



## **Promoting Access and Quality in Education Simultaneously**

### **1.0 The Historical Context of Access**

The historical underpinnings of education in Jamaica, from slavery through to emancipation, through decolonization, self-rule and finally independence; to the establishment of the Ministry of Education and the Education Act of 1965, to the New Deal in Education 1966, the 70:30 policy for reserving secondary places for public primary schools, the compulsory attendance policy, the upgrading of junior high schools to full secondary schools, and various other initiatives over the last half century, have all emphasized widening and improving access to education for the mass Jamaicans. Internationally too, the main thrust of development agencies over the last half century has been focused on expanding access to education. Indeed, the second set of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All initiative could be interpreted as being access focussed. Universal Primary Education is a major 'access' goal of all development agencies, it seeks to ensure that all primary-age children have the benefit of completing a full course of primary education. Much effort has been placed on building out infrastructure, removing fees, providing nutrition and educational material, increasing the cohort of teachers, enacting legislation for truancy and compulsory attendance, and ensuring gender and ethnic equity, particularly for girls and minorities. Jamaica is well aligned with the thrust of the international development community and has long since met or surpassed most of the minimum education related development targets.

The thrust towards widening access is not an externally motivated policy. This must be understood in the context of a long struggle for liberation and enlightenment. Successive governments and both political parties see expanding educational access as a means of empowering a disenfranchised people, increasing social mobility, and building human capital. It forms part of the political and social imperatives on which the entire nation agrees.

### **1.1 Access is conquered at the Primary Level**

Jamaica now has approximately 1,000 public schools serving over 650,000 students. Mass primary education<sup>1</sup> has been a feature of the Jamaican education system for the last 150 years; free public primary education has existed for at least 100 years and Universal Primary Education has been achieved in Jamaica certainly, for over the last 40 years. Jamaica compares favourably in our attainment of the MDGs and the EFA targets.

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Errol (1997). Jamaican Primary Education: A review of Policy-Relevant Studies, Green lizard Press, pg 5-6



**Table 1**

**Net Enrolment Rates % (End of Year Population)**

	Primary			Lower Secondary			Upper Secondary			Total Secondary		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2000/2001	93.6	94.1	93.8	78.1	80.2	79.1	51.1	58.0	54.5	67.5	71.5	69.5
2001/2002	93.3	93.0	93.2	77.5	79.7	78.6	51.4	57.2	54.3	67.3	70.9	69.1
2002/2003	92.9	92.0	92.5	83.1	84.8	83.9	54.7	60.8	57.7	72.0	75.4	73.7
2003/2004	92.9	90.8	91.9	85.8	85.3	85.6	54.5	59.9	57.2	73.8	75.5	74.7
2004/2005	93.5	91.0	92.3	83.7	83.3	83.5	67.8	51.2	59.5	77.6	70.9	74.2
2005/2006	92.1	90.0	91.1	80.8	81.9	81.4	59.9	67.1	63.5	72.8	76.2	74.5
2006/2007	93.4	91.0	92.2	87.2	86.9	87.0	59.3	67.9	63.6	76.1	79.4	77.8
2007/2008	90.1	90.4	90.2	84.9	88.8	86.8	60.0	69.8	64.8	75.2	81.5	78.3
2008/2009	87.5	89.3	88.4	85.1	89.0	87.0	64.1	72.9	68.4	77.0	82.8	79.8

We have largely conquered ‘access’ issues at the primary level, we have approximately 90% enrollment, though we see a worrying trend that net enrollment rates are declining. Attendance, particularly in rural areas, has always been a challenge and the 2008/2009 school year showed an 83% attendance rate. Approximately 95% of enrolled students completed primary school this year. Public primary schools have no ‘exclusionary fees’<sup>2</sup>. Government provides the core workbooks and reading materials at the primary level. Students are provided with nutrition and parents who fall within the PATH social safety net are given conditional cash transfers in support of the education of their children.

## 1.2 Access is a challenge at the Secondary Level

At the secondary level, we have universal secondary education up to grade 9. We can accommodate approximately 90% of the cohort of junior secondary age, 11 to 14 years old. Attendance is a challenge at this level as well, and while there are no exclusionary fees in all age, and junior high schools, and the government has recently removed exclusionary fees from secondary schools, the continued existence of obligatory auxiliary contributions poses a challenge to some students accessing secondary education.

At grades 10 and 11 access is limited. Only 64%<sup>3</sup> of the net population of that age cohort is enrolled. This means that there is a significant portion, estimated at about 25% to 35%, of the youth population between 14 and 16 who are out of school. The majority of those ‘out-of-school’ youth would have been initially placed in junior high or all-age schools where their education journey ended at grade 9. Generally, students placed in junior high and all age schools achieved below 30% overall score on the GSAT. They are among the students in our school system who are most at-risk of being lost to illiteracy. After completing three additional years of what can be termed as an advanced primary curriculum with remediation, and empowerment, all age and junior high students are required to sit the Grade Nine Achievement Test (GNAT) for placement in full secondary institutions. At this stage of school life, most of these students have lost interest in school or are so far behind their counterparts in full secondary schools that even those who are offered places in the full secondary system are made to repeat grade 9. In a process of involuntary attrition, approximately 3,000 students exit the system at 14 years of age, many of whom are without basic literacy.

<sup>2</sup> An exclusionary fee is considered to be any fee that if not paid would deny the student access to the core service of the school or any other service critical to the education of the child. The policy of the GOJ is that primary education is free and no child can be denied access for inability to pay any auxiliary fee imposed by the school for development, special services or goods. The policy is the same for secondary schools except that auxiliary fees are usually much higher than those at the primary level and at that can be prohibitive to some parents, and thereby exclusionary.

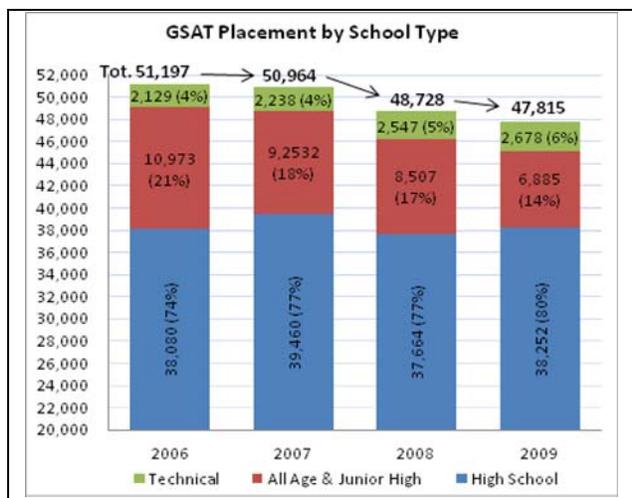
<sup>3</sup> This is the cohort net of repeaters.



This year, we have placed 80% of GSAT students into full secondary schools, up from 74% in 2006 and the percentage of GSAT students placed in junior high and all age schools has fallen from 21% in 2006 to 14% as of the 2009 sitting. This means that more students theoretically would have a chance to spend more years attached to an educational institution.

We have been able to place more students in full secondary schools because the numbers sitting the GSAT exams have fallen steadily relative to spaces in the full secondary system. In 2006, 51,197 students sat the GSAT; this fell to 47,815 in 2009. We are projecting that this trend will continue for the next two years as only 45,809 students sat the Grade Four Literacy Test in May 2008 and 46,376 in June 2009. This suggests that registration for GSAT will remain below the 47,000 mark.

In the early 1970's in a move to further widen access to full secondary education, the Ministry of Education started the process of upgrading junior high schools, which were built in the previous decade, to full five-year secondary institutions. This marked the start of the two tiered system of secondary education. On one hand, we have schools that were long established, and traditionally considered as full secondary institutions, providing the gateway to better jobs and higher education through O'levels and A'levels, and later CXC and CAPE. On the other hand, newly upgraded junior high schools which were extended to grades 10 and 11, initially with a special curriculum, special exit examinations in the form of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC), but in many respects, less qualified teaching staff, weak leadership, and low expectations.



It was never the intention that these schools would be able to compete on equal footing with the traditional high schools. To be frank, they were meant to provide for those students who were sifted out from Common Entrance Examinations as low performers, not likely to go on to tertiary education, but who could develop the basic skills set to enter the labour market at 16 years or progress to vocational training through the HEART institutes.

Over time, the thinking evolved that a national curriculum should be instituted at the primary

and secondary levels and the process of promotion and transitioning should be assessed at key stages under the National Assessment Programme (NAP). This meant that all children would be exposed to the same knowledge set and should sit the same exit exams at the end of the school system. The plan was to develop a learning profile of the child at grade one, then a diagnostic evaluation of literacy development in grade three, a literacy test at grade four, and for transitioning from primary to secondary, a test based on the knowledge achieved from the curriculum in grades 5 and 6, which we now call the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT).



The Common Entrance Examination (CEE) was not based on a standard curriculum of knowledge. It operated more as an IQ test evaluating reasoning, and mental ability. Those who passed, won a place to a traditional high school, students who failed were fed to a pre-designated upgraded high schools, and students who failed badly were made to repeat or promoted in their primary school to the all age department. Under the GSAT system, which replaced CEE 11 years ago, students are tested on the knowledge they gained from the curriculum. There was no pre-determined cut-score for pass or failure, and feeder links with clusters of primary schools and a pre-designated upgraded high school were cut. In principle, GSAT democratized the access to the available full secondary places. It was the intention of the Government to eventually place all students in a full secondary school from grade 7 to 11.

It was envisioned that at grade nine all students would sit the Grade Nine Achievement Test (GNAT), to establish their attainment against the grades 7 to 9 curriculum and their readiness for upper secondary. The Reform of Secondary Education Programme (ROSE) was undertaken to create a standard learning curriculum for all students at the secondary level, among other things. At grade 11 all students would sit the CXC examination and the consideration was to 'curricularize' the CXC syllabus. Currently, the GNAT is used as a placement mechanism only for students in junior high and all age schools to transition to full secondary schools. The SSC examination has been gradually phased out and we now use the CXC set of examinations (CSEC and CAPE) as our final school leaving exams for all secondary students, whether they are placed in traditional high schools, newly upgraded schools or in recently built high schools. This has been the vision and direction of education policy for the last 30 years, to have a stream-lined secondary education system with a standard curriculum and a standard form of assessment. It was intended to phase out the junior high schools and all age schools, and every child would then be placed in a comfortable seat, in a reasonably populated classroom, getting adequate attention from his teacher, teaching to a standard curriculum of knowledge, for five years in a secondary school, leading to a standard certification and equal opportunity for placement in either the labour market or in tertiary education.

### **1.3 Literacy a Barrier to Access**

The vision is largely hinged on access considerations rather than quality considerations, but it is still a valid vision and one that this administration is committed to fulfilling. This administration however, realizes that there can be no trade-offs between access and quality. While we were expanding physical access at the primary level over the last 100 years we continued to turn-out a large but declining percentage of primary students who are illiterate. While we were expanding physical access at the secondary level over the last 30 years, it is now clear that a significant number of the students placed in secondary institutions could not access or benefit from the secondary curriculum because they were illiterate. The quality of primary education was a barrier to access at the secondary level. I want to bring to the attention of the House a passage that was written in a UNESCO report on education in Jamaica 26 years ago.<sup>4</sup>

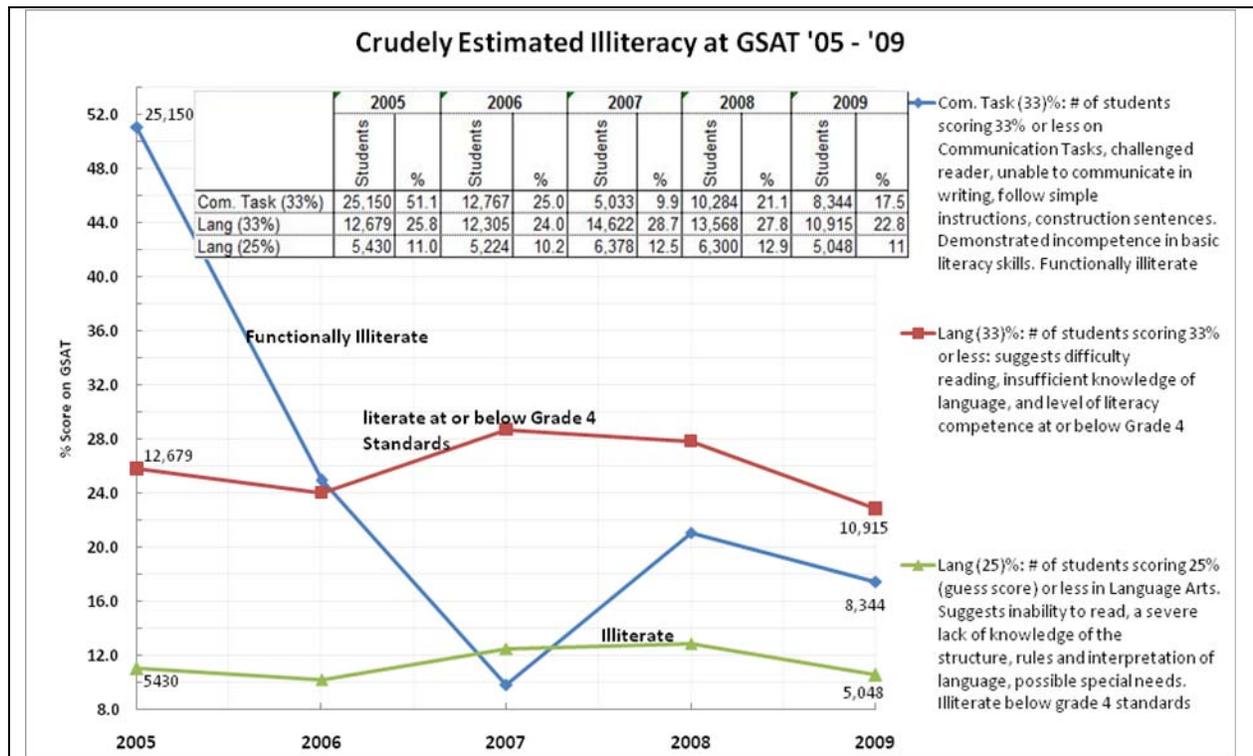
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<sup>4</sup> UNESCO, 1983. Development of Secondary Education, Report No. 649, pg 1.



Primary education is where the basic aptitudes and knowledge are supposed to be acquired laying the basis for all that follows. The fact that about one of every two primary school leavers is considered illiterate is alarming. It suggests massive inefficiencies in the delivery of primary education that have serious ramifications for secondary education, vocational training and in the labour market itself. It also means that a good deal of effort, as well as public funds invested in primary education, have gone for naught.

Through the remedial efforts in secondary schools the students, in effect, are learning what they should have learned in primary school. But this represents a duplication of effort as well as serious time-delays in teaching schedules. Much of what should be acquired in grades 7 and 8 has to be put off until the student has reached the basic literacy and numeracy skills. Or, it may never be learned.



The sentiment echoed in those words, 26 years ago, remains true today. We continue to turn out illiterate or low level literate students from primary schools in a conveyor-belt system with no quality checks. Inevitably, the secondary schools in which they are placed will end up diverting from the secondary curriculum to conduct remedial teaching. Where illiterate and low level literate students comprise the bulk of the population then the secondary school will be nothing more than an advanced primary school. If at the end of secondary school these student without the requisite skills in the first place to keep up with curriculum, are required to sit the same exit examination, as we see at CSEC, then there must be a huge performance gap when compared to students in the traditional high schools who are able to keep on track with the curriculum. This is the root of the two tiered secondary system.



GSAT is the gate to secondary education, but literacy is the key. GSAT does not explicitly test literacy competencies. It seeks to measure knowledge attainment from a transparent curriculum, to get that knowledge the student must be able to read, comprehend, and compute. GSAT assumes the literacy of the child. While we note improvements in literacy at the grade 4 level we do not know exactly the literacy competence of students at grade 6. We can however estimate equivalencies in literacy from GSAT to the required grade six literacy standards and the Grade Four Literacy benchmark.

Using a crude cut-score of 25% on Language Arts, which is the probable score from guessing on the exam, it could be safely inferred that the student was unable to read. The student would therefore, have a severe lack of knowledge regarding language and its use. It could also be a signal that the child has a special learning need. In general, we conclude that a child scoring 25% or less on the Language Arts component is illiterate. In 2005, by this indexation 5,430 or 11% of the GSAT cohort would be illiterate. This remained relatively stable and in 2009 5,048 or 11% students sitting GSAT could be considered illiterate. This number maps neatly to the internationally accepted percentage of any population that has special learning needs, however, let it be clearly understood that learning disabilities do not mean that a child is condemned to being illiterate.

Using another crude cut-score of 33%, in the opinion of some experts, we could gauge the level of literacy competence of GSAT students at grade 4. A score of 33% or less would suggest that the child was a challenged reader and would not be able to get sufficient knowledge of language from the curriculum. The child would not be able to manage the work required of him in his current grade and the literacy level would suggest Grade 4 or lower. In 2005, 12,679 or 26% student who sat GSAT were

<b>Table: Definitions of Illiteracy</b>	
<b>'Functional Illiteracy'</b>	<b>Illiteracy</b>
'A person is functionally illiterate who cannot engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development.' Source: UNESCO	'Illiteracy is lacking the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute, and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts' Source: UNESCO
'Anyone who manifests any difficulty in managing skills necessary to "function" in current societies has been defined as functional illiterate.' Source: 'Functional Literacy, Functional Illiteracy: The Focus of an Ongoing Social Debate' National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Sofia Valdivielso, 2006	'A person who is unable to read or write, uncultured or poorly educated' Source: The Oxford Dictionary
'People who are functionally illiterate have some ability to read and write, but not enough to be able to fully function in everyday life. They have difficulty with crucial tasks such as filling out job applications, reading maps, understanding bus schedules, reading newspaper articles, etc. Source: 'More than One-third of Washington D.C. Residents are Functionally Illiterate.' Associated Content, May Monten, 2007	'A illiterate person is one who cannot, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement on his or her everyday life.' Source: OECD: Glossary of Statistical Terms
'A person is functionally illiterate who cannot engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development.' Source: OECD: Glossary of Statistical Terms	
'Lack of capacity to understand and use the information contained in brochures, information bulletins, train schedules, road maps and simple instructions for household appliances or pharmaceuticals.' Source: 'Functional Illiteracy: The Invisible Problem, Conference on Education for All in Europe and North America, 2000' UNDP, UNESCO, *UNFPA, UNICEF & the World Bank	
'The inability to use reading, writing and numeracy skills for effective functioning and development to the individual and community.' Source: UNICEF	



indexed at or below grade 4 levels. In 2009, 10,915 or 23% of GSAT students were estimated to be at or below grade 4 levels of literacy. On average, for the last five years, 12,800 students or 25.8% of students sitting GSAT, were at a level of literacy, at least two grades below the required level to be able to function and access secondary education beneficially. The situation is even more concerning when we consider that there are about 8,980 GSAT students or 19% whose score in Language Arts range from 34% to 49% which places them in a category barely ready for secondary education.

Another index of literacy at GSAT can be gauged using the Communications Task component. This is the written aspect of Language Arts and seeks to assess the demonstrated competence of the child at grade 6, to communicate in writing, follow instructions on a simple form, and express ideas in a sequential and coherent manner using the rules, vocabulary, and context of language and their own creativity experiences.

Using a crude cut-score of 33%, it was estimated that a student scoring that grade or below could be considered functionally illiterate, meaning that the child probably could read, but below grade four levels, and would have difficulty performing simple task that required reading and writing to function productively in society. Based on this crude indexation of functional illiteracy, in 2005, 25,150 or 51% of the GSAT cohort would be functionally illiterate. This figure dropped dramatically in the 2007 sitting to 5,033 or 10%. The figure now stands at 8,344 or 17% of students being functionally illiterate. While the test results of the Communications Task component are very volatile because of the grading scheme and the subjectivity of the questions and markers, as well of the relative newness of the test, it still gives a fairly useful indication of functional literacy at GSAT. The fall in estimated functional illiterates though dramatic is not surprising and is explained by the persistent rise in grade four literacy rates over the last 10 years.

## 2.0 Quality Initiatives

The Government has set 100% literacy by 2015 as the goal for all primary schools. Some persons have said that this is an overly ambitious, if not unattainable goal. It is noted that there is always a residual number of persons who may never attain even basic literacy because they have severe learning disabilities or physical impairment. In any event such persons could be accommodated or treated meaningfully in mainstream education. The goal is therefore based on the educable population at grade 6.

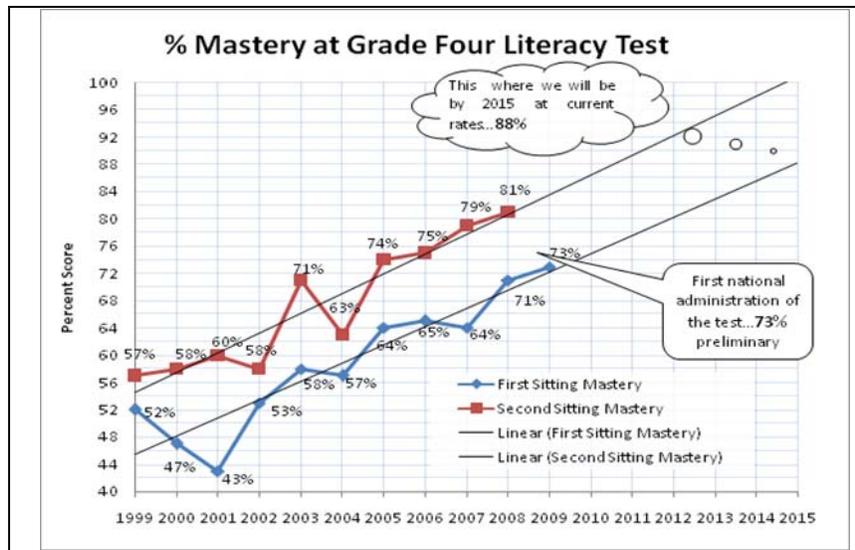
We have now departed from the policy of automatic or social promotion to a policy called **Competency Based Transition**. The Grade Four Literacy Test is the main standardized measure of literacy and now the critical test for transition from primary to secondary. The test comprises three sections; Word Recognition, Reading Comprehension and a Writing Task. Student performance is categorized at three levels 'Mastery', 'Near Mastery', and 'Non-Mastery'. Mastery of the test indicates that the student is functionally literate and has developed all the critical skills necessary to acquire knowledge. It effectively shows that the student would not be at risk of being illiterate at grade 6. All students are now required to be registered at grade 4 for the Grade Four Literacy Test (GFLT) which for the first time this year was



nationally administered. This early registration gives us solid data on which to plan for that cohort two years in advance. National administration of the test standardizes the marking process, removes variations in assessment and increases confidence in the integrity of the results. A structured approach will be instituted to ensure that all children transitioning to the secondary level are literate. The Grade 4 literacy interventions currently administered during the summer will now become a part of the regular curriculum delivery and intensive literacy support used throughout the school year in grades 5 and 6.

Each child will be provided with **four (4)** opportunities to be certified as literate. It is now compulsory that all children in Grade 4 must be registered and sit the Grade Four Literacy Test administered by the Ministry of Education in June of each year. Screening is not an option. All children inclusive of those in the “near mastery” and “non mastery” categories will be promoted to Grade 5. At this stage the Special Education Unit of the Regional Education Agencies will be alerted to provide assessment and proper diagnosis in order to identify the special needs and recommend the appropriate intervention for children not certified as attaining mastery.

All children in grade 5 who were not certified as attaining mastery at the initial sitting will be eligible to sit the Grade Four Literacy Test a second time in December at the Supplemental Sitting. Grade five children whose competency levels remain unchanged after the second sitting will be eligible to sit the test a third time at the General Sitting in June. All Children whose competency levels remain unchanged after the third sitting will be promoted to grade 6 with the general cohort and be eligible to sit the test a fourth time at the supplemental sitting in December. These children will be provisionally registered to sit the Grade Six Achievement Test. **However, only those children certified as literate will be allowed to sit**



**the Grade Six Achievement Test in March of the following year.** Students who sat the test this year and achieved mastery would be eligible to sit GSAT in 2011.

The preliminary results show 73% of students achieving mastery of the test in the first sitting this year. Last year 71% of students achieved mastery on the first sitting. After an intervention, an additional

10% of the cohort was able to achieve mastery on the second sitting, bringing the final mastery number for 2008 to 81%. If we continue on our current trajectory based on the results of the second sitting we will be able to reach the goal of 100% by 2015. However, efficiency of the education system must ultimately be judged by the attainment on the first sitting. Based on current projections by 2015, 88% of students sitting the Grade Four Literacy should be literate.



We are not satisfied with this and we have set our target at 95% literacy by 2015 on the first sitting, and we are not leaving this up to chance. To meet the target, we have increased our budget for literacy programmes this year. In addition to the existing 50 literacy specialists, 40 more will be hired during the course of the year along with 22 more numeracy specialists. The role of the literacy specialist is to act as a coach for the teachers, and in many cases the parents, support and advise the school on implementing literacy interventions. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the work of the literacy specialists who have been doing an amazing job in supporting the literacy programmes and interventions in the field. The literacy specialists have now been mainstreamed in the administration of the Ministry as we move to institutionalize the various programmes and interventions they lead. From a management perspective, the Ministry must now embed the knowledge of the specialists in systems, institutions and documents so that they become standard operating procedures for the teachers, resident in the operation of the school rather than the individual ability of a good teacher or specialist. A similar support structure is underway for numeracy.

We have mobilized the entire primary education fraternity in support of this new thrust. Parents have been informed of this new policy and they now realize that their child will not sit the GSAT examination unless the child is certified literate at the Grade Four Literacy Test. This will shift the focus of parents to literacy and secure their interest and intervention much earlier in the school life of the child. This policy has also effectively adjusted the placement mechanism of the GSAT, all children must now be certified in basic literacy before they are placed in secondary schools. Students who are not certified by the time GSAT is administered will be required to repeat a year at grade 6. If a child demonstrates improvement in the opinion of the principal and the education officer, during the course of the repeated year, the child may be allowed to sit the GFLT in June or December of that year, and if the child achieves mastery and is below the legal age to sit GSAT, the child may be allowed to sit GSAT the following year.

Students who have not benefited from the intervention programmes and are still operating below the required grade level after repeating will be transitioned in to the **Alternate Secondary Education Programme** (ASEP). This programme is designed to provide a safety net for the approximately 4,000 children at the end of the primary level we estimate will require special intensive support and intervention to advance to the next stage. This programme is in the final planning stage and should be ready in time for the first set of students who would not be able to transition to secondary schools through the GSAT route in 2012.

The consistent assessment of literacy through a nationally administered test, clearly identifies the pool of at risk students that must be supported. The inability to transition without literacy, cuts the conveyor belt approach to education as the slow learner cannot be passed on to the next level without assistance. The purpose of primary education is to deliver a literate child to the secondary system. This new policy ensures that if remediation has to be undertaken then it must be done at the level where resources are already provided for it. Previously, the failure of the school to deliver literacy would not be pronounced because the children move on from the school. Under this system, it will be easier to identify a failing primary school by the growth in the numbers of repeaters at grade six.



## 2.1 Accountability for Literacy

A key feature of the new policy is accountability. The first step in establishing a system of accountability is to decide on a standard measure for the performance required. The performance required is the provision of basic literacy and the standard measure is mastery at the Grade Four Literacy Test. The measure must also be transparent and known to all stakeholders. With information the stakeholders can have a voice in the discussion of the problem. This year we will be publishing the Grade Four Literacy Test percentage mastery by school and region, along with other useful information such as class size, school size and teacher pupil ratio at grade 4. It is hoped that this will draw national attention and interest in literacy and give useful information for parents, teachers, board members and principals to compare, motivate and spur to action.

For the first time in education in Jamaica national targets for literacy will be set for each school. Every primary school principal before the beginning of each school year will be set a target for performance in literacy. The targets may be adjusted, upon appeal of the principal with valid explanation, and with the agreement of the Ministry, to a level where it is reasonable to the local circumstances and resources of the school. Once agreed, this target will form part of the performance appraisal system of principals. We have not yet set the target for this year, this will be done as soon as the results are finalized. However from the preliminary data we would need at minimum a 5% increase in mastery of the first sitting next year. This would mean that on average every school would be asked to increase their performance by 5%.

School boards will be asked to take action against principals that consistently miss their targets, where it is obvious that the repeat rate is growing in the school, where it is apparent that there are no intervention initiatives in the school, and where leadership on the part of the principal is weak. In turn, principals must design programmes, mobilize parents and all other stakeholders towards this effort. Most importantly principals are expected to hold their teachers accountable for results. Where there is a genuine lack of skill in conducting literacy interventions on the part of teachers, the Ministry stands ready to support and coach; where there is a lack of knowledge of structuring and designing special intervention programmes the Ministry stands ready to assist. Where there is a lack of material, the Ministry stands ready to assist and principals as they are doing now should continue to mobilize parents and the community to assist. However, where there is a breakdown in staff morale, professional misconduct, absenteeism, dereliction of duty, inefficiency, incompetence, and general disinterest, the principals must act with the support of their boards to bring those teachers to account.

We have received significant support towards this new thrust in literacy from our development partners, I want to mention the USAID/GOJ Expanding Education Horizons Programme which identified the 71 worst performing schools on the Grade Four Literacy Test and supported them in a specially designed programme, from which they graduated as their performance and systems improved. A new version of the programme is now being designed in partnership between the USAID and the GOJ. The private



sector has also come on board, and I want to mention the work of the Digicel Foundation in building and equipping enrichment centres in schools to assist with literacy interventions. Sagicor is also assisting the literacy thrust by sponsoring material and professional development seminars for our literacy teachers. Later this year we plan to launch a national literacy campaign aimed at raising the awareness of parents to the importance of ensuring literacy in their children. We invite the private sector to join us in this campaign.

With a national database on literacy mastery by schools it is easier for the Ministry to monitor performance. An accountability matrix has been developed breaking down the responsibilities, duties, and targets of each agent in the process, starting from the Minister of Education, and cascading down to the Permanent Secretary, the Chief Education Officer, the regional heads, the territorial education officers, the literacy coordinators, the literacy specialists, the principals, and the teachers. While we are increasing our programmes and professional development support for literacy to schools, the Ministry will be watching keenly the effectiveness of all the agents, in marshalling their limited resources towards this effort. Where it is obvious that, interpersonal problems, poor leadership, nonchalance, and administrative and management weaknesses are affecting the teaching learning process, the Ministry will act with dispatch. It is now time for effective leadership in education to be demanded as this is the key to quality education. In 1966 in a Ministry Paper tabled in this House commonly referred to as the New Deal in Education, the goal of eradicating illiteracy by 1980 was set. We have missed that target. Let us get serious about eradicating illiteracy from our country once and for all.

### 3.0 Building out the Infrastructure

Whenever the discussion is engaged about quality and the need for accountability, the usual retort is

CURRENT CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY PROJECT STAGE	SCHOOLS				SPACES				COST (\$M)
	Total	Infant	Primary & P/JH	Secondary	Total	Infant	Primary	Secondary	
<b>DESIGN &amp; TENDER</b>									
New Schools	8	0	0	8	7,820	0	0	7,820	2,744
Expanded and Upgraded Schools	3	0	2	1	280	0	280	0	128
Prototype Schools - Phase 3	9	0	2	7	1,240	0	240	1,000	76
<b>CONTRACT APPROVAL</b>									
Prototype Schools - Phase 3	3	0	1	2	430	0	120	310	26
<b>CONSTRUCTION - 08/09</b>									
New Schools	6	1	1	4	4,210	250	630	3,330	1,597
Expanded and Upgraded	12	0	3	9	3,450	0	1,280	2,170	1,116
Prototype Schools - Phase 3	8	0	1	7	1,000	0	120	880	57
<b>COMPLETED CONSTRUCTION - 07/08</b>									
Prototype Schools - Phase 3	19	0	5	14	2,900	0	600	2,300	161
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>21,330</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>3,270</b>	<b>17,810</b>	<b>5,905</b>

about the poor state of our education infrastructure. This is undeniably so. The last major investment in education infrastructure was in 1966 when the Government of the day, borrowed US\$6m from the World Bank for the

establishment of 50 Junior Secondary Schools, the expansion of the College of Arts, Science and Technology, and the Jamaica School of Agriculture. In 1971 the Government borrowed another loan from the World Bank for US\$13m to extend the 50 junior secondary schools to full secondary schools, construct 12 new junior secondary schools, and the construction of one new teachers' college. Since



then we have incrementally added to the stock of schools building. Our investment in upgrading and refurbishing existing stock is miniscule compared to the level of depreciation. This year we are building 4,210 new spaces (6 new schools) and we are upgrading and expanding 4,450 spaces in existing infrastructure at a projected cost of JA\$2.8 billion. This pales in comparison to the numerous requests and complaints directed to me daily from principals and parents regarding the physical condition of their school plant.

Shift schools are another manifestation of the need to provide access. The exploding demand for places in the 1970s resulted in the implementation of the shift system as a short term solution. Three decades later, there are **154, 341 students** attending **116 schools** that remain on shift. The shift system has a major negative impact on the quality of education. If we are serious about quality then we must provide universal secondary education, we must remove of the shift system, and we must reduce overcrowding. Building more schools and improving the ones we have will increase access but it will also increase quality.

To offer universal secondary education up to grade 11, remove the shift system and reduce overcrowding, we must build, refurbish and replace at least 100 schools. The plan is to build-out the new schools required at the secondary level to ease the bottleneck at GSAT and take all secondary schools off shift. It is estimated that we would need to construct 30 new high schools and expand 10 schools to remove the shift system at the secondary level. We would also need to construct an additional 30 high schools to reduce overcrowding and accommodate students of secondary age who are not presently in the school system. In so doing, we could then revert the 43 all age and junior high schools, presently operating on double shift to single shift primary schools, utilizing the junior secondary space for additional primary age students. The remaining 28 double shift primary schools would be taken off shift strategically, by a process of rationalization and consolidation, replacement, expansion and new construction.

The estimated cost for building a school to accommodate 1200 students is US\$6.5 million, equipped to the standards set by the Ministry using traditional building methods. If we use systems building, the single unit cost is projected at US\$7.1 million, however this cost falls dramatically depending on the number of schools built using a particular system. With the right economies of scale the cost of system

Schools on Shift by Type, 2007/08	Primary	All Age	Primary & Junior High	Secondary	Total
Number of Shift Schools	28	9	34	45	<b>116</b>
Number of Schools	543	163	87	164	<b>957</b>
% of Total Schools	5.2	5.5	39.1	27.4	<b>12.12</b>
Enrolment in Shift Schools	39,393	5,848	35,605	73,495	<b>154,431</b>

building can be as much as 50% of the cost of traditional building when time is factored into the equation.

**The National Education Trust (NET)**

Construction Method	Land	Furniture	Construction Cost (US\$)*	Total Cost (US\$)	Cost per Place (US\$)
<b>Traditional</b>	220,000	510,000	5,800,000	6,530,000	5,442
<b>System Build</b>	220,000	510,000	6,400,000	7,130,000	5,942

Building out the education infrastructure to give universal access at the secondary level and

removing the shift system is a critical goal of this government. To achieve this goal, we are establishing the National Education Trust which will be launched in December of this year. We have secured funding



from USAID and the World Bank to establish the NET. We have also started preliminary discussions with the IFC regarding funding Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in school construction in Jamaica. PPPs engage the resources of the private sector in the construction, ownership and maintenance of public infrastructure, while securing the commitment of government to use and pay for the usage of the infrastructure, under clearly defined contractual terms. This reduces the capital outlay of the government and shifts the burden and costs for poor construction to the private contractor or owner of the facility. PPPs therefore change the incentive structures of construction, contractors have no incentives to delay projects or use inferior designs, materials or methods, as they will be required to maintain the properties in the long run. Intuitively, the government could use its current outlay which builds approximately 5 new schools per year, to build 100 schools in two, and pay for them using the current outlay for the next thirty years. This would not have any impact on the deficit or the cash flow of the government.

PPPs are successful where there is a certain cashflow on the part of the government consuming the infrastructure. PPPs in education are usually well subscribed by the private sector because they know that governments rarely cut their education budget to committed items. However, in the Jamaican context there may be some tentativeness towards PPPs by the local private sector. The purpose of the NET is to establish a definite dedicated fund out of which yearly payments can be secured. The Prime Minister has indicated that some of the revenues derived from casino operations will be dedicated to the NET. I think it is now time however that we look to dedicating a part of the Education Tax, under the new framework of merging certain social taxes, to the NET as a dedicated source of payments for these PPP new schools, and to undertake other infrastructural development in education.

#### **4.0 Transformation Initiative further to Quality**

Earlier this year, after analysing the status of the Education Transformation Project, it was decided that projects being developed in the transformation nursery were sufficiently advanced, and that it was now time to mainstream their operations in the Ministry, in effect actualizing the process of modernization and transformation. The main projects under the Transformation Programme are:

##### **The Jamaica Teaching Council**

**Purpose: To raise and regulate the standards of the teaching profession in Jamaica, as well as provide support to achieve excellence in teaching**

Status:

Cabinet has approved the establishment and preparation of drafting instructions for legal establishment of the agency. The JTC is however functioning and is headed by Dr. Winsome Gordon, an alumni of the Ministry of Education and a former senior technocrat at UNESCO. The Professional Development Unit and the Secretariat of the Teachers' Services Commission (TSC) has been placed under this new agency. It has already launched one of its major initiatives for teacher development, the Quality Education Circles (QEC). Sixty one quality circles islandwide have been defined. A structure for the JTC has been



agreed, job description for key staff drafted and functional profiles for 3 units in the JTC completed. Jobs will be ready for classification by September 2009. The JTC will continue to function under the powers of the TSC under which it is now incorporated until it has its own legal personality. Registration of teachers has commenced and will be substantially completed by the end of the year. However, licensing of teachers will be delayed until the requisite legislation and empowerment is in place.

### **The National Education Inspectorate**

**Purpose: To promote a culture of excellence and system of accountability in the education system**

Status:

The NEI has begun preparatory work with support of international consultants to put business systems in place for the start of inspections early in the 2009 school year. Ten key job descriptions and functional profiles for the core units have been developed and the structure is being finalized. The IT system to support the work of the NEI is being scoped. It will not be in place to support the ten inspections which are expected to be completed by December 2009; however a manual system will be employed to do the first ten inspections. The system is however expected to be in place by January 2010. The NEI is to be established as an Executive Agency (EA) and as such all the necessary documents have been prepared and are to be packaged for approval of the Ministry before submission of application to the Ministry of Finance & Public Service to be established as an EA. The proposal is to have the submission done before the end of August 2009. It may therefore be possible for the NEI to have its own legal personality by the next financial year. The NEI already has its senior staff in place and is headed by Elaine Foster-Allen, an alumni of the Ministry of Education and renowned educator. Mrs Foster-Allen is on secondment from the Shortwood Teachers' College.

### **The Regional Education Agencies (REAs)**

**Purpose: To improve the management of education affairs by devolving authority for operations to smaller local agencies, and provide support for school improvement.**

Status:

After much deliberation it was agreed to establish 6 REAs as follows:

REA 1 – Kingston & St. Andrew

REA 2 – St Thomas, Portland, St Mary

REA 3 – St Ann, Trelawny

REA 4 – St James, Hanover, Westmoreland

REA 5 – St Elizabeth, Manchester, Clarendon

REA 6 - St Catherine

Under this new structure regional boundaries no longer cross parish boundaries. Two REAs will be modelled/piloted commencing in the new school year in Regions 1 & 2. Boundary shifts for the pilot



regions are planned to commence by August 17<sup>th</sup> 2009. Meetings to inform Principals, Boards, MPs and sensitization of the public is planned to commence within the next 3 weeks. The Options paper for the governance model has been drafted and submitted to the Legal Consultant for review. Four options are explored – Executive Agency, Statutory Body, and Education Department with six (6) branch operations & Education Districts with governing District Boards. Work in modelling the two pilot REAs has commenced with support of consultants and the Cabinet Office. Roll out to the remaining four REAs is scheduled for 2011/2012.

Reports on the other transformation activities, and other MOE Agencies/Projects, are tabled today in a Ministry Paper.

## 5.0 Pulling it Together

The Government of Jamaica will continue the struggle to improve access to quality education. However, we are cognizant of the fact that there can be no trade-offs with quality. Poor quality education is a barrier to access at the secondary level no matter how many secondary school places we build. The government is therefore focussed on attaining 100% literacy at the primary level and we have adopted a new Transition Policy that requires literacy as a condition to be placed in a high school. This will have the effect of improving performance at the secondary level over time. Teachers and parents must be held accountable for the literacy development of the children in their care and tutelage. The science and pedagogy of teaching reading and writing skills is well known, it is not a mystery, we know how to teach even the most challenged student, how to read. That knowledge can be embedded in programmes, institutions and practices which we call interventions. School leaders do not have to start from scratch in this respect and the Ministry of Education provides coaching and advice in developing intervention strategies. The failure to deliver literacy at the primary level is squarely a management and leadership issue. It is also the fault of unconcerned parents, who leave the education of their children up to the teacher only. The Ministry will be launching its National Campaign to raise awareness of parents on the importance of literacy. The National Parenting Policy will be placed before Cabinet in August and the legislative agenda for the National Parenting Support Commission is under way. In the final analysis, Principals must be held accountable for the programmes and initiatives they put in place to support literacy, including mobilizing parents. It cannot be that all stakeholders point the finger of blame at each other. To solve the problem, accountability must start with someone. In this instance I start with myself, holding myself accountable for the national targets, and then cascading this down in an accountability matrix for all agents involved in the education process.

We have to build more schools to give more of our youth access to better life chances. We plan to build 100 more schools in the short term, this will be the largest school construction in Jamaica's history. Such a massive construction project can have a huge positive impact on the economy and lay the framework for Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in other areas of infrastructure. If we make the investment today, we would not need to build any new schools for some time to come, as the population growth trend is declining. This means that if we build these schools and attain full universal secondary education, we



can then turn our focus to replacing, refurbishing and maintaining the existing education infrastructure, some of which have not received attention in over 50 years.

The Government has also adopted a new framework for securing the quality of education in schools. All new schools will operated under a scheme called the Centre of Excellence. We are now considering legislation to support this scheme called the School Improvement Act. The main objective of the Centre of Excellence is to meet and exceed the standards set for secondary educational institutions by the establishment and maintenance of an ethos and institutional culture of excellence in all aspects of the School's academic, administrative and operational programmes and activities, that is to say,

- i) Excellence in academics, vocation, arts, and athletics;
- ii) Excellence in behavior, conduct, and deportment;
- iii) Excellence in aesthetics, etiquette, ethics, and culture,
- iv) Excellence in civic awareness, community service, and volunteerism,
- v) Excellence in creative expressions, critical thinking, and thoughtful articulation,
- vi) Excellence in pedagogy, technology, and curricula content and material,
- vii) Excellence in leadership and governance, human resources, management and accounting systems,
- viii) Professionalism in interpersonal, and industrial relationships and associations,
- viii) Excellence in safety, security, health and nutrition, guidance, counseling and emotional support
- x) Excellence in sanitation, cleanliness, conservation, and maintenance of the built and natural environment

These objectives will be supported by the School Improvement Act. Under the proposed legislation school failure will be defined relative to the inspection report of the National Education Inspectorate and the Ministry of Education will be given special powers to intervene expeditiously and deploy special measures to return quality education to the school. All new schools will be established under the School Improvement Act, for a period of five years or until the Ministry is satisfied that the school has the institutional capacity and leadership necessary to guarantee the delivery of quality education. Already the new high school in Belmont, Westmoreland has been placed under the Centre of Excellence framework and we are heartened at the excitement and interest that the community and parents have shown at the prospect that their school will be a Centre of Excellence.

It is necessary to ensure that all new schools are centres of excellence that parents will choose to send their children. The problem with GSAT as a placement mechanism is that it used to ration 12,000 places in the top 50 most preferred schools to 40,000 students seeking them as their first choice. The problem with GSAT is that there is just not enough preferred quality places. If we are going to build more schools it is a waste of money if students do not want to attend or parents have low expectations of the school. All new schools must provide a quality place for students transitioning from primary. There will be not trade-offs between access and quality.



There are many reasons proffered for Jamaica's lack of growth. No doubt they are all pertinent. However, for me our lack of growth is inextricably tied to the failure of our education system to deliver quality and access simultaneously. This failure has led to low level cognitive development of our human capital. Jamaica's greatest resource is our people, our creativity our perseverance, our spirit. We always boast about our Brand Jamaica, created by our people. However, in markets where Brand Jamaica is traded and valuable, many of our people cannot access those markets or thoroughly exploit our Brand because of the low level of educational attainment. Then we suffer from crime and violence which are directly linked to low educational problems. I say to Jamaica, do you want to grow, do you want Jamaica to be the place of choice to live, do business and raise your families? Then lets fix education together.