

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

MINISTRY PAPER 4/15

THE NATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION

Members are being asked to note that the Ministry of Education, MoE, is implementing its National Comprehensive Literacy Programme, with invaluable support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Currently there are 66 Reading Coaches working in 300 primary schools, with special focus on grades 1-3 literacy development. In addition, there are 6 literacy coordinators and 6 literacy specialists who are giving support to another 120 primary schools and 72 secondary schools across the system, with special emphases targeted right across the grades. These specialist officers are managed by the MoE's National Literacy Coordinator.

2. BACKGROUND

In light of the current status of literacy at Grade 4 and considering the 2015 target of one hundred per cent (100 %) of the educable cohort, which is eighty five percent (85%) literacy at the primary level, the MoE has implemented a special intervention plan for literacy targeting Grade Four teachers and students.

The tables below provide summative data on the 2014 Grade 4 cohort's performance on the Grade Four Literacy Test (GFLT). The general statistics over the last four (4) years are encouraging and indicate that every year students' performance in literacy improves.

Table 1: Students' Performance in the Grade 4 Literacy Test (2010 – 2014 for the 1st & 2nd Sittings)

YEARS	Percentage Mastery at 1 st Sitting (June)	Percentage Mastery after 2 nd Sitting (December of same year)
2010	65	81
2011	69	83.7
2012	74	87
2013	76.2	83.1
2014	77.4	No examination was administered because of the change in policy, i.e. a reduction from 4 sittings to 2.

Table 2: Total Numbers of Students Sitting G4LT (First time sitters/2012-2014)

YEARS	NUMBERS SITTING	% MASTERY
2012	43,977	74
2013	42,483	76.2
2014	40,978	77.4%

Table 3: Total numbers of students sitting G4LT (First time sitters/2014 cohort) by gender

	NUMBERS SITTING	% MASTERY
MALES	20,666	68.6
FEMALES	20,312	86.4

The statistics on students' performance on the 2014 examination indicate that the girls attained an average mastery rate of 86.4 % and the boys attained 68.6% (a two point increase on their 2013 average performance). The statistics justify an increased focus on efforts to improve the performance of all students but more so our boys.

Consequently, the intervention is concerned with a strategic approach that is being undertaken on behalf of our boys who continue to struggle with literacy and underachievement.

3. LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

There are certain limitations which impede the rate of progress in literacy in some schools across the system. These include:

- i. Inability of some teachers to effectively impart aspects of the primary curriculum
- ii. Inadequate levels of responsiveness by some teachers, especially to students at the non-mastery level of the GFLT, especially boys
- iii. Inadequate number of literacy specialists available at the primary level to directly support teachers and struggling students
- iv. Low levels of parental involvement in students' education
- v. Special Education Needs of some students not otherwise addressed through the current system
- vi. Low attendance levels of some students

4. SPECIAL COMPONENTS OF THE INTERVENTION PLAN

The following are the specific components of the intervention:

- i. All Grade Four teachers in the priority underachieving schools will be supported by the national team in the effective and targeted management of their students' learning with special focus on boys' performance. Teachers will be trained, coached and monitored in their implementation of the foregoing fundamentals of literacy instruction as well as Boys' Literacy Needs.
- ii. Classroom teachers of Grade 4 are benefiting from direct and indirect support from literacy specialists deployed to clusters of schools.
- iii. Approximately five hundred (500) primary schools are currently receiving specialized attention but all primary schools will receive support.
- iv. At risk students are being supported clinically by Reading Specialists.
- v. While literacy specialists are providing support at all levels of the system (primary and secondary), they are intensifying their efforts at the Grade Four level. This intensified effort includes additional time allotted to students who did not master the examination in the 2013 sitting, who will need further support prior to the July 2015 sitting when they are given the next opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the examination.
- vi. Establishment of school based intervention programmes in response to the Child Find Initiative. These include special education units and resource rooms for special education instruction.

- vii. Classroom teachers are required to document and track the progress of each at risk student-both male and female, and report concerns to literacy specialists for further action.
- viii. Grade Four Coordinators and School Curriculum Implementation Teams are required to monitor the status of literacy instruction and intervention plans for at-risk students and make recommendations for improvement where possible.
- ix. All Grade 4 teachers have been asked to spend additional instructional time with at-risk students, especially the boys, in efforts to improve areas of concern in their progress.
- x. As much as possible, Grade 4 teachers through the support of the literacy specialists are enlisting parents in reinforcing students' learning outside of the classroom through some simple ways including home-work time, 'read alouds' at home as well as writing and talking about their daily experiences.

The Education Ministry has joined in partnership with the Department of Language, Linguistics and Philosophy of the University of the West Indies, Mona, to further address these concerns through a project to build language awareness among our teachers of the English Language.

The project will:

1. Enable teachers to more efficiently translate their students' knowledge and intelligence of Jamaican Creole into the skills and knowledge of the English Language.
2. Help teachers gain the background knowledge and skills to teach English
3. Improve teachers' awareness of English Language grammar and help them to translate this information into classroom practice

Importantly, the Ministry of Education's Literacy 1-2-3 Programme is complemented by the UWI-MoE Language Project. This is based on the Language Experience and Awareness Approach, which recognizes that students enter the learning environment already very fluent in their home language, which almost invariably is Jamaican Creole. Furthermore, the new National Standard Curriculum being piloted in schools emphasizes the relevancy of Jamaica's language situation and the teaching approaches are informed by this linguistic and social awareness.

The MoE-UWI project will start in May 2015 and last for 7 weeks and involve 6 primary schools in Region 1, targeting mainly teachers of Grades 3 and 4. The National Rollout will take place over a 2 year period commencing September 2015. The MoE continues to pursue instruction in Standard Jamaican English.



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April 8, 2015
File No. C2222

