additional technical/human resources that are now available.

The National Comprehensive Literacy Programme

The National Comprehensive Literacy Programme, which is supervised by the National Literacy Coordinator, is being administered through the support of twelve (12) Literacy Specialists. One (1) Regional Literacy Coordinator and one (1) Literacy Specialist are assigned to Regions 1 to 6 of the MOE's regional divisions and since November 2013, ninety (90) Reading Coaches, under the USAID/MoE Government to Government Reading Activity, have been assigned to four hundred and fifty (450) primary schools across the island.

ISSUES

Some of the issues which have contributed to the low levels of literacy include:

- i. Inability of some teachers to effectively impart aspects of the curricula
- ii. Inadequate levels of responsiveness by some teachers, especially to students at the non-mastery level
- iii. Low levels of parental involvement in students' education
- iv. Weak governance structures, for example, inactive Boards of Management in some schools
- v. Low attendance levels among some students
- vi. Special Education needs among some students

INITIATIVES TO DATE

Several initiatives have been pursued to combat the low levels of literacy among students. These included:

1. On-going development of teachers through teacher training and capacity building to give focused attention to student assessment and the development of normative, remedial, and corrective reading programmes from Grades 1 to 6.
2. Increased collaboration with organizations such as the Jamaican Foundation for Lifelong Learning (JFLL), Early Childhood Commission (ECC), HEART Trust/NTA, National Parenting Support Commission and major partners such as parents, teachers, students, Board Chairmen, local (inclusive of the Private Sector) and overseas volunteer groups such as Project for the Advancement of Childhood Education (PACE), Canada for targeted intervention
3. Publishing and distribution of the following:
 - Literacy standards and benchmarks for primary schools
 - The Informal Diagnostic Reading Inventory (I.D.R.I.)
 - Handbook of Literacy Instruction
 - The Literacy 4-5-6 Curriculum Guide

4. Partnerships with various private sector entities to provide adequate resource materials for students.

SPECIAL FOCUS FOR THE 2014/2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

For this school year, the National Literacy Team, with assistance from the USAID, is providing direct support to five hundred and fifty eight (558) schools. This includes forty eight (48) secondary schools that are receiving special attention in English. Each Regional Literacy Coordinator has been assigned four secondary schools and each Literacy Specialist has been assigned four (4) secondary schools and six (6) primary schools. Additionally, each Reading Coach has been assigned five (5) schools, to which they will give direct and targeted support in student reading and writing development, assessment, teacher training and the design and implementation of intervention programmes to address students' language needs.

Appendix 2 outlines recently held region-wide training initiatives and proposed Summer Programme. The training involved senior school administrators, teachers, Reading Coaches, Education Officers and parents of school-aged children.

National Literacy Steering Committee

The MoE has recently drafted the Terms of Reference for a National Literacy Steering Committee, which was established in April 2014. The Committee, along with its sub-committees, will be responsible to provide advisory, technical and professional support relative to literacy and language education at the national and regional levels. A cadre of experienced professionals is now being recruited to constitute the committee.



Ronald Thwaites, M.P.

Minister of Education

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APPENDIX 1: Students' Performance in the Grade 4 Literacy Test in Public Schools (1999 – 2013)

YEAR	Percentage Mastery at 1st Administration	Percentage Mastery at 2nd Administration
1999	52	57
2000	47	58
2001	43.3	60
2002	53.3	58
2003	58	71
2004	57	63
2005	64	74
2006	64	75
2007	64	79
2008	71.8	81
2009	70.1	80
2010	67	81
2011	71	83.7
2012	72	86
2013	76.3	84.2

Professional Development Seminars

Workshop Date	Area of Focus for Training	Target Group(s)	Number of Persons Trained
January 25 – 31, 2014	Literacy 1-2-3	Grades 1- 3 Teachers, Education Officers, Principals, Reading Coaches	874 teachers, 453 Principals, 33 Education Officers
March 26 – April 11, 2014	Literacy 4-5-6	Grades 4-6 Teachers, Education Officers	6 Principals, 7 teachers, 7 Education Officers
January 25 – 31, 2014	Conducting Literacy Walkthroughs	Education Officers, Principals, Reading Coaches	38 Education Officers, 513 principals, 88 Reading Coaches
January 2014	Informal Diagnostic Reading Inventory	Grades 1- 6 Teachers, Education Officers, Principals, Reading Coaches	434 teachers, 52 Reading coaches, 22 Education officers, 273 Principals
January 25 – 31, 2014	Phonological Awareness & Phonics	Grades 1- 3 Teachers, Reading Coaches	1167 teachers, 28 Reading Coaches
November 2013 – January 2014	Operation Turnaround-Primary Arm: Using the Four Blocks Approach, Programme Planning	Grades 4-6 Teachers, Education Officers	33 Principals, 23 Education Officers, 147 Teachers
March 7 – April 17, 2014	Operation Turnaround-Primary Arm: Developing Positive Writing Skills	Grades 4 -5 Teachers	113 Teachers
March 7, 2014	Operation Turnaround-Primary Arm: Comprehension- Students' Strategies for Constructing Meaning	Grades 4-5 Teachers	187 Teachers
October 17, 2013	Infusing Literacy Across the Curriculum	Grades 1 – 6 Teachers	163 Teachers
November 2013	Creating and Maintaining a Literate Home Environment	Parents	1343 Parents
November 2013	Enhancing Literacy Development Through the Use of Environmental Prints	Parents	400 Parents
November 2013	Lesson Planning	Reading Coaches, Education Officers	112 teachers, 14 Education Officers, 43 Reading Coaches
November 2013	National Comprehensive Literacy Programme	Grades 1-6 Teachers, Reading Coaches	88 Reading Coaches
February 2014	Needs Assessment	Language Teachers, H.O.Ds	190 teachers, 26 H.O.Ds
January – March 2014	Engaging Children in Read Alouds	Parents, Reading Coaches	88 Reading Coaches involved, 9288 students read to in 400 schools
February 2014	GSAT – Refining Students' Test Taking Skills	Grade 6 Teachers	623 Teachers
April 2014	G4LT Workshop- Getting it Write!	Grade 4 Teachers, School Based Literacy Coordinators	891 Teachers
January – March 2014	Demonstration Lessons	Grades 1-3 Teachers	1, 340 Lessons demonstrated
January – March 2014	Remedial Reading Programmes	Grades 1-3 Students	651 boys and 261 girls engaged
January – March 2014	Corrective Reading Programmes	Grades 4-6 Students	90 students engaged