

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

MINISTRY PAPER

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Attendance Rates for the Academic Year 2013/2014

INTRODUCTION

The attendance rates from the infant to secondary schools for the 2013/2014 Academic Year were assessed. Some 976 or 98.4% of 992 public schools provided data. The analysis by school type showed that data were submitted for all infant and technical schools.

Table 1: Percentage Daily Attendance Rates by Region and Level (2013/2014)

Regions	Level								
	Infant			Primary			Secondary		
	Male	Female	Average	Male	Female	Average	Male	Female	Average
Region 1	80.5	83.1	81.8	86.7	88.2	87.5	83.8	85.2	84.5
Region 2	74.7	74.1	74.4	84.9	86.7	85.7	77.8	82.8	80.3
Region 3	80.7	82.5	81.6	86.0	88.1	87.0	80.3	86.0	83.3
Region 4	78.6	79.8	79.2	83.7	86.2	84.9	78.9	82.2	80.5
Region 5	76.0	79.1	77.4	85.7	88.1	86.9	81.3	85.3	83.3
Region 6	78.7	79.6	79.1	85.2	87.0	86.1	80.7	84.2	82.5
National	78.6	80.2	79.4	85.4	87.3	86.3	81.0	84.3	82.7

FINDINGS

1. For the Academic Year 2013/2014, the national attendance rates were **79.4** percent for infant schools and departments, **86.3** percent at primary and **82.7** percent at the secondary level. Of the three levels, primary had the highest attendance rate. (see Table 1).
2. Data disaggregated by sex showed that attendance rate at the early childhood level was **78.6** percent for boys and **80.2** percent for girls. Attendance rate for boys at the primary level was **85.4** percent and **87.3** percent for girls while at the secondary level, attendance rate for boys was **81.0** percent and **84.3** percent for girls. Attendance rates for girls were higher than those for the boys at the three levels.
3. Attendance data for the regions indicate that the attendance rates for boys at the early childhood level ranged from 74.7 percent for Region 2 to 80.7 percent for Region 3. The rates for the girls ranged from 74.1 in Region 2 to 83.1 percent in Region 1.
4. At the primary level, attendance rates for the boys ranged from of 83.7 percent in Region 4 to 86.7 percent in Region 1 and from 86.2 percent in Region 4 to 88.2 percent in Region 1, for girls.

5. At the secondary level, attendance rates for boys ranged from 77.8 percent in Region 2 to 83.8 percent in Region 1. Attendance rates for girls ranged from 82.2 percent in Region 4 to 86.0 percent in Region 3. Region 1 had the highest attendance rate at the secondary level while Region 2 had the lowest.
6. Disaggregation of data by parish revealed that **Kingston** had the highest daily attendance rates at all three levels. On the other hand, **St. Mary** had the lowest rate at 73.3 percent for the early childhood level; **Westmoreland**, the lowest at the primary level with 81.2 percent and Hanover, 76.5 percent, the lowest at the secondary level (see Table 2).

Table 2: Percentage Daily Attendance by Parish and Level (2013/2014)

Parishes	Infant			Primary			Secondary		
	Male	Female	Average	Male	Female	Average	Male	Female	Average
Kingston	82.2	85.2	83.8	87.0	88.8	87.9	86.4	87.0	86.7
St. Andrew	78.1	79.8	78.9	86.6	88.0	87.3	82.2	84.6	83.5
St. Thomas	75.9	76.4	76.2	85.9	87.2	86.5	74.9	80.3	77.5
Portland	74.6	74.9	74.8	84.0	86.1	85.0	76.3	80.9	78.6
St. Mary	74.4	72.1	73.3	84.7	86.7	85.6	80.7	85.4	83.1
St. Ann	79.4	81.8	80.6	85.2	87.7	86.4	81.6	86.7	84.2
Trelawny	82.6	83.7	83.1	87.5	89.1	88.3	78.2	85.0	81.7
St. James	79.9	81.4	80.7	86.2	88.4	87.3	81.3	83.5	82.5
Hanover	77.9	76.4	77.2	86.1	88.1	87.1	74.0	79.1	76.5
Westmoreland	76.6	77.8	77.2	79.6	82.8	81.2	78.9	82.3	80.6
St. Elizabeth	75.8	81.4	78.6	84.3	86.7	85.4	80.3	85.3	82.7
Manchester	76.0	78.4	77.1	87.1	88.6	87.8	82.3	85.4	83.9
Clarendon	73.0	75.6	74.2	83.8	85.7	84.7	79.5	83.1	81.3
St. Catherine	83.4	82.8	83.1	86.0	87.7	86.8	81.7	85.0	83.3
National	78.6	80.2	79.4	85.4	87.3	86.3	81.0	84.3	82.7

7. A total of 169 of 992 schools (17%) had attendance rates of over 90 percent.
8. Some 35 schools had attendance rates below 70 percent. Two schools had attendance rates in the 50s.
9. A total of 159 schools or 20 % of 791 primary level schools had attendance rates of 90 percent and above.
10. A total of 87 of 363 schools offering secondary education or 24 percent had attendance rates of 85 percent and above for 2013/2014

REASONS FOR LOW ATTENDANCE

Further research was conducted at the regional level to ascertain possible reasons for low attendance in schools. The responses provided are outlined below:

Student Factors

- Lack of importance placed on education by students/parents
- Students being held back on Fridays to provide support to the economic situation of the family
- Truancy
- Poor academic performance
- Grade 11 Students not registered for external exams and are therefore not engaged
- Students gain employment during holiday seasons and continue working after the holidays

School Factors

- Distance travelled by students to schools
- Poor teaching/learning environment which impacts student's engagement
- Difficulty to access schools located in volatile areas when there is a flare up of violence.

Parental Factors

- Financial difficulties experienced by parents which impact ability to provide lunch money and transportation costs consistently.
- Lack of/weak parental and other support
- Low expectations by parents for their children

Community Factors

- Students living in volatile areas are sometimes prevented from leaving their communities because of a flare up of violence.
- In farming communities students' attendance is affected by the different crop-related seasons.
- Cultural and economic activities of the community which identify Friday as preparation or market day.
- The perception that nothing happens at school the days immediately before and after holidays.

The Regions also identified times when attendance is noticeably lower. These are:

- For PATH beneficiaries, the days when they are not being fed
- Thursdays and Fridays
- Days nearing end of a term
- Beginning of January when parents are expected to pay unpaid auxiliary fees
- The Easter Term where some Grade 11 students are not entered to sit external examinations
- Close to the end of the school year

Some measures taken by the schools to improve attendance include the following:

- ❖ Breakfast programmes established and number of days for PATH lunches increased.
- ❖ Establishment of needy students lunch programme
- ❖ Referral of students with frequent absences to Guidance Counsellors.
- ❖ Ensure that contact is made with parents through teachers and guidance counsellors regarding frequent absenteeism.
- ❖ Collaboration of PTA and Past Students' Association to assist students with transportation cost
- ❖ Uniform drive to provide needy students with clothing for school
- ❖ Motivational presentations/ Career counselling
- ❖ Transportation arrangements where principals arrange with taxis or buses to transport groups of students
- ❖ Mentorship of parents/Parenting Workshops
- ❖ Encouragement of parents to register with the PATH Programme
- ❖ Planned activities on Fridays such as Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) and clubs and sporting activities
- ❖ Introduction of skills programme focusing on areas such as agriculture, barbering, plumbing, cosmetology, sewing

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are being recommended:

- ✚ Make classes more interesting to stimulate students' interest
- ✚ Expand Breakfast Programme for students who are in need of nutritional support.

- ✚ Develop and implement an incentive system for high attendance
- ✚ Increase parental accountability through sensitisation, engagement in school activities and follow up by schools' personnel.
- ✚ Ensure that all students at grade 11 are engaged in preparation for an exit examination. Create options that will engage students' interest.
- ✚ Implement different strategies to engage boys in the teaching learning activities.
- ✚ Increase stakeholder partnerships in support of attendance.
- ✚ Implement more extra-curricular activities to engage and maintain students' interest
- ✚ Provide incentives to increase the number of male teachers thereby providing more male role models for the boys.
- ✚ Enforce compulsory education and establish tracking mechanisms for identifying and reporting incidents of truancy.
- ✚ Introduction of island -wide School Bus System.

TARGETS/PROJECTIONS

Based on the current attendance data and the recommendations made, the targets in **Table 3** are being projected for 2017.

Table 3: Targets for Attendance at School by Level

Level	Performance Measure/Target
Early Childhood/Pre-primary	85% of the age cohort attending pre-primary school regularly by 2017
Primary	95% attendance rate at the primary level by 2017
Secondary	85% of learners attending regularly by 2017



Ronald Thwaites, MP

Minister

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