

**Statement to the House of Representatives by the
Hon. Rev. Ronald Thwaites, Minister of Education, February 2, 2016**

Mr Speaker on previous occasions I have advised this honourable house that there was a deficit in the number of teachers qualified to teach Mathematics in the public education system. About 22 per cent of the approximately 1800 teachers deployed to the secondary system are fully qualified.

As an interim measure, since 2014 the Ministry of Education introduced a cadre of Math specialists and coaches in primary and secondary schools to assist teachers. This, along with in-service training, has resulted in significant improvements in teaching and learning outcomes.

The grade-four numeracy rate moved from 49 per cent in 2011 to 67 per cent in 2015. Mathematics passes in the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate examination increased significantly three years in a row, moving from 42 per cent in 2012 to 62 per cent in 2015.

However, these positive education outcomes are being undermined by the continued attrition from the system of the already scarce supply of qualified Math teachers.

A similar situation exists with our supply of science teachers. There is inadequate access to quality science education at the secondary level where only some 5,000 of the average 40,000 students sitting CSEC examination annually choose a science subject.

The situation is complicated by the fact that over the years, Jamaica has been losing many of its mathematics and science teachers to several countries including the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada and other Caribbean Islands such as The Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, Cayman and the Virgin Islands. Jamaican teachers have also left for far away countries such as Botswana, Ghana and Dubai.

Over 490 teachers of mathematics and science are estimated to have left the secondary level of the system between the 2014 and 2015 academic years.

SOLUTIONS

In response the Ministry has developed a strategy with the following objectives:

1. To increase the number of fully qualified mathematics teachers deployed to the system by 200 each year totalling 600 by 2021.
2. To increase the number of fully qualified science teachers deployed to the system by 200 each year totalling 600 by 2021.
3. To provide incentives for mathematics and science teachers to increase the retention rate
4. To increase the number of fully qualified mathematics and science education lecturers deployed across all government-run teacher training institutions
5. To decrease the number of teachers teaching outside of their area of specialisation by providing opportunities for them to upgrade their qualifications
6. To improve systems to predict and respond to the demand for teachers within the sector

These objectives will be achieved by way of the following initiatives:

PRE-SERVICE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME to attract 200 persons in the first year to be qualified at First Degree Level to teach mathematics, and a similar number for the sciences. Beneficiaries of this programme will be recruited from the secondary cohort.

The scholarships will provide: -

- full tuition except for miscellaneous costs
- support for boarding where needed
- a stipend to help cover the cost of books and other supplies

Successful candidates will be bonded for a period of not less than 5 years and will be required to sign an agreement noting that they may be deployed by the Ministry of Education upon completion of the course of study. This approach will allow the Ministry of Education to identify schools that have critical needs and ensure that they are able to benefit from the increased availability of qualified teachers.

Starting this month the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the teacher-training institutions will embark on a vigorous recruitment drive to identify potential candidates for the scholarship programmes. To qualify for the scholarship, candidates should satisfy the following requirements: -

- passes in CSEC Mathematics and English
- Grade I or II at CSEC in the subject(s) they will be prepared to teach; and
- passes in the subject(s) of choice at CAPE 1 or 2

IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMME

The Ministry of Education will also provide in-service training opportunities to teachers currently engaged in the classroom who need to upgrade their qualification to meet the required standard.

This would apply to approximately 1,400 secondary level teachers who fall in this category. The Ministry of Education has asked the teacher training institutions (including the University of the West Indies) to design and deliver a hybrid (online and face-to-face) programme over two years which will provide these teachers with the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications while keeping disruptions to the education system at a minimum.

It is being proposed that 700 teachers access the programme in years 1 and 2 with the remaining 700 teachers beginning in year 3 and completing in year 4.

SHORT TERM MEASURES

While the main component of this initiative will involve the pre-service education of teachers and the provision of specially developed programmes to support the upgrading of teachers who are either not fully qualified or teaching outside their area of specialisation, many of these programmes will not have an immediate impact on the current crisis. In this regard two short term measures will be temporarily employed to help meet the current demand for mathematics and science teachers. These are: -

- 1) The contractual engagement of suitably qualified retired teachers on a part-time basis
- 2) The contractual engagement of persons employed to the private sector whose first degree is in one of the areas of specialisation identified. Interested persons will be immersed in a short course designed to prepare them for the classroom where necessary. These individuals will be engaged to serve at Grades 10 - 13.

VIRTUAL EDUCATION

The Ministry of Education will accelerate the use of Information Communication Technology to aid in the teaching and learning of Math and Science. In addition to materials made available through the Education Broadcasting Network the Ministry has partnered with several private sector entities to provide access to online or virtual educational resources. In due course, the Ministry will announce these arrangements.

COST

Programme will cost \$412 million in the first year of implementation and total \$1.2 billion over the first three year period.