



# Expanding Educational Horizons

Ministry of Education and Youth

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## Expanding Educational Horizons (EEH)

### Overview:

Expanding Educational Horizons (EEH), a four-year Project (2005-2009), and is a joint initiative of the Governments of Jamaica and the United States of America. It is monitored by the Ministry of Education and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This project benefits approximately 30,000 students from 71 primary schools and 2000 out-of- school youths from 6 NGOs across Jamaica.

The Los Angeles based *Juarez & Associates Inc.* (J&A), serving as the USAID contractor, has engaged a locally based project implementation team to achieve the project goal to improve student performance in Literacy and Numeracy among students in the 71 primary schools and the 6 NGOs. One new feature of the EEH is its focus on the underperformance of boys. The Project Director and Chief of Party is Dr. Jean Beaumont.

### Partnership with the Ministry of Education

EEH assists the Ministry of Education in increasing literacy and numeracy performance levels in 71 primary schools across Jamaica, by conducting regular visits to schools, onsite and cluster training of teachers, special attention to low performing schools, provision of materials such as books and technological devices. Previously, each of these schools participated in the former New Horizons for Primary Schools Project (NHP).

EEH also supports 6 NGOs across the island which serve out-of- school youth aged from 10 – 18 years. These NGOs are part of local grant awardee, Peoples' Action for Community Transformation (PACT).

## **MAJOR COMPONENTS OF EEH PROJECT**

### **Literacy**

The Literacy component of the Expanding Educational Horizons (EEH) Project aims at raising the literacy level of Grades 1-4 students within 71 Primary schools across Jamaica. To achieve their objectives, Literacy Resource Specialists and the EEH staff work closely with schools, offering modeling and guided practice in literacy to both classroom teachers and students.

### **The School Management Component - JSAS**

The School Management component of the Expanding Educational Horizons (EEH) Project provides schools with a modern computer-based approach to administration. It also provides the EEH Monitoring and Evaluation Unit with performance monitoring data to support the impact of the project's intervention in schools.

To accomplish these tasks, the School Management team is utilizing JSAS, the Jamaica Schools Administrative System Software, a customized Jamaican database, developed and introduced by the former New Horizons for Primary Schools Project. JSAS is a user-friendly software designed to assist school administrators in the collection and manipulation of data on students, teachers and school. The web-enabled version of JSAS (JSAS 7.0) has recently been developed to better meet the needs of teachers, principals, administrators, and the Ministry of Education, using the latest technology and taking advantage of growing Internet penetration.

### **Numeracy**

The numeracy component of the Expanding Educational Horizons Project aims to promote child-centred approaches to the teaching and learning of mathematics. This approach is counter to the traditional 'chalk and talk' method of the explanation, example and exercises routine that is still too prevalent in our schools.

Teachers are shown and encouraged to use innovative teaching methods, which include the use of manipulatives and technology. These teaching methods are used to promote the conceptual understanding of the mathematics involved, preferably in a problem-solving context and related to real-world experiences.

In conjunction with the Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant, a Grade Four Numeracy Test (to 'match' the Grade 4 Literacy Test) has been produced. It is known by the acronym GAIN – "General Attainment In Numeracy".

## **Educational Technology**

The Educational Technology component uses technology tools to enhance curriculum delivery and improve literacy and numeracy for students at the primary level. To achieve this outcome, various activities are being implemented including furnishing schools with technology tools, conducting workshops, producing teachers' guides and increasing access to resource materials through compact discs and online training.

Under the former NHP, technology was seen as a huge motivator for students and promoter of learning, and schools were given educational software, television sets, video cassette recorders, overhead projectors, radio/CDplayer/tape recorders, multimedia projectors, digital cameras, AlphaSmart, desktop and laptop computers.

Expanding Educational Horizons, building on the work of NHP, has provided additional tools such as printers, multimedia projectors, AlphaSmart, desktop and laptop computers to schools to ensure they all have basic technology tools with which to work.

## **The Gender Component**

The purpose of the Gender Component is to sensitize project staff, principals, teachers and parents in order to enable them to obtain a conceptual understanding of gender, gender identity acquisition and ways in which gender influences classroom practices and learning outcomes.

The main strategy being used by the component is the delivery of gender training workshops to all stakeholders, but primarily to teachers and parents.

The expectation is that strategies and interventions implemented by the gender component will contribute significantly to improvement in the performance of boys in particular, in project schools. In the final analysis, success will be measured by the extent to which the disparity between the performance of girls as against that of boys is reduced and is showing positive movement towards equity. Performance data for the 2008 Grade Three Diagnostic Tests will be used to measure the effectiveness of the strategies employed.

## **Private Sector Partnerships**

The project recognizes that the Jamaican private sector and parental involvement in education and schools is on the rise, partly due to the efforts of the previous NHP, and considers itself to be in a privileged position to strengthen this movement. Under the NHP, a variety of partners were used to assist with the project goals of improving literacy and numeracy of primary school students.

EEH's intervention to increase stakeholder support aims to capitalize on this trend by targeting: (a) increased awareness of opportunities for and (b) the establishment of, public/private partnerships (PPPs) as well as increased parental participation in schools.

The rationale behind this initiative is closely tied to USAID's Global Development Alliance (GDA) focus which is aimed at mobilizing the ideas, efforts and resources of governments, business and civil society by forging public/private alliances to stimulate economic growth, develop the work force, address health and environmental issues and expand access to education and technology.

## **THE NGOS**

The NGO intervention of **Expanding Educational Horizons Project (EEHP)** is managed under a four-year grant agreement by PACT, a 26 member NGO/CBO umbrella organization which works primarily in the inner city areas of eastern Jamaica. PACT was designed as a response aimed at integrating the poverty alleviation activities carried out in the NGO sector. EEHP is implemented by 6 NGOs.

The primary responsibility of the EEHP is the improvement of literacy and numeracy of the at risk youth between the age of 10 – 18 years who are not enrolled in school, have dropped out of school or do not attend school on a regular basis.

The project focuses on the facilitation of each student achieving a functional level in numeracy and literacy through remedial education, pre-vocational training, life skills and reproductive health.

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