



# SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS TOOLKIT

This School Effectiveness Toolkit shares findings from a School Effectiveness Study commissioned to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) by Jamaica's Ministry of Education in 2012, financed by the IDB's Social Fund, and an Adolescent Dislocation Study commissioned to the IDB by the Planning Institute of Jamaica in the same year, financed by the IDB's Gender and Diversity Fund. The Toolkit was developed by Carol Watson Williams, Social Policy Consultant and Cynthia Hobbs, Senior Education Specialist, IDB with support from a team from Jamaica's Ministry of Education. Special thanks go to Jean Hastings, Director of the Education System Transformation Programme, as well as to Maurice Smith, Principal Director of the National College for Educational Leadership and Maureen Dwyer, Chief Inspector of the National Education Inspectorate for valuable inputs, feedback and information. Photos were provided by the Ministry of Education. The graphic design and layout were done by BDA's Graphic Team. November 2014.

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1. WHAT IS SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

# SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS TOOLKIT





**IN THIS SECTION:**

- INTRODUCTION
- WHY SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS MATTERS
- FEATURES OF AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL: WHAT RESEARCH SAYS
- SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS IN JAMAICA

## 1. Introduction

Jamaica enjoys universal enrolment of children at the early childhood and primary levels and up to grade nine at the secondary level. However, enrolment at the higher levels of the secondary system, particularly of poor and vulnerable children, needs to be improved. There are also concerns about the quality of education available to students, and the high levels of underperformance at both the primary and secondary levels. This high level of underperformance exists alongside pockets of excellence, highlighting the inequality among schools. Reducing and ultimately eliminating this large achievement gap is the primary objective of Jamaica’s education reform efforts, and of the work which teachers do everyday.

Education policy and planning are increasingly focusing on how schools function and how they organize themselves to achieve their primary objective of *‘educating’* children. This area, referred to as *‘school effectiveness’* research, attempts to understand how the way schools are led, organized and resourced affect the quality of student outcomes. Hence, the research has focused on identifying the key factors that determine the *‘success’* of a school.

*‘Success’* can be defined in many ways, but a common understanding is that schools exist to ensure that children receive the requisite knowledge and skills on which to build a productive life. This *‘requisite knowledge and skills’* and how we measure these, will vary according to the social, economic, political, and cultural context of each society. Whatever the measure, it is agreed that schools are involved in the business of educating children and maximizing both their academic and non-academic assets.

Research has identified certain key characteristics that allow schools to succeed. These characteristics are the focus of this toolkit. This toolkit is designed to provide Jamaican school leaders with information, strategies and resources to help improve their schools. It discusses what makes a school effective, identifies effective practices from Jamaican classrooms, and provides resources and guidelines to help school leaders adapt and adopt these practices to improve student outcomes in schools across the island. We know that, depending on their resources and needs, schools will make their own adaptations to the suggested approaches to building effectiveness features, but we reaffirm the importance of each of the featured characteristics in this toolkit in developing successful schools.

### 1.1 School Effectiveness: Why it Matters?

School effectiveness matters because research shows that student outcomes are positively related to the effectiveness of schools. In other words, schools with more effectiveness characteristics produce students who do better.



Although students’ academic achievement is used as the litmus test for school success, schools are also now recognising the importance of social outcomes linked to the students’ school. So, students’ behaviours, experiences and expectations are also essential indicators of a successful school. How a school is able to improve outcomes using the resources that are available is also a key aspect of school effectiveness.

School Effectiveness also matters because there is an underlying assumption that once the characteristics of successful schools are identified, other schools can replicate their success. Thus, understanding the factors identified through school effectiveness research work can help you improve your school.

## 1.2 Features of An Effective School: What the Research Says

Using a multi-dimensional approach, researchers have identified some core characteristics of effective schools. Among the various models of effective schools is the Shannon and Bylsma (2007) model, which identifies nine key characteristics of effective schools. These nine characteristics fall into three broad categories:

### Goals and Aspirations

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- a. Clear and shared focus
- b. High standards and expectations for all students

### Processes and Actions

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- a. High levels of collaboration and communication
- b. Curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned with national standards
- c. Frequent monitoring of learning and teaching

### Supports and Capacity Building

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- a. Focused professional development
- a. A supportive learning environment
- b. High levels of family and community involvement

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School effectiveness has been defined as the *‘unique characteristics common to schools in which children, regardless of socio-economic background, race or gender, learn the essential skills, knowledge and concepts required to successfully advance to the next level.’*

*Foster-Allen, 2010; Dwyer, 2013.*

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The ninth factor, *Effective school leadership*, is considered a cross cutting issue and therefore not limited to any one category, but rather influences all other areas (Shannon and Bylsma, 2007).



Figure 1: Shannon and Bylsma Nine –Factor School Effectiveness Model.



Schools which exhibit these characteristics are able to motivate both their teachers and students to higher levels of performance.

### 1.3 School Effectiveness in Jamaica

Within the Jamaican context, school effectiveness has been defined by the following characteristics, in line with the Shannon & Bylsma model: (a) strong leadership, (b) a clear school mission, (c) a safe and orderly climate, (d) transparent and effective monitoring of students’ progress, (e) high expectations and (f) parental involvement (Dwyer, 2013).

The 2013 Chief Inspector’s Report, which presented the findings of inspections of 205 schools (about 20 percent) across Jamaica, found that 44 percent of schools were effective, 5.3 percent were *‘emerging satisfactory’*, though still ineffective, and the other 50 percent were ineffective (National Education Inspectorate/NEI 2013:iv).

#### ➔ Box 1: Eight Key Performance Indicators for Jamaican Schools

- a. How well the school is led and managed
- b. How effectively teaching supports learning
- c. Performance of students on national and regional tests and assessments
- d. Students’ progress in relation to their starting points
- e. How well Curriculum and Programme enhancements meet student needs
- f. Students’ personal and social development
- g. Effective use of human material resources to help students achieve
- h. Safety, security, health and wellbeing of students and staff.

**Source: National Education Inspectorate Handbook**

# CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVENESS IN JAMAICAN SCHOOLS







**IN THIS SECTION:**

➤ FINDINGS FROM THE SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS STUDY 2013

## 2. Characteristics of Effectiveness in Jamaican Schools

Becoming an effective school requires sustained effort and implementation of strategies that actually make a difference in the performance of the school. Hence, understanding the characteristics that separate effective from ineffective schools is crucial. This knowledge provides a basis on which schools and policy makers can map a path, target specific areas for focus, act on these decisions and take corrective steps where necessary.

A study was commissioned by the Ministry of Education in 2013 to identify international good practices and see how Jamaican schools compared. The results of the 2013 School Effectiveness Study suggest that the main characteristics of effective schools in Jamaica accord with those identified in the international literature. Effective schools in Jamaica are those that have:

- a. Clear and Focused Goals and Aspirations.** These schools set very ambitious performance targets, communicate these targets to the school community, and provide rewards and recognition for achievement, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy and character development. In addition, effective schools have the support of the community of stakeholders in the development of their School Improvement Plans (SIPs).
- b. High Levels of Collaboration and Communication:** In effective schools, teachers work collaboratively to solve problems, and there is widely practiced co-teaching to transfer knowledge and instructional practices.
- c. Frequent Monitoring of Teaching and Learning:** Data garnered from assessments and tests is used to monitor teaching and learning as well as to guide instruction and teacher evaluation. In effective schools, tests consider the abilities of all children, and teachers use extensive student data to determine instructional strategies; when teachers find gaps in achievement, they plan specific interventions to assist students in their learning process.
- d. Focused Professional Development:** In these institutions there is ongoing professional development of teachers, funding for professional development programmes as well as provisions for in-school professional dialogue and on-going performance appraisal of teachers. The appraisal is used in a positive, supportive way to help teachers improve their teaching.

Effective schools were almost four times more likely to have high levels of parental involvement than ineffective schools.

*C. Watson Williams & K. Fox, 2014.*

- e. A Supportive Learning Environment:** In this environment interactions are respectful, students are encouraged to think and ask questions, learning sessions are inclusive, there is sufficient focus on academic work (time on task) and both instruction and assessment take into consideration the diversity of students and culture of the school. The findings also showed that the policy environment forms part of the overall supportive environment of effective schools, indicating the importance of support from the central policy making body (this refers to the Ministry of Education but must be supplemented by strong support from the Regional Education Office, the school Board and the school Principal). Schools that were effective were almost three times more likely to have a good policy and support environment.
- f. High Levels of Family and Community Involvement:** This finding confirms what has long been established in international research on effective schools and the impact of parental involvement on school outcomes. In this study, effective schools were almost four times more likely to have high levels of parental involvement than ineffective schools. In effective schools, parents actively support teachers and students, the school community is aware of the goals and the importance of literacy and numeracy, there are ongoing programmes of parent engagement and the community responds to opportunities to partner with the school. These schools involve parents and the community of stakeholders as partners in the school improvement planning process, and this helps to build the public's confidence in the school. Schools that actively promote parent involvement benefit from parental support for learning and other interventions, such as character development for students.
- g. Strong Leadership:** This is the cornerstone of an effective school. This strong leadership is manifested in innovation and risk taking and the application of unconventional methods of achieving school goals, insistence on coherent practices across classrooms and facilitation of ongoing strategic interventions as agreed by parents, students and teachers. These strong leaders also pay significant attention to teacher accountability, ensure the development and implementation of their SIPs, observe classroom activities in their schools, and provide support to staff to achieve goals and targets set by the school.
- h. Budget:** The study suggests that schools are generally finding it difficult to provide adequate fiscal resources to support their operations, regardless of level of effectiveness. Effective schools, however, are able to overcome this potential barrier through the implementation of strategies that do not necessarily require additional funds- e.g strong leadership, a supportive learning environment, high expectations- to drive school performance.



# LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT



## IN THIS SECTION:

- LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT: IMPORTANCE TO SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS
- WHAT EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE IN SCHOOLS
- KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERS

## 3. Leadership and Management

### 3.1 Leadership and Management: Importance to School Effectiveness

School leadership is not only focused on the role of the principal. Members of the senior management team and the school board also have a critical role to play in how schools are led and managed.

Strong leadership plays a major role in the management of schools' resources and, therefore, is consistently identified as an effectiveness enhancing condition (The Wallace Foundation 2010). Leadership has been shown to be second only to direct classroom instruction as a key condition for effectiveness (ibid). Leaders set the tone of the school's learning environment, motivate both staff and students to achieve, and provide clear goals around which stakeholders in the school can collaborate in a climate of mutual respect. Increasingly, too, school leaders are required to be not just *'good managers'*, but instructional leaders who use data to drive improvements in teaching and learning throughout their school. Essentially, the work of an instructional leader is to ensure that all students get the highest quality of classroom instruction every day.



### Box 2: Key Elements of Instructional Leadership

- a. Teaching and Learning is of the highest priority in the school. This is the area of the school leaders' primary focus, and the one to which most time is dedicated.
- b. A culture of continuous learning is fostered. Information on the latest developments in teaching and learning is considered key to improving teacher performance. Hence, continuous professional development is seen as critical to school improvement.
- c. There is a strong focus on alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and the school's goals.
- d. In their focus on improving achievement, instructional leaders use multiple sources of information to assess performance.
- e. School leaders view instructional improvement as a continuous process. There are systems for the monitoring of performance towards the achievement of agreed goals.
- f. Instruction is a whole school effort and is led by a team of leaders, of which the Principal is the head.
- g. Instruction is built around the cultural, linguistic, learning, and socio-economic context of the school.

**Adapted from: The Wallace Foundation, 2010**



The NEI notes that *'research shows that where school leadership is effective, school-based management displays a good mix of conceptual, human and technical skills. This means that leaders in the school bring qualities of vision, intensity, and creativity that complement their good management practices.'* (NEI 2013:11).

### **3.2 What Effective Leadership Looks Like in Schools:**

Though effective leadership is recognised as a key element in the creation of effective schools, it is not always clear what it looks like. When a school is effectively led and managed:

- The Principal is a goal-directed, visionary, strong, firm and industrious leader.
- The Principal has strong organisational management skills.
- There is a clear pathway towards attaining the school's goals and vision that is shared and understood by all the school's different stakeholders.

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As far as we are aware, there is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership. One explanation for this is that leadership serves as a catalyst for unleashing the potential capacities that already exist in the organisation.

*Seven Strong Claims About School Successful Leadership. [www.ncsl.org.uk](http://www.ncsl.org.uk)*

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- There is good, regular communication between the Board Chair and the Principal.
- Middle managers (e.g. Head teachers) hold teachers accountable for the highest possible standard of student achievement.
- Senior, grade level and staff meetings are scheduled to ensure standardisation and monitoring of curriculum delivery.
- Department meetings involve a discussion of a variety of issues, such as: classroom management, analysis of academic performance, special educational needs, relationships with students, discipline, curriculum coverage, homework policy and professionalism.
- Leaders know what is happening in the school - what teachers and students are doing and how well.

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School leaders influence classroom teaching, and consequently student learning, by staffing schools with highly effective teachers and supporting those teachers with effective teaching and learning environments, rather than by focusing too narrowly on their own contributions to classroom instruction.

*E. Horng and S. Loeb, 2010.*

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### Box 3: Clear Direction and Purposeful Educational Leadership - What it Looks Like

Management's clear direction and purposeful educational leadership has significantly impacted the quality of education offered by the school. There is a clear vision, which is outlined in the school improvement plan and communicated effectively to all stakeholders.

A drive to establish a unique culture is centred on a learning environment that models and reflects a deep understanding and appreciation of cultural practices and identities while demonstrating a high level of respect for authority, peers and the physical plant. This is reflected in ongoing efforts to eliminate punishment of students, replacing it with understanding, respect and the desire to conform to rules. An open door policy is operated where all are encouraged to contribute to the school's development. Evidence of this is the visitors' dress code, developed by the students.

The principal ensures a visible presence on the compound. In his/her effort to maintain standards, the Principal visits classes regularly and maintains a system of reporting to provide detailed information on the teaching and learning process. Heads of Department (HODs) are given the mandate to organize and conduct workshops, reporting regularly on teachers' participation and effectiveness.

Leadership, in its drive for excellence, has had direct impact on the standards and progress of the school in many areas. Over the last three years there has been a steady improvement in attainment in CSEC and CAPE, and improvements in the physical plant and students' behaviour are evident.

All major plans and projections are contained in policy documents. Records are in order and there is a drive to generate an electronic data base system within three years.

***Titchfield High School Inspection Report, page 6***

The School Board also plays a key role in the leadership of the school.

#### The Board should:

- Be representative of the whole community (staff, students, church, partner school reps, expertise from within the community (NEI, 2010:29).
- Have sub-committees which meet monthly. This will allow the Board to effectively monitor all areas of the school.
- Hold the principal and teachers accountable for meeting agreed targets.
- Monitor the finances of the school. This can be achieved by tabling financial reports at quarterly board meetings.
- Give advisory or strategic supportive guidance to school leadership on a variety of issues pertaining to the effective functioning of the school, e.g. deployment of staff.
- Aid in school improvement planning.
- Have a chairman who is proactive and understands the vision of the principal.



### **Box 4: A Case of Effective Governance**

The board's interest and involvement in the school is manifested in the various committees that ensure complete coverage of every aspect of the school. The committees, such as accounts, academic, sports and extra-curricular activities, consist of experts and professionals in these fields who provide guidance and assistance for the students and staff. There is a rigorous accountability system in place where all departments and areas of responsibility must report to the board, stating attainable targets and processes for attainment. The board's policy document outlines expectations for all and is used to conduct self-evaluation in areas such as attendance, punctuality, discipline and academic performance. Regular monthly meetings are held, with the various committees also meeting when necessary.

The Board monitors and advises school leadership on issues pertaining to the effective functioning of the school. Minutes of recent Board meetings outline the strict guidelines used to rigorously monitor the areas of responsibility for various committees. They track and monitor the leadership and management of the school through the Principal's reports at Board meetings, general observations and dialogue. The Board members have good knowledge of the school's activities and continuously make themselves available to provide invaluable advice to guide the strategic planning process for the school.

***Titchfield High School, inspection report, p. 6***

### **3.3 Key Strategic Actions of Effective School Leaders**

Based on qualitative research involving 125 high performing Jamaican principals (Hutton, 2011), the following key strategic actions have been identified as things that effective leaders do. They:

- Articulate a philosophy of self and school
- Emphasize the importance of personal characteristics, abilities and qualities
- Practice situational and transformational leadership
- Provide a supportive platform for student growth and development
- Focus on student academic performance and achievement
- Emphasize the need for strong staff involvement and support
- Recognise the psychological benefits of a well-managed school plant
- Engender broad-based community relationships
- Enjoy a cordial, but not unquestioning, relationship with the Ministry of Education.

Other research (The Wallace Foundation, 2013) has found that effective Principals also:

- Cultivate leadership in others
- Manage people, data, processes, and resources to foster school improvement.





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When principals and teachers share leadership, teachers' working relationships with one another are stronger and student achievement is higher.

*K. Leithwood, K. Seashore Louis, S. Anderson and K. Wahlstorm, 2004.*

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### Effective Middle Management

Additionally, the NEI (2013:12) reports that effective schools recognise the importance of middle management in strengthening the schools' operation and empower these managers to carry out their role and responsibilities. So empowered, these managers are able to articulate the school's vision and hold teachers in their departments accountable for improvements in students' performance. The school's middle management should also lead in curricula assessment and reviews, ensuring that the curricula is adapted to meet the needs of students.



#### Box 5: Leadership as Teamwork

The Principal, together with the two Vice-Principals and middle management team have established an ethos where everyone strives for excellence. They provide clear directions and have clearly articulated the vision to all stakeholders who appear to fully understand it. Systems for staff development and training have enabled sustained improvements in teaching and learning for all students.

***Immaculate Conception High School Inspection Report, 2011, p 6***



**TOOL 1. Help Your Middle Managers Evaluate Themselves**

1. You have been teaching for ..... years
2. Are you a Head of Department?
  - a. Yes (go to Q.4)
  - b. No
3. Do you wish to become a HoD?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No (Go to Q.5)
4. How many years have you been a Head of Department?.....
5. What are your current leadership responsibilities in the school? .....  
.....  
.....
6. In what areas would you like to improve your skills? (Indicate all that apply)
  - a. Building positive relationships in the department/in school
  - b. Building bridges and a collaborative forum within the department to share good practice
  - c. Building confidence in staff/team
  - d. Motivating your staff
  - e. General review of good teaching practices – to raise the quality of teaching across the department
  - f. Encouraging learning and greater progress in student achievement
  - g. Using assessment data to guide teaching
  - h. Curriculum planning and organisation
  - i. Revising departmental policies, and implementing change across the school
  - j. Other – please specify
7. What are your priorities for professional development in the next year or two?
8. What do you identify as your strengths as a leader? .....  
.....  
.....  
And your weaknesses? .....  
.....  
.....
9. What are the 3 key things you can do now to improve your leadership skills?
  - a. ....
  - b. ....
  - c. ....



**You'll know you have effective leadership in your school when:**

- Teachers, parents and students can articulate a shared vision for the school
- School improvement is focused on improving student achievement
- The school culture is focused on learning
- Teachers collaborate and learn from each other
- Leadership is promoted throughout the school

**➤ Box 6: Clear Vision and Goals**

The Principal and senior managers are very passionate about the school and the performance of the students. The school's vision is to bring the level of literacy and numeracy to 100 percent mastery by 2015. In light of this, the school rigorously pursues every opportunity for development of staff and expansion of its programmes.

Stakeholders are constantly aiming for excellence, looking at the school's strengths and weaknesses and planning for improvements. Management makes accurate assessment of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Senior staff meet to discuss what is to be achieved based on assessment and set goals for development; this is then communicated to the other staff and parents who work towards achieving it.

Parents are also able to make suggestions about areas they think need improvement. For example, issues about the vendors and traffic.

***Lyssons Primary, Inspection Report, p. 6***

# TEACHING AND LEARNING





**IN THIS SECTION:**

- THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING TO SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS
- CREATING A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
- TEACHING STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING
- CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENTS AND ADAPTATIONS
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS
- USING ASSESSMENT DATA TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

## 4. Teaching and Learning

### 4.1 The Importance of Teaching and Learning to School Effectiveness

Teaching and Learning is at the core of education. Improvements in student performance are therefore largely hinged on what happens in the classroom, and what happens in the classroom is affected by school-wide and policy variables such as:

- The overall teaching and learning environment in the school
- The school culture
- Operational/organisational structures to support teaching and learning
- Education policy environment

The School Effectiveness study found that highly significant characteristics of effective schools in Jamaica included:

- A supportive learning environment
- Focused professional development
- Frequent monitoring of teaching and learning

In assessing how effectively teaching supports learning in Jamaican schools, NEI data shows that this was good in 3 percent of schools, satisfactory in 53 percent and unsatisfactory in 43 percent. In 1 percent of schools, teaching and learning was so deficient, it was found to be in ‘*need of immediate support*’ (NEI, 2013:15).



## 4.2 Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

In supportive learning environments:

- Interactions are respectful; principals, teachers, parents and students listen to and respect each other.
- Students are encouraged to think and ask questions.
- Learning sessions find a way to include learners of varying backgrounds and abilities.
- There is sufficient time on task, that is, the majority of a class session is spent on academic-oriented work and activities.
- Both instruction and assessment are related to the diversity of students and culture of the school.

Schools that were effective were almost three times more likely to have a good policy and support environment. However, to the extent that both effective and ineffective schools operate in the same policy environment, the data confirms that this supportive policy environment has to be complemented by internal policies which allow the school to best implement the national policies. In other words, central policy making cannot create effective schools without the school themselves having structures to implement and support the national policies.

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Schools that were effective were almost three times more likely to have a good policy and support environment... central policy making cannot create effective schools without the presence of school level structures to implement and support the national policies.

*C. Watson Williams & K. Fox, 2014.*

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### 4.2.1 How to Create a Supportive Learning Environment

#### Get to know your students

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Students come to school from varied backgrounds and experiences, including previous learning experiences. Get to know them. Understand their starting points and this will help you shape the environment that is most favourable to their optimal performance.

#### Have high expectations of teachers and students and make sure they know and are rewarded for success and effort

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Successful schools set very ambitious performance targets, communicate these targets to the school community, and provide rewards and recognition for achievement.

#### Institute collaborative planning by teachers

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In effective schools, teachers work collaboratively to solve problems and there are established systems to transfer knowledge and instructional practices. This can also happen across schools, such as through the Ministry's Quality Education Circles (QECs).



## Create a culture of learning

The culture of a school is the background against which everything happens. Schools create a culture of learning when teachers set clear and ambitious goals for all their students, holding the same high expectations for all students regardless of their background or current circumstances. This requires teachers to reach beyond their own life experiences to connect with their students. In these schools, achievement is applauded and students are continuously encouraged to improve their performance.

A culture of learning is also important for teachers. School leaders create that culture for teachers by creating frequent professional development opportunities both internally and off-site. Schools that view teaching as an intellectual activity which requires continuous learning are more likely to cultivate a whole school culture of learning.

## Ensure that the school environment is safe for both teachers and students

A safe and orderly environment is a key element that supports learning. School effectiveness is facilitated when students operate in a classroom environment where *'better disciplinary climates, more positive behaviour among teachers and better student teacher relations'* exist (PISA, 2009, P. 54).



### Box 7: Students' Wellbeing - a community effort

Staff and students' personal wellbeing is a high priority.

There are well organised and maintained systems in place for addressing and tracking students' personal welfare and for supporting students who are less fortunate. Every Friday, the Guidance Counsellor visits parents of students who are habitually late, have poor attendance and have prolonged misbehaviour issues. Students are not suspended for behavioural offences. Instead, they are punished at school where they are allowed to remain in class and conduct after school duties.

The guidance department conducts regular guidance sessions with disruptive students, and external agencies such as the MoE Guidance Unit come in on request of the school to mentor students and give additional support. Religious personnel from the community give regular talks and have rap sessions with students from Grade 7 to 9.

**Castleton Primary and Junior High – Inspection Report p. 15**

## Allow sufficient time on task

This refers to the amount of time students spend on a particular task in the classroom. It may seem obvious that this is an important part of a supportive learning environment, but studies show that in some classrooms, up to 50 percent of the time is spent on non-instructional activities. These may include disciplining students, talking to other teachers or people in or outside the classroom, administrative activities such as taking attendance or collecting lunch money, or in transitioning from one instructional activity to another



(passing out books, reorganizing student groups, getting out materials and so forth). Recent studies show a clear relationship between time-on-task (or engaged time) and student achievement (Bruns, Evans and Luque, 2012). Learning gains are expanded when time allocated for instruction is appropriate; that is, at the appropriate instructional level for students and delivered in a way that is effective, efficient, meaningful, and motivating to students (Ibid).

### Have clear classroom rules

Students learn best when there is order in their classroom. It is therefore important to set clear, easy to understand rules at the beginning of the school year, and enforce them consistently.

### Assessing the Culture of Learning in Your School

Use the following checklist as a guide in your assessment of the learning culture of your school. You can also add your own assessment areas, based on the issues which affect your school.

#### TOOL 2: Guide to Assessing School Culture

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1. The school has clear and consistent student discipline policies				
2. The school has clear and consistent grading policies				
3. The principal consistently enforces these policies.				
4. The teachers consistently enforce these policies.				
5. Students are aware of the discipline and grading policies				
6. Teachers in this school take responsibility for their own and each other's student learning				
7. The principal and teachers share and articulate high standards for teaching and learning				

Once you have done your assessment, you can decide which areas of your school culture need more focused improvement, and which need to be monitored to ensure that the performance continues to be good. This helps you to decide where to place your time and financial resources.





**TOOL 3: High School Student data capture. This may be used to gather some basic information on your students.**

**Tell Us Something About Yourself**

We are so glad you are a student at this school! And we really want to make sure we are doing the best for you. The best way to do this is to get to know you better, and a little about your family too. Please help the school by completing the following questionnaire.

Thank you so much.

**Section I: Just a little about you and home.**

Name:.....

Age: .....

- 1. Do you have brothers or sisters?  
a. Yes    b. No
- 2. If so, how many? .....
- 3. Who do you live with?  
a. Both parents  
b. One parent  
c. Grandparent(s)  
d. Other relative .....
- e. Friends
- 4. What is your favourite activity? .....
- 5. What is your least favourite activity? .....
- 6. What is your favourite school subject? .....
- 7. Have you been involved (or are you hoping to become involved) in any school activities (clubs, sports, etc.)? .....
- 8. If so, which ones? .....
- 9. What is your favorite type of music? .....

**Section II: Please complete the sentences below.**

- 10. On the weekends I like to .....
- 11. A person I admire is ..... because .....
- 12. If I could go anywhere for a day, I would go to .....
- 13. I learn the most when the teacher .....
- 14. I think I learn the most when I .....
- 15. I really don't like it when teachers .....
- 16. I don't like it when I'm asked to .....
- 17. I feel really good about myself when .....
- 18. After high school, I would like to .....
- 19. After high school, I am likely to .....
- 20. My ideal job would be .....



### 4.3 Teaching Strategies to Improve Student Learning

#### Effective teachers:

- Use innovative teaching strategies and assessment methods. Examples include:
  - > Teaching mathematics through hands-on activities, e.g. using geoboards to calculate area
  - > Use of technology, multi-media projectors, games, visual presentation, dramatization, songs
  - > Use of real objects, such as local fruits to explain proportions
- Use differentiated instruction strategies within and between grade levels
- Ensure that planned activities involve students in their own learning; this requires teachers to get to know their students so they can make references to their lives and personal experiences to help them connect to the subject being taught
- Facilitate opportunities for students to develop investigative and observational skills
- Keep students engaged through activities such as:
  - > Hands-on teaching methods
  - > Offering multiple opportunities to apply their learning to new situations and real life
- Effectively use praise and reward to motivate students
- Ensure a strong relationship between teachers and students, which creates a climate of respect and leads to a more peaceful, controlled classroom
- Provide consistent, meaningful feedback to students
- Keep thorough records to be able to track each student's progress
- Use questioning techniques and problem solving activities designed to get students to think critically
- Allow students think time and avoid helping them too quickly



## Box 8: Effective Strategies for Teaching

### Lesson Planning

Most teachers plan their lessons in detail, identifying objectives, procedures and activities. A very strong feature of lesson planning is the diagrammatic representation of the theme for the lesson, broken down as: phonics, study skills, comprehension, vocabulary, mechanics, structure, writing and reading.

### Resource Use

There is good use of resources to bring across concepts. For example, in an upper grade class, manipulatives are used to help students understand the concepts being taught. Most teachers demonstrate best practices by using games, charts and good questioning techniques to motivate students and maintain interest.

### Relevance

Some lesson contents are set to relate to students' lifestyle and experiences. For example, in a Grade 6 mathematics lesson, shapes were brought to life as students used instructions given by a teacher to form shapes with their bodies. This generated much interest, participation and critical thinking as the students explored the various possibilities.

### Differentiated Instruction

In some lessons, students are grouped according to ability levels and instructions and activities reflect their levels.

### Classroom Climate

Relationships between teacher and students are very good. For most lessons, teachers actively engaged the students in lively discussions and students respond with a high degree of enthusiasm.”

*Duanvale Primary, Inspection Report – p. 8*

## Assessing Teaching Culture and Collaboration: How Do We Do?

The following checklist will help your school assess how well you are doing in making sure that teaching and learning are the primary focus and are reflected in the daily activities. You are encouraged to add your own questions to this checklist.



**TOOL 4:** A Guide To Your Assessment of Teacher Culture and Collaboration

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1. Teachers share materials and resources with each other				
2. Teachers observe each other				
3. Teachers work together to develop and improve the curriculum				
4. Teachers look at student work and analyse student learning together				
5. Opportunities for teachers to work together are included in the school day				
6. Experienced teachers share their expertise through leading in-school workshops and/or in-services				
7. The principal visits teachers' classrooms and provides feedback that facilitates teacher learning				
8. The principal's interactions with teachers focus on improving teaching and learning				
9. New teachers seek and receive assistance from several experienced teachers				
10. New teachers work with experienced teachers in study groups and/or professional learning communities focused on improving teaching and learning				
11. The principal and experienced teachers view their work with beginning teachers as opportunities to teach/mentor and learn				
12. The principal and experienced teachers value the knowledge beginning teachers bring to the school				



## 4.4 Curriculum Enhancements and Adaptations

There is no recipe for adapting general education curriculum to meet each student’s needs. Each teacher, each student, each classroom is unique and adaptations are specific to each situation. Indeed, in some instances, the curriculum may not require modification, but effective schools make adaptations where a clear need to do so has been identified. Curricula can be adapted and enhanced in several ways, as illustrated below (Ebeling, Deschenes & Sprague, 1994).

<p><b>Input:</b> Adapt the way instruction is delivered to the learner.</p> <p><b>For example:</b> Use different visual aids; plan more concrete examples; provide hands-on activities; place students in cooperative groups.</p>	<p><b>Output:</b> Adapt how the learner can respond to instruction.</p> <p><b>For example:</b> Allow a verbal vs. written response; use a communication book for students; allow students to show knowledge with hands-on materials.</p>	<p><b>Time:</b> Adapt the time allotted and allowed for learning, task completion or testing.</p> <p><b>For example:</b> Individualize a timeline for completing a task; pace learning differently (increase or decrease) for some learners.</p>
<p><b>Difficulty:</b> Adapt the skill level, problem type, or the rules on how the learner may approach the work.</p> <p><b>For example:</b> Allow a calculator for math problems; simplify task directions; change rules to accommodate learner needs.</p>	<p><b>Degree of Participation:</b> Adapt the extent to which a learner is actively involved in the task.</p> <p><b>For example:</b> In geography, have student hold the globe, while others point out the locations.</p>	<p><b>Alternate Goals:</b> Adapt the goals or outcome expectations while using the same materials.</p> <p><b>For example:</b> In social studies, expect one student to be able to locate just the parishes while others learn to locate capitals as well.</p>
<p><b>Level of Support:</b> Increase the amount of personal assistance with a specific learner.</p> <p><b>For example:</b> Assign peer buddies, teaching assistants, or peer tutors.</p>	<p><b>Size:</b> Adapt the number of items that the learner is expected to learn or complete.</p> <p><b>For example:</b> Reduce the number of social studies terms or dates a learner must learn at any one time.</p>	<p><b>Substitute Curriculum:</b> Provide the different instruction and materials to meet a learner’s individual goals.</p> <p><b>For example:</b> Individualize a timeline for completing a task; pace learning differently (increase or decrease) for some learners.</p>

In schools where the curriculum enhancements and adaptations are good, students are exposed to a full range of activities which contribute to the *'social as well as academic development'* (NEI, 2013:34). These schools have a broad based curriculum, which is enriched by sports and the performing arts. These schools use the curriculum set by the Ministry of Education as a starting point, but take the initiative to introduce modifications as necessary. In some instances, schools introduce gender sensitive enhancements, and activities which provide opportunities for specific groups of learners (ibid).

### **Catering to a student's learning needs**

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#### **Potential activities include:**

- The provision of specialists such as a reading specialist
- Pull-out programmes to work on specific areas, for the more academically challenged students
- Field trips, which would provide students with concrete experiences to make their learning more meaningful
- Individual consultations that allow students and staff to discuss work one-on-one

#### **Other strategies include:**

- Primary teaching strategies
  - > The use of the primary curriculum along with enhancement programmes which focus on numeracy and literacy to meet the needs of students
  - > Ability Grouping

#### **To promote student's personal and social development, effective schools encourage their students to:**

- Participate in expositions of the arts and culture
- Take responsibility through membership in clubs and societies



**TOOL 5: Creating Ways to Adapt Familiar Lessons- Primary**

1. Subject area .....  
Grade Level: .....
2. Lesson topic .....
3. Briefly identify the curricular goal for most learners: By the end of this class, most students will know .....  
.....  
.....  
.....
4. Briefly identify the instructional plan for most learners: As teacher, I will .....  
.....  
.....  
.....
5. Identify the name(s) of the learner(s) who will need adaptations in the curriculum or instructional plan:  
.....  
.....  
.....
6. Now use “Nine Types of Adaptations” as a means of thinking about some of the ways you could adapt what or how you teach to accommodate this (these) learner (s) in the classroom for this lesson.

<b>Input</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Difficulty</b>	<b>Degree of Participation</b>	<b>Alternate Goals</b>
<b>Level of Support</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Substitute Curriculum</b>



## 4.5 What Curriculum Adaptations and Enhancements Look Like in Effective Schools



### Box 9: Curriculum Enhancements

The School has creatively designed curriculum material which guides both the academic and non-academic programmes. It has adapted and ambulated aspects of the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) and Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE) syllabuses to develop its own unique curriculum to meet the personal, social, academic and physical needs of the students. They have also included the teaching of research as a subject to build students' analytic skills, the teaching of refinement to create the opportunities for holistic development, and the teaching of politics and current affairs at the Year 3 (Grade 9) level to help develop awareness and social responsibility. Co-curricular activities such as performing arts and 20 hours of community service, which students must do in order to graduate at the end of Year 5 (Grade 11), also bolster the school's curriculum.

*Belmont Academy, Chief Inspector's Report, 2010, p. 52*



### Box 10: Curriculum Management

Teachers meet in their respective departments regularly to review and plan in order to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and is meeting the needs of all students. There is a school policy for each department to submit at least four assessment grades during the term and set an exam grade at the end of each term to assess the progress of students. The policy of the school also states that all students must sit a minimum of 8 CSEC subjects, thus setting the expectations and standards for each student from the beginning. The compulsory subjects are mathematics, English Language, English Literature, Information technology, one science, one foreign language and students select two additional subjects.

The curriculum is further enhanced by over 40 clubs and societies which are well organized and properly monitored by teachers. These provide students with sporting, cultural, civic, and creative opportunities. Teachers as well as students are strongly encouraged to be involved in at least one activity. Extra-curricular activities in the form of clubs and societies provide opportunities for students to tutor and mentor young people in the surrounding communities. In addition, the music department is expansive and has been instrumental in the school obtaining national and international awards.

*Immaculate Conception High School, Inspection Report 2011, p.13*



### ➤ **Box 11: Curriculum Adaptations**

“There is adequate use of the Revised Primary Curriculum, with special focus on literacy and numeracy. Enhancement programmes include daily “Drop Everything and Read” sessions for all classes, and daily homework and weekly compositions from each student which are submitted to the principal for vetting and feedback. Weekly book reviews culminate with the “Reader of the Year” award. The teachers are highly motivated and committed to ensuring the highest level of student achievement possible. They all volunteer an additional hour each day to work with students on literacy and numeracy.

**August Town Primary Inspection Report, p. 12**

## 4.6 Using Assessment Data to Improve Student Learning

In effective schools, the data from assessments and tests are used to monitor teaching and learning and to drive instruction. Many teachers use this data to develop their instructional strategies, to identify gaps in achievement and to guide specific interventions. Student data is also a valuable source of information, which can be used to shape teaching strategies. However, this section concentrates on the use of data from student assessments to improve performance.

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It can be very difficult to change from traditional ideas where assessment data was considered to be reflective of students’ abilities, about which little can be done, to one where assessment data is considered to be information to guide reflection about the effectiveness of teaching and what needs to happen next.

*H. Timperley, 2009.*

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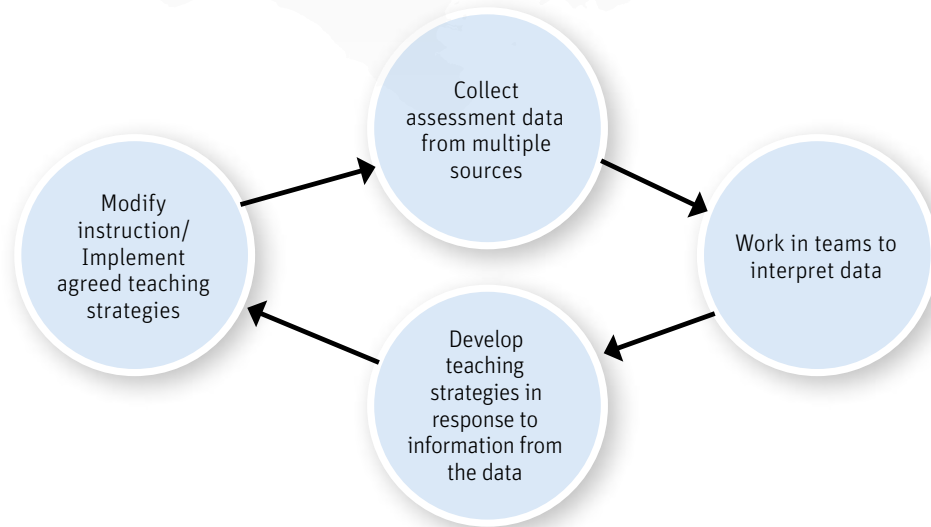
Assessment data is easily available to all schools. In fact, your school actually generates most of this data itself, and has direct access to the student results in national tests such as the Grade One Individual Learning Profile, the Grade Four Literacy and Numeracy Tests, the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT), and regional tests such as CSEC and CAPE. Though readily available, this data traditionally has not been fully utilised by schools. However, there are some specific actions which your school can take to ensure that this assessment data is used regularly to shape what happens in your classrooms. Among these actions are:

- Collect and prepare a variety of data about student learning. The best way to get a full picture of the performance of your students is by collecting and using data from a wide range of assessments. Use pop quizzes, writing assignments, structured tests, graded classwork, and national tests to make up the student profiles.
- Interpret data. The best way to do this is in teams. Working together, teachers in your school can look for patterns and trends in the data and identify areas of strength and weakness in student performance.



- Develop ideas about how to respond. Using the information from the data, your team can develop strategies to address the areas in need of improvement and build on the identified strengths.
- Modify instruction to implement the new strategies to improve student outcome. Teachers can work together to develop new strategies.

**FIGURE 2:** Steps to Using Assessment Data to Improve Student Performance



**Effective leaders view data as a means not only to pinpoint problems, but to understand their nature and causes.**

**➤ Box 12: Using Assessment Data to Drive Teaching Strategies**

After receiving results in external examinations, the data is evaluated by the Assessment Committee to see the performance of the students at all levels and the strands that they need to improve. For example, it was identified that Grade 3 students are weak in statistics and measurements, and corrective measures are presently being used to address this.

“The school monitors a well-structured assessment policy across grades, and most teachers plan lessons according to student’s mastery or non-mastery levels of the various areas assessed. Students are tested regularly, and the information from tests and examinations is used to identify students’ strengths and weaknesses. All teachers monitor students’ progress in classes and give effective feedback on their performance. For example, in Grades 1 to 6, the record books show an effective display of assessment used by teachers to begin the work of transforming the teaching and learning process. Assessment activities in many classes are designed to cater to students’ ability levels and teachers monitor students while they do activities. Good quality feedback is given to students by the teachers; this helps students to correct errors and improve performance. Most teachers use a variety of assessment strategies to assess students. Oral questioning is effectively used by most; this elicits good responses from students. In addition, students are given group work and individual written assignments.”

***Duanvale Primary School, Inspection Report***



### Box 13: Effective Use of Assessment Data

Planning for curriculum adjustments is exceptionally high, standardized and well organized at the school. The six weekly test results form the foundation of planning. The results are statistically analysed with great levels of detail and the area (s) of concern and those for adjustments are identified, tabled at monthly planning departmental meetings and implemented.

***Wolmers’ High School for Girls, Inspection Report, p. 13***

#### Assessment is exceptionally high

The school uses a thorough programme of assessment and review, including students’ evaluation of their work. Most teachers keep detailed records of student’s achievements and use them to track students’ work focusing sharply on what they need to do to improve.

***Westwood High School Inspection Report, 2011, p. 9***

### Strategic Steps

- Help your school take collective responsibility for student learning. Your school should reflect on the link between student learning and instructional practice. Working with data in the way described above will help show this link and empower teachers to take action to improve student learning.
- Involve all teachers in the design of instructional strategies to address the problems identified by the data. This will encourage teachers to take responsibility for the impact of the changes in instructional practice and give them a sense of control over their work.
- Look behind the headline numbers. Knowing the average GSAT score in English Language for your school is of little use if you do not understand in what areas of the test your students had least success. Was it in comprehension? Was there a pattern in the way particular students answered certain questions? It is this type of micro level information that will have the most impact on your instructional practice.
- Have set meetings for the discussion of assessment data, and have different teachers or departments lead these meetings.

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Classroom assessments that serve as meaningful sources of information don’t surprise students. Instead, these assessments reflect the concepts and skills that the teacher emphasized in class, along with the teacher’s clear criteria for judging students’ performance.

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb03/vol60/num05/How-Classroom-Assessments-Improve-Learning.aspx>

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## 4.7 Continuous Professional Development

Teaching is an intellectual profession, one in which knowledge changes quickly, both content knowledge and knowledge of the best ways to achieve the desired learning in students. Hence, it is very important that teachers continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge. This continuous learning is not only about leaving your school to go on specialized courses, but is also about providing opportunities to learn collaboratively within your own school environment. Professional development can also result from mentoring and consistent feedback on performance.

Information to guide professional development activities can come from several sources, including:

- Teachers' performance appraisal
- Goals set by the school in its School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- Student assessment data
- National educational goals set by the Ministry of Education.



### Box 14: Consistent Feedback

Teachers are observed monthly and feedback given but formal appraisals are done annually. Staff development workshops are then planned to help improve weaknesses or to develop skills necessary for improved performance.

*Denbigh High School, Inspection report, p. 6*

Professional development involves inward reflection as well as outward seeking of new knowledge.

- **Inward reflection:** An effective teacher thinks about how a lesson went. Did the students learn the intended objectives and facts? Could I have presented the material differently? How could I improve on the lesson? Did the method work?
  - > The teacher thinks about ways to improve on his/her teaching and uses the reflections and lessons learned in future teaching. This process can be done alone or in a group with other teachers, either from the same subject area or the same grade.
- **Outward seeking:** Effective teachers seek ways to expand their knowledge, both to be familiar with additional resources to share with their students and to stay current in their subject.



### Box 15: The Many Forms of Professional Development

Professional development can take many forms. It might involve

- A study group
- A course
- A workshop
- An online network
- Membership in a professional association

Professional development also comes through sharing with colleagues, either formally as a mentor, coach or participant in a group or association, or through informal meetings with teachers from the same school or grade. Sharing of expertise, experience and materials enhances the teaching experience and underscores teaching as a profession.

***Adapted from C. Danielson, 2007***

# PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT



**IN THIS SECTION:**

- WHY IT IS IMPORTANT
- THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL
- BUILDING TEACHER CAPACITY

## 5. Parental Involvement

### 5.1 Parental Involvement: Why It Is Important

The Jamaican School Effectiveness Study found that effective schools were almost four times more likely to enjoy high levels of parental involvement. International research also has shown that parental involvement is a key factor in the success of schools. The data amassed in this area, thus far, indicates overwhelmingly that when schools and families work together, a partnership for support of children is created and education becomes a shared venture, with all parties benefiting. Schools that encourage parental involvement are more likely to have children who are open to learning and this will be reflected in improved overall academic performance for the school. Extensive review of over two hundred studies (Carter, 2002) on the role of the family in schools identifies the major themes from the data:

1. There is value in creating meaningful partnerships among schools and homes to enhance educational outcomes.
2. More open dialogue is needed between teachers and parents, especially interventions that are positive and not problem-based.
3. There are many institutional and personal barriers to effective parent involvement.
4. Most models of parent involvement require that the parents conform to school practice rather than training educators to accommodate the diverse cultures of the families and to accommodate the views of the parents.

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Students who participated in co-curricular activities and enjoyed higher levels of parental involvement/support participated less in the risky activities that often preceded drop out. This was particularly true for males.

*Institute of Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies. 2014 (unpublished).*

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It is extremely important that schools develop strategies for engaging parents, given that when parents are actively involved in schools, good things happen:

- The children get better grades
- There are fewer disciplinary problems in the classroom and school safety is enhanced
- Students attend school more regularly.



Hence, supporting all families to be more involved at school and better informed about what children are learning in class should become a widely-used strategy for improving learning in all our schools. This school-based support to improve parental involvement is a proven and effective strategy.

## 5.2 The Role of the School

Schools play a key role in encouraging parent involvement. The school's *'posture'*, its willingness to welcome and treat parents and families with respect, and see them as key partners in the education of their children, influence the extent to which parents will become involved. Schools that do this successfully:

- Focus on building trustful, collaborative relationships and two-way communication with families
- Recognise and respect families' needs
- Work to bridge cultural and social class divides
- Adopt a philosophy of partnership: shared power and responsibility for children's education
- Facilitate parents' advocacy on their children's behalf



### Box 16: Importance of Teacher Outreach

Teacher outreach to families can result in strong, consistent gains in student performance in both reading and math. Effective outreach practices include meeting with families face-to-face, sending learning materials home, and keeping in touch about progress. Workshops for parents on helping their children are linked to higher reading and math scores. Schools with highly rated partnership programs make greater gains than schools with lower-rated programs.

***Parent and Family Involvement: A Guide to Effective Parent, Family and Community Involvement in North Carolina Schools, 2nd Edition (undated)***

### How To Do It

- It may require more effort to include some families than others. So a school must decide which groups of families it will directly target and how. You may decide to put in place specific actions to involve the families of children with low school attendance, or students who have not mastered the Grade Four Literacy/Numeracy, or those who are at risk of dropping out.
- Get ideas on how to engage these families from a wide range of stakeholders. Others in the community may have ideas about how to best reach families who are not normally involved with the school.
- Where possible, plan activities around an important milestone for the students. For example, make a special effort to make new parents feel welcomed in the school at the very beginning of the school year. Or organize special sessions around a transition



point, e.g. when students are moving from Grade 9 to Grade 10, and use that as a starting point for more continuous engagement.

- Ask families how they want to be involved, and what factors sometimes prevent their involvement. Once you know this, you can consider activities which respond to this information. Hence, if the main barrier to involvement is low literacy, your school could consider introducing an adult education class for parents. If parents feel uncomfortable because of perceived discriminations, you can work to assure them that all parents are respected and treat them as such.
- Engage parents in continuous dialogue. Explain to parents clearly, in language they understand, the school's expectations and standards, and find out how they think they can help maintain standards and meet expectations.
- Maintain a job bank that allows your school to capitalize on the skills of members of the community for its benefit; this might include carpenters, artists and musicians, technical specialists, health professionals, business people and others who can help around the school or with special events.
- Host seminars, promoting positive parenting, which are designed to encourage parental support to improve students' performance.
- Develop a comprehensive action plan to improve the school's engagement of families and communities. This action plan can be part of the School Improvement Plan.



### **Box 17: Family and Community Engagement in School's Action Plan**

The following are components of a comprehensive action plan on advocacy and decision-making to ensure the school, its families and community are meaningfully and equally involved in the **planning, dissemination, sharing, and receiving of information** about the school.

It is recommended that this action plan be completed by school in conjunction with its families and community members for a balanced representation of input and implementation among stakeholders.

1. Involvement of families and the community in the dissemination, sharing and receiving of information relative to advocacy and decision-making efforts
2. Use of technology in communicating information to stakeholders as well as to receive information from stakeholders
3. Service of the needs of underserved, underrepresented families
4. Collaboration among stakeholders to empower families and the community regarding advocacy and decision-making that affect children
5. Use of scientifically-based training, materials and information to support both advocacy and decision-making
6. Re-assessment of the effectiveness of the school's efforts to involve families and the community in decisions that affect children.

***Adapted From Parent and Family Involvement: A Guide to Effective Parent, Family and Community Involvement in North Carolina Schools, 2nd Edition (undated)***



Before starting any new parent engagement activity, your school should do an assessment of its current practice, and set improvement targets in your action plan.

The following rubrics may be helpful. Use them to establish a baseline and to monitor your progress in each area over time. You may also change the guiding principles to reflect the needs of your school.



**TOOL 6: Assessing Parent and Community Engagement**

Guiding Principles	<b>ENTRENCHED</b> Comprehensive evidence that practices are fully implemented, consistently used, and routinely refined to incorporate current best practices	<b>GETTING THERE</b> Evidence that practices related to this indicator are well established and routinely used to incorporate best practices	<b>JUST BEGINNING</b> Limited evidence that practices related to this indicator may be initially established or inconsistently used	<b>LACKING</b> Little to no evidence that practices related to this indicator are developed and implemented
1. Valuing parent assistance with child's school work, and parent interest in child's social wellbeing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Assisting parents in learning how to create conditions at home that support learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Helping parents develop more awareness of the need for literacy and learning in the home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Empowering parents to understand their role in establishing their children's boundaries, rules, and expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Holding meetings at times <i>and</i> places that are convenient for families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Source: Adapted from North Carolina Parent Engagement toolkit**



For each guiding principle, check the box in the column that most appropriately rates your current level of training of families and the school's staff on information needs of the families.



**TOOL 7: Assessing School's Efforts at Preparing Staff for Parent Engagement**

<b>Guiding Principles</b>	<b>ENTRENCHED</b> Comprehensive evidence that practices are fully implemented, consistently used, and routinely refined to incorporate current best practices	<b>GETTING THERE</b> Evidence that practices related to this indicator are well established and routinely used to incorporate best practices	<b>JUST BEGINNING</b> Limited evidence that practices related to this indicator may be initially established or inconsistently used	<b>LACKING</b> Little to no evidence that practices related to this indicator are developed and implemented
1. Using various data sources to identify information and learning needs for staff and parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Providing training for school staff on vital elements of effective parent involvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Providing training to staff and families about resolving parent/teacher conflicts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Ensuring that training activities for staff and families contain a common set of standards, knowledge, and expectations regarding family and community involvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Source: Adapted from North Carolina Parent Engagement Toolkit**



## Building Teacher Capacity

Teachers play a key role in increasing parent involvement. Research shows that parents are more likely to accept an invitation from a teacher to become involved (Hoover, Dempsey, and Jones 1997, Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. (1995). But engaging parents does not come naturally to all teachers; some will have to learn how to do it. To help teachers develop this skill, your school can:

- Provide teacher training on the value of parent involvement to students' academic performance.
- Provide training on how to discuss student progress with parents, paying close attention to methods to effectively communicate with parents of varying education levels.
- Provide training on how to resolve parent/teacher conflict.

### ➤ **Box 18: Engaging Parents and Communities.**

The school has good relationships with its stakeholders and with its immediate community. The breakfast programme is funded by the business associates in the immediate community. Parents and students are very positive about the school and how well it is led and managed. Parents are kept up to date with the programmes of the school through the calendar of events that they receive at the start of each school year. In addition, there are regular grade meetings along with the general Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meeting. Their views are increasingly taken into account. The school is developing its relationship with its alumni as part of establishing further its community base and spirit. The alumni are active in a number of ways; such as making financial donations and providing resource personnel when needed.”

***Mico Practising Primary and Junior High, Inspection Report, p. 4&5***



# RESOURCE USE



**IN THIS SECTION:**

➤ USING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING

## 6. Resource Use

### 6.1 Using Resources to Support Student Learning

An effective teacher uses different types of resources, in the classroom and beyond, to respond to the needs of the students. In order to do this well, s/he must know what the school, region, Ministry of Education, community and Internet have to offer. There are different types of resources:

- **Academic-related resources** to use in class or to expand content and pedagogy. The teacher identifies and uses these resources to complement or add to learning provided through textbooks and other curriculum materials. Examples include websites on related topics, books from the library or bookstore, or people with related knowledge (e.g. someone who lived in the country or who fought in the war being studied and can give a first-hand account, or someone who works in the profession being studied) who are invited to the class or who can be interviewed by students outside of class.
- **Resources to help students.** Teachers become aware of the many challenges students face as they get to know their students. An effective teacher treats each student as a whole person and understands how life challenges can affect a student's ability to learn and function in the classroom. The teacher refers students to resources that will help them overcome those challenges, thus allowing them to better focus on or advance in their academic learning. Examples include:
  - Tutoring or special education services
  - Help lines
  - NGO or church programs to address domestic abuse or drug-related problems
  - Big Brother Big Sister-type mentoring programs and other social services to impart values and meet students' physical and emotional needs.

# SAFE AND ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT





**IN THIS SECTION:**

- WHY IT IS IMPORTANT
- HOW TO CREATE IT

## 7. Safe and Orderly Environment

### 7.1 Safe and Orderly Environment: Why it is Important

This factor relates to creating ‘*a climate that is hospitable to education*’ and is accomplished by establishing a social climate and physical space that is conducive to learning (PISA, 2009; Hutton, 2011). School effectiveness is facilitated when students operate in a classroom environment where ‘*better disciplinary climates, more positive behaviour among teachers and better student teacher relations*’ exist (PISA, 2009, P. 54). According to the PISA 2009 Report, even after socioeconomic status is counted for, these elements of the school environment tended to correlate with higher scores in reading.

This is supported by the findings of the Jamaica Adolescent Dislocation Study, which examined some of the main factors contributing to student drop-out from secondary school. The study found that the extent to which students felt safe at school determined their levels of engagement with school and school activities and was predictive of attrition and drop-out. In this regard, males were more at risk of dropping out of school due to a fear of being harmed, mainly by other males (IDB & Institute of Gender and Development Studies, UWI, 2014 - unpublished).



#### **Box 19: Child Friendly School Initiative-UNICEF**

Schools that are child-friendly must protect students from the psychological harm that can result from various kinds of punishment perpetrated by peers or by teachers, including verbal abuse, name-calling and other forms of humiliation. School authorities must appreciate that children can be affected by prejudice and biases that result in isolation and exclusion by their peers.

**UNICEF, 2009. *Child Friendly Schools Manual***



A safe and orderly environment also refers to the school plant. According to Hutton (2011), high performing principals in Jamaica identified the shift system and overcrowding as the biggest challenges to having a well-managed school plant.

## 7.2 Creating a Safe and Orderly Environment

Effective schools promote safety and security in the following ways:

- Policies on safety, security and health are documented and known
- Signs that identify restricted areas or good habits to be observed, e.g. a sign that states students should not run in the corridors, are prominently displayed
- Teachers and other personnel are deployed during breaks to monitor students' safety and well-being
- Updated Incident logs are maintained
- A perimeter fence is built around the school
- Attention is given to proper sanitation
- Basic first aid services are available, and medical services given to students are recorded
- The presence of potentially hazardous materials on the school compound, including gas cylinders, is monitored.

### ➤ **Box 20: Keen Attention to Security**

The security officers possess an in depth knowledge of the school's security and emergency policies and protocols; for example, they are able to clearly articulate the procedures involved in a fire emergency. They are highly motivated and committed to ensuring the safety of staff members and students who must use the overhead bridge provided for their safety when moving from one campus to the other.

The school constantly reviews and assesses its security protocols to ensure that the highest levels of safety of the school community are maintained at all times; for example, the school is presently engaged in the process of revising its policy towards students carrying instruments for class that may be used as weapons.

Buildings and sporting facilities are well maintained and in excellent condition, posing no physical harm to students.

***Wolmers High for Girls, Inspection Report, p. 14***



# SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING



**IN THIS SECTION:**

- WHY IT IS IMPORTANT
- ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE SIP
- SCHOOL SELF EVALUATION
- MONITORING YOUR PROGRESS

## 8. School Improvement Planning

### 8.1 School Improvement Planning: Why it is Important

All schools are required by the MOE to prepare a School Improvement Plan (SIP). The School Effectiveness Study showed that the SIP is key to school effectiveness in Jamaica. However, it also found that the mere fact of having a SIP does not significantly affect school effectiveness. The critical aspects of the SIP process which effective schools share are:

- A focus on implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- The design of mechanisms to ensure that the key aspects of the plan are integrated into the routine management and become part of the normal way of doing business in the school
- A focus on the expected impact on students

Budgetary factors and resource availability, use and management were strongly correlated to all aspects of the SIP, suggesting that those schools which plan are able to better allocate their financial resources to support their goals.

### 8.2 Elements of an Effective SIP

School Improvement planning should help schools to explicitly focus on the factors that will have the most positive long term effects. The research (Creemers, Stoll and Reezigt, n.d) has shown that these areas are:

- Improvements in school culture
- Improvements in school processes
- Improvements in student outcomes.

Hence, Effective schools ensure that:

- Improvement planning activities are data driven
- Performance is monitored by comparing achievements with action plans
- Accountability procedures are in place. This can be achieved by the following methods:

- Heads of Department (HODs) and year coordinators provide a monthly progress report to the Principal
- Vice Principals monitor departments under their portfolios and the performance of the Year Group Coordinators and HODs
- New teachers are evaluated quarterly by HODs/ Vice Principals (VPs) and given feedback including suggestions for improvement
- Teaching staff members are assessed annually and senior school leaders (Principals, VPs, HODs) periodically observe them as they teach. Written feedback is issued.

School improvement plans are developed with the input of all stakeholders including the views of students and parents. Action plans should be clear, manageable tools for monitoring school self-improvement.

### **8.3 School Self Evaluation**

In order for your school to successfully plan improvements, you have to conduct a thorough self-evaluation. Your self-evaluation will take account of the nature of the school, its student population and its context.

The data you need may be collected from a variety of sources:

- Questionnaires completed by teachers, students, and parents
- Performance data
- Interviews with learners and teachers
- Interviews with other stakeholders
- Observation of teachers, students and school processes and procedures.

Throughout the process of self-evaluation, it is important that you keep a clear focus on the key aspects of improvement planning. Hence, you can ask yourself questions such as:

- Are we focusing enough on improving our teaching?
- Are we focusing enough on raising academic standards and student performance?
- Have we identified important strengths as well as areas for improvement?
- Have we done enough to collaborate and share good practices?
- Have we paid enough attention to improving our learning environment?



### Box 21: School Self Evaluation: Tracking Student Progress

Key Questions	Sources of Evidence	Impact
<p>Have we improved standards of attainment, or maintained them at a consistently high level?</p> <p>How good is our students' progress and attainment?</p> <p>Does the quality of our teaching and learning suggest that there is significant room for improvement? Or is it very high?</p> <p>Is there significant room for improvement in how teaching meets learning needs? Or is it very high?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Students' progress records</li> <li>➤ Attainment data (GFLT, GSAT, CSEC, CAPE etc)</li> <li>➤ Comparative data with other schools of the same characteristics</li> </ul>	<p>Students actively engaged in learning</p> <p>School effectively meets the learning needs of students</p> <p>Teachers and students have appropriate expectations, and there is a strong culture of achievement</p>

**Adapted from: *Improving Outcomes for Learners Through Self-Evaluation (2008)*  
Scotland Inspectorate of Education**



### Box 22: Key Questions in Assessing the Impact of the School Improvement Plan

- How well have we achieved our vision for our school and students?
- To what extent have we improved students' learning experience?
- To what extent have we improved progress or attainment?
- To what extent have we improved the wider experiences and achievements of our students?

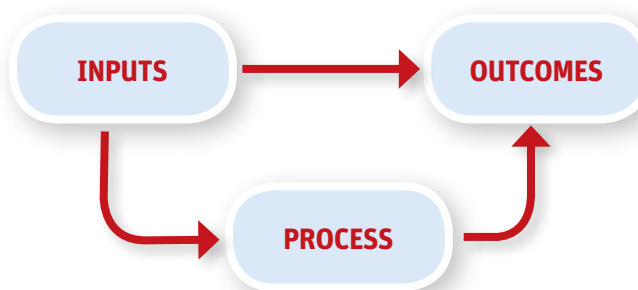
**Adapted from: *Improving Outcomes for Learners Through Self-Evaluation (2008)*  
Scotland Inspectorate of Education**

## 8.4 Measuring Your Progress

As important as are a plan, goals and visions, they do little to nurture an effective school if you do not measure your progress. It is through well-designed systems of monitoring and evaluation that schools can tell if they are really moving towards their vision. Ideally, your school should develop a monitoring and evaluation framework as part of your SIP. There are many benefits to having such a plan, including:

- It offers an opportunity to celebrate and further the school's success
- Ensures consistency in the implementation of agreed policies throughout the school
- Provides a ready source of information for all school planning activities
- Provides data which supports the professional development of teachers
- Provides data which helps to focus your school's teaching and learning strategies.
- Helps to identify risks, difficulties, challenges, and issues that impede progress at all levels of your school's operations.

**FIGURE 3:** Key Areas for M&E Focus



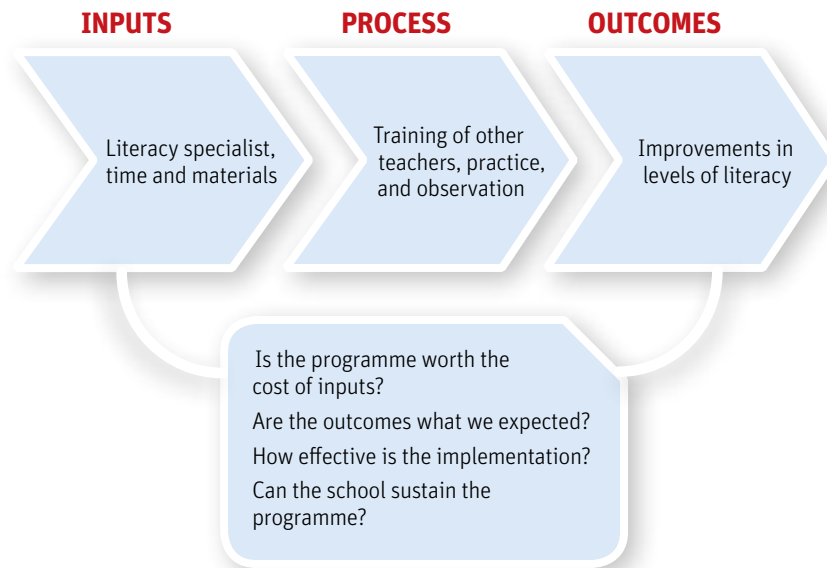
These benefits are only possible if monitoring and evaluation is approached candidly, letting the data speak for itself. Monitoring activities need not be elaborate and time consuming. Data can be gathered in a variety of simple ways on an ongoing basis, such as:

- Discussions with teachers and students
- Discussion with parents
- Observation of teaching
- Student performance data from assessments.

M&E plans monitor the progress towards long-term goals by assessing intermediate results. Hence, as you move towards performance targets, the monitoring activities will help you to see where you are in relation to your goals. Good data will tell you if you are on the right track, falling behind, or off-track and in danger of missing the target completely. Evaluation is the assessment of the value of the outcomes from the activities.



**FIGURE 4:** An Example of M&E Process: Evaluating the Use of Literacy Specialists to Improve Levels of Literacy



Areas to be monitored include those critical to improving student performance, such as:

- Quality of the teaching and learning process
- Whether the curriculum is sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of all learners
- Extent of on-going professional development and improvement in skills of the teachers
- Students’ access to appropriate learning resources

And it may also monitor

- The implementation of the SIP
- Fiscal management and resource use in the school
- Changes in the school population - Are there differences in some socio-demographic characteristics over time? In the academic profile of new students? Is the student population more or less diverse? Same?

Evaluation, on the other hand is concerned about the results of your activities. Are you achieving the goals you set? And if so, are these goals bringing you closer to being an effective school? This is a key question, because not every goal or target will take you closer to being effective.



### 8.5 Choosing Indicators of Success

The entire purpose of school effectiveness research is to help identify the things that really make a difference in a school’s success. Knowing what these things are really helps in guiding school leaders and teachers towards the main activities on which they should spend their resources and energy.

The study identifies nine key features of effective schools. Hence, it follows that in the journey to effectiveness, or to greater effectiveness, schools should focus on these features and develop indicators to track their progress towards establishing these as key features of their own operations.

Below are some suggested indicators to help you track your journey. You can use them as a guide as you develop your own.



#### TOOL 8: School Effectiveness Indicators of Success

Effectiveness Characteristic	Possible Indicators
Clear and shared goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of teachers who understand, and are committed to the 2-3 main goals of the school.</li> <li>Percentage of students who understand and are committed to the 2-3 main goals of the of the school</li> <li>Percentage of key stakeholders who understand and are committed to the 2-3 main goals of the school</li> </ul>
High standards and expectations for all students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 90% mastery on Grade Four Literacy Test</li> <li>Average Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) scores of at least 70% in each subject area</li> <li>At least 75% of students attaining 5 subjects at CSEC</li> <li>At least 75% of students passing CSEC mathematics and English Language</li> <li>At least 80% of students participating in one co-curricular activity</li> </ul>
High levels of collaboration and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers meet at least once per fortnight for lesson planning/ review sessions</li> <li>At least one scheduled grade/subject level planning session per month.</li> </ul>
Curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned with national standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All lesson plans based on national curriculum</li> <li>All classroom activities supported by appropriate learning materials</li> <li>Curriculum adapted to reflect socio-economic context of school</li> </ul>
Frequent monitoring of teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment policy in place and used by all teachers</li> <li>Assessment data used in lesson planning by all teachers</li> <li>Assessment data used to improve student outcomes</li> <li>All teachers observed at least once per term, during lesson</li> </ul>



<p>Focused professional development</p>	<p>School conducts needs assessment of staff by the end of the term of each academic year</p> <p>Needs Assessment Committee established in school</p> <p>All teachers are active participants of a learning community specific to their area of specialization</p> <p>At least 50% of teachers participate in one in-person professional development session per academic year</p> <p>Needs assessment used to design professional development activities</p>
<p>A supportive learning environment</p>	<p>All students and staff feel safe at school</p> <p>School has an objective and transparent system of reward and recognition</p> <p>All teachers develop an ongoing system of rewards and incentives at the classroom level</p> <p>School timetable reflects teaching and learning priorities</p>
<p>High levels of family and community involvement</p>	<p>School has a regular schedule of parent teacher consultations</p> <p>There is a regular schedule for PTA meetings</p> <p>At least 70% of parents attend PTA meetings</p> <p>School has at least one project implemented by the PTA/Community and/or other stakeholders</p>
<p>Leadership and management</p>	<p>School Self Evaluation done once per year and shared with all stakeholders</p> <p>Principal, with input from all stakeholders, leads development of annual School Improvement Plan establishing clear achievable targets focused on student learning</p> <p>Accountability measures in place for teachers and administrators, and job descriptions clearly define middle managers' roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Provisions made for ongoing professional development of middle managers</p> <p>Board and Principal meet regularly</p> <p>Principal maintains visible presence in school and visits classes several times per week</p>

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### **Toolkits**

[Education Endowment Foundation Toolkit](#)

[Education for Sustainable Development Toolkit](#)

[Peer Education Toolkit UNFPA](#)

### **Multilaterals**

[ADB Education](#)

[AFDB Education](#)

[Center for Learning \(Free Webinar Series & Resources\)](#)

[Journal of Case Studies in Education](#)

[OECD Education](#)

[TED Education](#)

[World Bank Education](#)



## General

Center for Applied Linguistics: <http://www.cal.org/> A website with resources on language teaching, planning and policy, and testing and assessment.

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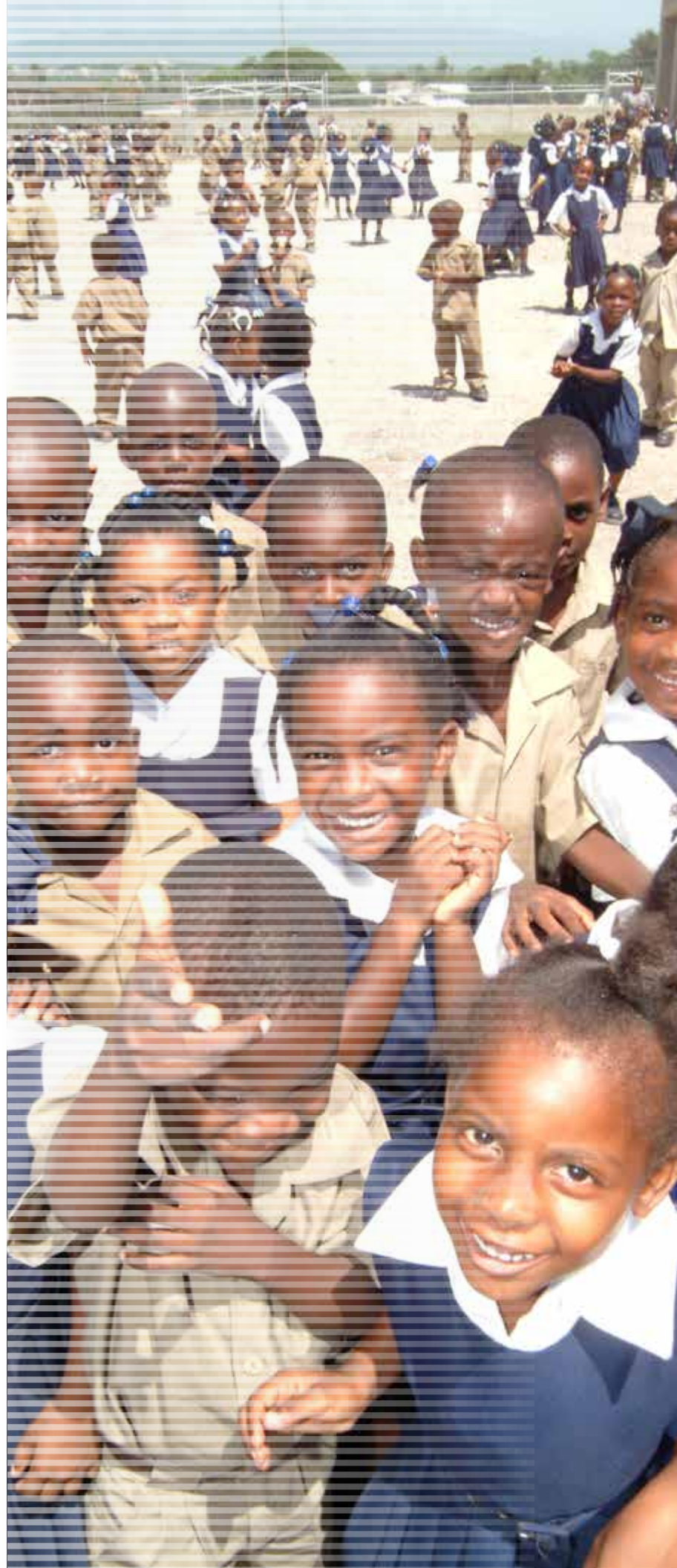
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