



Expanding Educational Horizons
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Press Release

For Immediate Release

**USAID EXEC SAYS JAMAICAN PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS MUST
FOCUS ON LITERACY AND NUMERACY**

Deputy Director of the Office of Sustainable Development of the USAID, Sean Osner has called on Jamaica teachers to do everything in their power to ensure that the country's children are numerate and literate.

Mr. Osner was speaking at the Hilton Kingston Hotel at the recent graduation ceremony for 23 schools which have benefitted from the Expanding Educational Horizons (EEH) program, a joint initiative between the Jamaica and United States Governments in the key areas of literacy, numeracy and educational technology.

The EEH is a four-year project (2005-2009) supported by the Ministry of Education and Youth (MOEY) and USAID. It benefits approximately 30,000 students from 71 primary schools and 2,000 out-of- school youths from six Jamaican NGOs.

The USAID executive said Jamaica needs a strong education system because there is enough evidence to show that education and training are effective drivers of a country's economic development.

Mr. Osner says all the stakeholders in the learning process should rally around the cry repeatedly made by the Minister of Education Andrew Holness, for greater accountability and performance management in the education system. He also had high praise for the unique gender component of the EEH project, because of its special emphasis on techniques to enhance the learning process for boys.

"We can celebrate the work we have done to improve the performance of boys. Several schools have reported improvements in their attendance, and cited instances where boys performed better than girls in some standardized examinations. However, we are aware that the EEH needs to accelerate its efforts to integrate gender and roll out proven practices to a larger number of schools and we look forward to pursuing that in the coming months", said Mr. Osner.

Chief of Party and Project Director for the EEH, Dr. Jean Beaumont highlighted the many challenges and success of the Project over the past several years. She lauded the work of the steering committee, numeracy and literacy specialists, as well as teacher and administrators in the project schools.

Dr. Beaumont noted that included in the many successes is the development of the Grade Four Numeracy Test by the EEH numeracy and monitoring and evaluation teams. The Test is now being administered nationally by the Ministry of Education.

She also highlighted the recent launch of the Jamaica School Administrative System (JSAS 7.0) software by the Project, which will be rolled out nationally. JSAS is a management information tool specifically created for Jamaican schools to assist principals and other school administrators to efficiently complete required administrative and diagnostic tasks.

JSAS stores data at the school, class and student levels and provides fast and easy retrieval of student and teacher information as well as generating student reports and transcripts.

A total of sixty-two (62) of the 71 EEH project schools have now satisfied the criteria for graduation based on their improvements in numeracy and literacy. There were previous graduations in December 2007 with 17 schools and again in June 2008, with 22 schools achieving the required standards.

The 23 new graduating schools have met specific performance criteria and will be used as model institutions for neighbouring primary schools. Two important criteria used to select the graduating schools are 1) acceptable performance in literacy at the grade four level maintained over two years (2007-8) with 65 percent of students at mastery level, and 2) acceptable performance in mathematics at the grade three level maintained over two years (2007-8) with 65 percent at the mastery level.

The graduating schools are: Victoria All Age, Allman Town Primary, Norman Gardens All Age, St. Anne's Primary, Mount James All Age, Fergusson All Age, Ramble All Age, Mt. Pleasant All Age, Cavaliers All Age, White Marl Primary & Jnr High, Carmel All Age, Mt. Airy All Age, Tulloch Primary, Mizpah All Age, Chester Castle All Age, Maxfield Park Primary, Aeolus Valley All Age, Jack's River Primary, Long Road All Age, Drews Avenue Primary, Job's Hill All Age, Lower Buxton All Age and Rio Bueno All Age.

The EEH project also assists non-governmental organizations such as Children First and the YMCA to provide remedial education and life skills training to at-risk youth.

It has also developed links to another USAID project, the Caribbean Centers for Excellence in Teacher Training (CCETT), to incorporate their best practices and include more structured use of the teacher-training methodologies. The project has an intensive focus on educational technology, as well as on gender issues, specifically improving educational outcomes for boys who significantly under-perform compared to girls.

Also at the graduation ceremony, the Project launched its website at WWW.EXPANDING-EDUCATIONAL-HORIZONS.COM. The site will provide stakeholders with updates on the project as well as provide excellent tips for teachers and parents to boost numeracy and literacy at the primary level.

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