

Back-to-School Message 2019
The Hon. Karl Samuda
Minister with Oversight
Ministry of Education, Youth & Information

My fellow Jamaicans, good evening.

I hope you enjoyed a good summer and you are eager to start a new school year.

Tomorrow morning, a total of 1000 public schools at the infant, primary and secondary levels will open their doors to welcome almost 500,000 students and teachers.

Rest assured that the Ministry of Education has worked very hard to ensure that we will have a smooth start to this new school year.

Funds have been provided and sent to all primary and secondary schools. The Ministry will be providing a total of \$11 billion to all schools; to underwrite their operational expenses, including the provision of lunches for students on PATH.

All shortages of school furniture have been addressed.

Indeed, 32,000 pieces of furniture have been ordered.

Additionally, 8,000 pieces have been repaired.

In addition, 30 schools have been provided with funds to purchase their own furniture.

Over 90 per cent of our schools have had minor repairs completed.

The Ministry is mindful of the urgent need to make breakfast available to students on PATH. And this year, we will start by providing 70,000 of these students with breakfast.

Special arrangements have been put in place to assist students with transportation; especially in rural areas. In this regard, an amount of \$380 million

has been provided for eight parishes. This is an increase of \$180 million over last year.

All books required to satisfy the curriculum needs have been purchased and delivered at a cost of \$800m.

Arrangements have been made for schools to be provided with water tanks, where necessary. We expect this to be completed within the next few months. We are also working with the NWC and the Rural Water Supply Limited, to ensure that a more consistent supply of water is provided to all schools.

Plans are in place to have the entrances to all our schools upgraded as necessary.

The Ministry has redoubled its efforts to remove all schools from the shift system starting this year. The previous pace at which this was being undertaken will be accelerated.

Our plans to introduce the twinning of schools is far advanced. This year, 35 schools will participate in the pilot programme.

I wish to reiterate that:

- The results of the Primary Exit Profile for Grade 4 will be made available to schools on Friday, October 4, 2019.
- Grade 5 will be released on Friday, September 13, 2019
- The presentation of these results for Grades 4 and 5 will be similar to that of Grade 6.

Curriculum

A new Comprehensive Intervention Plan, which is designed to assist Grade 4 to Grade 6 teachers, coaches and specialists with delivering the National Standards Curriculum, will be introduced in September.

Grade 7 teachers in schools that have received students who were placed in Pathways 2 and 3 in the PEP, will also benefit from this intervention.

Special Education

Over 300 additional students will be placed in special educational facilities this school year.

Approximately 200 students will be supported by special caregivers, at a cost of sixty million \$60m this year.

School Feeding

The Government's policy on the non-mandatory payment of school fees remains unchanged.

No child is to be discriminated against or denied access to their education because of an inability by their parents, to make a contribution.

With God's help and hard work I am confident that our children will achieve great success this year.