



A SUMMARY OF  
**PRISMS OF  
POSSIBILITY**  
A REPORT CARD ON  
EDUCATION IN JAMAICA



Programa de Promoción de la Reforma Educativa en América Latina y el Caribe  
Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas



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# A SUMMARY OF PRISMS OF POSSIBILITY

## A REPORT CARD ON EDUCATION IN JAMAICA, 2012



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Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas





# BACKGROUND

At the end of the 1990's, the Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL) convened two international Task Forces - one for Latin America and one for Central America - to discuss grave deficiencies in the education being offered to children throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. The Commission's reports - *The Future at Stake* and *Tomorrow is Too Late* - outlined the principal challenges and proposed four steps to make schools better:

1. Set standards for education systems and measure progress toward meeting them;
2. Give schools and local communities more control over—and responsibility for—education;
3. Strengthen the teaching profession by raising salaries, reforming training, and making teachers more accountable to the communities they serve; and
4. Invest more money per student in preschool, primary and secondary education.

As a follow-up to these recommendations, PREAL works with national partners to publish periodic reports on educational progress - "education report cards" - so that leaders both inside

and outside the education sector have independent, reliable information on how their schools are doing compared to other regions or countries and their own past performance. To date, PREAL's report card program has produced over 30 reports on education progress at the regional, Central American, national, and departmental level - including the 2012 Report Card on Education in Jamaica produced in collaboration with the Caribbean Policy Research Institute (CaPRI), based at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona, Jamaica. (Published report cards are available online at [www.preal.org](http://www.preal.org)).

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2012 Education Report Card is the result of a comprehensive study of the current state and progress of education in Jamaica. It was carried out by CaPRI in cooperation with PREAL, a joint project of the Inter-American Dialogue (IAD), in Washington D.C., United States of America (USA) and the Corporation for Development Research (CINDE), in Santiago, Chile. PREAL's activities are made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the GE Foundation, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), and the World Bank, among others. However, the contents of this report are the sole responsibility of PREAL and its partner organizations and do not necessarily reflect the views of any of its donors.

CaPRI would like to recognize the hard work, kind assistance and stakeholder cooperation that led to the successful completion of the 2012 Education Report Card. Special thanks go to the staff of PREAL, IAD and CINDE. We are particularly grateful for the support of PREAL's Co-Directors, Jeffrey Puryear and Marcela Gajardo, and the hard work of the Report Card Coordinator, Tamara Ortega Goodspeed and Education Associate, Alexandra Solano. We would

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SUBJECT	GRADE	TREND	COMMENTS
Enrollment	B	▲	Jamaica has consistently had high enrollment at the pre-primary and primary levels; however, high enrollment at the secondary and tertiary levels remains a challenge.
Staying in School	C	◀▶	Younger Jamaicans are staying in school longer but the overall certification of those in the 25-59 year old bracket continues to be low.
Test Score	D	▲	Performance in all areas of assessment is improving.
Equity	D	▼	No clear path to address the underperformance of boys in the school system and wide disparities in educational outcomes by socio-economic groups exist.
Standards	C	▲	Jamaica, through its National Education Inspectorate, is taking steps to improve performance standards and to create increased opportunities for learning.
Assessment System	B	◀▶	The country is not benefitting as it should from the availability of data from the various national and regional assessments.
Management and Accountability	C	▲	Greater efforts are being made to improve accountability at the school level.
Teaching Profession	C	▲	Legislated teaching standards will contribute to protecting the profession.
Expenditure	B	▲	Jamaica continues to allocate a high percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) to education and has made improvements in reducing the disparity in spending per pupil at the basic and tertiary levels.

**GRADE**

A - EXCELLENT      D - UNSATISFACTORY  
 B - GOOD            F - VERY POOR  
 C - AVERAGE

**TREND**

▲ IMPROVING  
 ◀▶ NO OBSERVABLE CHANGE  
 ▼ DECLINING

Source: Prisms of Possibility – A Report Card on Education in Jamaica, 2012- Full Report

# SUCCESSSES, POSSIBILITIES AND REMAINING CHALLENGES

## ENROLLMENT

**In 2009, nearly all (98%) children 3-16 years old were enrolled in schools, according to household survey data (pg. 10)**

Jamaica is on target to have at least 35% of its population enrolled in tertiary institutions by 2015 (32.8% in 2009) (pg. 13)

Jamaica has exceptionally high levels of enrollment among 3-5 year olds (99% in 2009, according to household survey data); higher than even some developed countries, including the United States and Finland (pg. 11)

**Net enrollment in secondary education institutions increased from 79% to 92% for 15-16 year olds (pg.12) and from 13% to 48% for 17-18 year olds between 1990 and 2009 (pg. 12)**

The Government plans to have at least one full access school per parish to ensure access for children with disabilities (pg. 13)

Jamaicans from all socio-economic groups have a strong culture of participating in the formal school system, especially among younger students (pg. 11)

## STAYING IN SCHOOL

**Certification at the tertiary level moved from 6.7% to 12.9% between 2000 and 2008 (pg. 14)**

Participation in tertiary education nearly doubled among 19-24 year olds - from 12% in 1999 to 22% in 2009 (pg. 14)

**Current plans for the Career Advancement Programme (CAP) offer more opportunities for older students (pg. 15)**

Most primary school students attend at least 85% of the mandated days of schooling, consistently meeting the Government's target. However, these students may miss as many as 29 days of school, which negatively impacts their learning (pg. 15)

Attendance at the secondary level is near the 85% target, increasing from 81% in 2004 to 83% in 2010 (pg. 16)

## TEST SCORES

**The percentage of passes in the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations improved from 64% to 72% between 2005 and 2010 (pg. 17)**

14% of CSEC passes received a Grade 1 score (the highest rating) in 2010 compared to 9% in 2005 (pg. 17)




Average scores on the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) improved from 52% in 2005 to 62% in 2011 (Table A2 in Appendix, pg. 54)

In 2005, 64% of students were successful in the Grade 4 Literacy Test, compared to 71% in 2011 (Table A3 in Appendix). The national target is 85% (pg. 54)

 Success/marked progress;  Opportunities exist as we are trending in the right direction;  Challenges impeding greater progress.





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ENROLLMENT	STAYING IN SCHOOL	TEST SCORES
<p> Jamaica, with a net enrollment of 77% at the secondary level trails the USA, the United Kingdom (UK) and most other Caribbean countries (Graph A1 in Appendix, pg. 49)</p> <p>More than half of 17-18 year olds are not in school (Graph 1, pg. 11)</p> <p>Limited space at the secondary level for 17-18 year olds. (Box E1, pg. 13)</p>	<p> In 2008, nearly 75% of the economically active 25-59 year olds<sup>1</sup> had no certification, almost the same rate as in 2000 (pg. 14)<sup>2</sup></p> <p>40% of the economically active population never completed secondary school. Only one in four of those who did complete high school achieved some form of certification (pg. 14)</p> <p>Students enrolled in all age and junior high schools usually do not continue their education beyond the 9th grade (pg. 15)</p>	<p> Jamaica is performing below its Caribbean counterparts in CSEC Mathematics and English Language (pg.19). Only 53% of secondary level students sat the minimum number of subjects required for tertiary level matriculation in 2010 (pg. 17)</p> <p>Under current trends, it will take until the year 2036 before every 11th grader has the 4 CSEC passes required to matriculate into the least competitive tertiary programmes (pg. 18)</p> <p>Average scores in all GSAT subjects in 2011 was 60%, well below the national target of 85%. (pg. 19)</p> <p>Less than 50% of children mastered numeracy skills on the Grade 4 test between 2009-2011 (pg. 19)</p> <p>Under current trends, Jamaica will not reach 100% literacy at the Grade 4 level until the year 2036, and 90% until the year 2028 (pg. 20)</p> <p>In 2007 data from the Grade 1 Individual Learning Profile showed that less than 50% of children entering primary schools were ready (pg. 20)</p>

<sup>1</sup>This differs from the labour force, which refers to the population between the ages of 15-64 years old. One of the advantages of the 25-59 age range is that it does not overlap with the school age population, which ends at age 24, nor with the official age limit for the elderly, which is 60 years.

<sup>2</sup>Certification is defined as passing at least one subject in an exit examination at the secondary or higher levels. This includes post-secondary certificates, diplomas and degrees.

 Success/marked progress;  Opportunities exist as we are trending in the right direction;  Challenges impeding greater progress.

EQUITY	STANDARDS	ASSESSMENT SYSTEM
<p><b>■ Jamaica is one of 22 Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries to have achieved gender parity in enrollment at the primary school level (pg. 22)</b></p> <p>Jamaica is close to gender parity at the secondary level and is doing better than the Latin American average in this regard (pg. 22)</p> <p><b>■ Private sector actors are experimenting with gender-based learning techniques (Box A1 in Appendix, pg. 60)</b></p> <p>The system is making a strong push to make education more accessible to persons with disabilities (pg. 24)</p>	<p><b>■ The Core Curriculum Unit of the Ministry of Education provides a framework for standardized curricula throughout the country (pg. 30)</b></p> <p>Jamaica has a national curriculum at the early childhood and primary levels (pg. 29)</p> <p>In 2006, a curriculum guide for children 0-3 years of age was developed. The "Readiness Curriculum" for 4-5 year olds was revamped (pg. 29)</p> <p>Jamaica's high stakes tests provide parents, students and the public with a general sense of the level of acceptable learning performance (pg. 28)</p> <p><b>■ The National Education Inspectorate is assessing school plants as part of its school audit. This data will help to identify the areas of weakness (pg. 29)</b></p> <p>The Ministry of Education, through the Education System Transformation Programme, has embarked on establishing a standard national curriculum at the secondary level (pg. 30)</p>	<p><b>■ A national assessment programme, spanning the early childhood to the post-secondary levels, monitors students' learning throughout the system and allows comparisons over time. (pg. 31)</b></p> <p>Jamaica has a robust assessment system at the primary level. (pg. 31)</p> <p>Test scores on CSEC, GSAT and the Grade Four Literacy Test (GFLT) are reported regularly and receive national attention (pg. 34)</p> <p><b>■ The Government has developed a year-by-year matrix that sets out progress that needs to be made in order for literacy goals to be reached at Grade 4 (pg. 32)</b></p> <p>The prevalence of high stake testing gives external supporters a yardstick for measuring the impact of their involvement (pg. 34)</p>

■ Success/marked progress; ■ Opportunities exist as we are trending in the right direction; ■ Challenges impeding greater progress.

EQUITY	STANDARDS	ASSESSMENT SYSTEM
<p><b>Boys perform below girls on achievement tests at all levels of the education system (pgs. 22-24)</b></p> <p>Budget mechanisms do not help to minimize differences in school quality (pg. 27). Government spending on tertiary education, resulting in the relative high cost of tertiary education, disproportionately favours the wealthy, as they are 8 times more likely to access tertiary education than other groups. (pg.24)</p> <p>Nearly 90% of persons in the poorest fifth of the population have no secondary or post-secondary certification, compared to 56% in the wealthiest fifth<sup>3</sup> (pg. 25)</p> <p>Persons in rural areas show a higher rate of non-certification (85%) versus an average of 75% at the national level (pg. 25)</p> <p>Inequalities by school type persist. The average GSAT score in preparatory schools is 80% compared to below 60% in public schools (pg. 27). Students in upgraded secondary schools perform below their counterparts in traditional high schools (Graph A 14 and 15 in Appendix, pg. 58)</p>	<p><b>The system has been unable to adhere to explicit standards for school plants. This has led to disparity among schools in terms of allocation of resources, plant quality and opportunities to learn (pg. 30)</b></p> <p>The existing secondary level curriculum is not mandatory, and thus not all schools use it. Disconnect between primary and secondary school curricula is common (pg. 29)</p> <p>At the primary level, expectations for students' performance are largely defined by various national tests (pg. 29)</p> <p>There is no annual national assessment at the secondary level, with the exception of CSEC which is at the end of the cycle (pg. 29)</p>	<p><b>Schools and system administrators do not systematically use data from tests for planning or improving teaching and learning (pgs. 33-34)</b></p> <p>Assessment results are not always reported, especially for the Grade 1 Individual Learning Profile and the Grade 3 Diagnostic Test, limiting the potential for school or system-level lessons. (pg. 32)</p> <p>Participation in CSEC is not mandatory, and many students do not sit key subjects. (pg. 33)</p> <p>Jamaica does not participate in any global assessments, thus limiting the opportunities to compare the country with other players outside the Caribbean (pg. 35).</p>

<sup>3</sup>Certification is defined as passing at least one subject in an exit examination at the secondary or higher levels. This includes certificates, diploma and degrees.

### MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

■ Compared to 1991, the education system is much more decentralized and schools have more autonomy (pg. 36).

There are significant levels of collaboration between the education sector and civil society (pgs. 45-46).

■ The country is placing an increased focus on leadership and management. Corporate partners are providing training for school leaders (Box A7 in Appendix) and the Ministry of Education is working to establish a national college for educational leadership (pg. 39)

The National Education Inspectorate, as part of school assessments, will consider schools' contribution to student learning. This "value-added" approach takes into account a student's starting point (including family background and prior learning) and measures progress rather than simply overall scores. If well-designed, such assessments can be a platform for establishing a fair mechanism for the measurement of annual progress (pg. 39)

### TEACHING PROFESSION

■ Jamaica has 10 accredited teacher training colleges and 3 university departments dedicated to training new teachers (pg. 40)

The number of students enrolled in teacher training institutions rose to 9,000 in 2009 up from 7,435 in 2005 (pg. 40)

The Professional Development Unit in the Ministry of Education provides all personnel in the education sector (teachers, principals, clerical and ancillary personnel as well as education officers and managers) with opportunities for professional growth (pg. 41)

In 2009, 45% of all trained teachers had a university degree compared to 9% reported in 1990. The improvement occurred at all levels of the education system (pg. 41)

■ Legislated teaching standards should be in place by 2013, making it clearer what is expected of teachers and how they (teachers) will be evaluated. Such standards will need to be aligned with teacher training and other elements of the education system and speedily implemented (pg. 40)

Jamaica has reached and maintains a pupil: teacher ratio of 35:1 at the primary level but many countries in the region have a better ratio (pg. 44)

### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

■ In 2010, Jamaica invested a greater share of its national wealth (6.1%) in education than the 5.2% average for developed countries (pg. 46)

On average, Jamaica invested 6% of its national income on education from 2005-2010 despite declines in gross domestic product (GDP) over the period (pg. 46)

Jamaica's education tax, which earmarks a portion of income taxes for education, is a further testament to the priority the Government places on education (p. 46)

Employers, employees and businesses also provide financing for education (pgs. 45-46)

■ Jamaica is reducing the disparity between spending per student at the tertiary level and the primary level. In 1990, it was 7:1 and in 2009 it had declined to 4:1. On average, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries have a ratio of 2:1 (pg. 47)

The National Education Inspectorate, through its school evaluation process, should be able to collect and use data on the condition of school plants to address deficiencies in the learning environment (pg. 48)

■ Success/marked progress; ■ Opportunities exist as we are trending in the right direction; ■ Challenges impeding greater progress.

### MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

**■** Most decisions, including staffing, are still made at the Ministry level, depriving school leaders the autonomy and authority they may need to effect desired changes (pgs. 36-37)

Very few schools provide the Ministry of Education with annual audited financial statements (pg. 37)

Performance accountability measures for principals, teachers and other staff are obscure and hardly used (pg. 38).

Most principals have not been trained in management and have limited abilities to develop strategic plans and monitoring mechanisms (pg. 38)

### TEACHING PROFESSION

**■** Jamaica is at risk of losing teachers to migration, especially those with specialized skills. In 2006, 55% of Jamaican teachers expressed an interest in leaving the country to teach, while 33% indicated that they had specific intentions to do so (pg. 42)

Jamaican teacher salaries, controlling for the cost of living, are less than half that of developed countries such as the UK and the USA, popular destinations for teacher migrants (pg. 43)

At the secondary level, teachers of core subjects face large classes even though the overall pupil: teacher ratio (which include teachers for specialized subjects) has remained at about 18:1, since 1990 (pg. 44)

### PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

**■** By allocating a uniform budget amount to each school based on education level, the financing system does not address the unique needs of schools (pg. 48).

Jamaica lacks reliable data that can be used to assess spending on schools' physical infrastructure and access to learning and teaching resources (pg. 48).

Spending on tertiary education is disproportionately higher than for other education levels, creating equity concerns since few poor children qualify for tertiary education (pg. 47).

# WE ALL CAN ACT... WE ALL MUST ACT

"Every child can learn, every child must learn"

~ Ministry of Education, Jamaica

"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest"

~ Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the United States

"Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do."

~ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German Playwright, Poet, Novelist and Dramatist

"Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today"

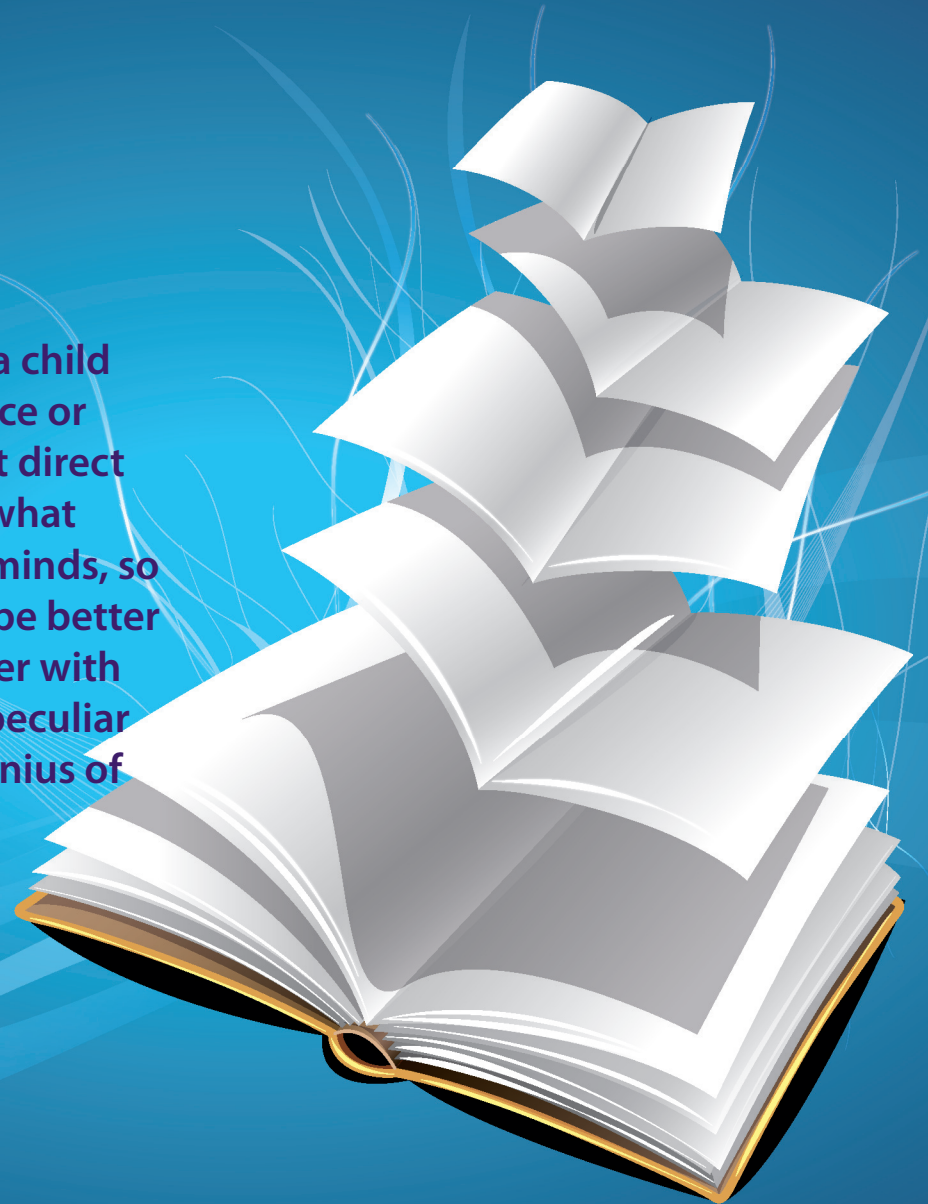
~ Malcolm X, Civil Rights Advocate

"Don't gain the world and lose your soul, wisdom is better than silver or gold..."

~ Bob Marley, Jamaican Singer, Composer and Guitarist

**"Do not train a child to learn by force or harshness; but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each."**

**~ Plato, Greek Philosopher**





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# **POSSIBILITY PATHS FOR NON- GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, CHURCHES, BUSINESSES AND OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**



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NGOs, Churches, Businesses and Other Civil Society Organizations should:

- Collaborate with schools to offer apprenticeships/internships for students in Grades 11-12 so as to enhance the curriculum. They should also support the Career Advancement Programme (CAP) initiated by the Government.
- Assist in providing resources, materials, software or technical expertise to ensure that at least one school in each parish can provide full access to children with disabilities.
- Advocate for better management skills among school leaders. Businesses and universities, in particular, can leverage their experience to help develop effective training programmes.
- Promote and support monitoring systems that incorporate students' achievements and other data into education planning. Information should be used not just to assess whether students are learning but also to help improve education performance both of individual students and the school system as a whole.
- Reignite efforts of the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ) to collaborate with the National Council on Education to identify prospective school board candidates from amongst its membership of over 240 companies, business

associations and individuals. The aim of this effort would be to bring business management skills to the operations of schools.

- Continue to support early childhood education and the transition of students to primary schools. Ensure that data from the Grade 1 Individual Learning Profile is collected and analyzed appropriately in an effort to identify critical areas of vulnerability and chart a path for improvement at the beginning of the formal education system.
- Independently monitor education progress to ensure that improving the system and achieving high levels of learning remain a priority and that goals are met.
- Identify and help design strategies to address inequalities in education such as the emphasis on improving the educational outcomes of boys and the focus of schools in underserved communities.
- Leverage their influence in communities in order to engage community members in supporting student enrollment and attendance, provide resources that increase opportunities to learn, and build relationships with the schools in the community.

**Private entities, mainly churches and large foundations, as well as development partners contribute substantial amounts to the education sector through projects that enhance infrastructure, resources and technical capacity of the teaching staff (pg 45)**

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# POSSIBILITY PATHS FOR GOVERNMENT AND MINISTRY OFFICIALS

The Government and Ministry Officials should:

- Continue plans to phase out all age and junior high schools. Data show that students are less likely to re-enroll at the secondary level after having completed schooling at these types of schools.
- Strengthen the mechanisms that monitor attendance both at the primary and secondary levels. Even though the target of 85% attendance is being met at the primary level and within reach at the secondary level, there has been only a minimal improvement in this indicator since 2004. Presently, students are missing about 6 weeks of school on average.
- Ensure that the physical resources of schools and school plants meet specified minimum standards as a strategy to reduce the existing inequity in the education system.
- Develop a mechanism for using data from national and classroom assessments to develop school improvement plans. This should include an Average Yearly Progress indicator at the secondary level, which would define performance standards throughout the secondary education cycle.
- Review the Alternative Secondary Transitional Education Programme (ASTEP) to better define its resource needs and the process for integrating students into the regular secondary school programme.
- Give schools more autonomy in exchange for clear accountability and standards for principals, teachers, and other administrative staff.
- Initiate programmes to build the cadre of teachers in key areas such as mathematics and science.
- Modify the budgeting and other resource allocation process in order to assign greater resources to those schools with the greatest need instead of the common allocation method that is now being used.
- Revisit the secondary level curriculum to ensure its compatibility with the CSEC syllabi.
- Ensure that teachers are equipped to handle the challenges of the education system through focused professional development and entrenchment of a mentorship period in the profession. This should have rewards for teachers.
- Participate in at least one global test of student achievement, such as TIMSS, PIRLS or PISA, to better understand how Jamaican students compare in the global economy.

**The Ministry of Education oversees the Jamaican education system through its central office and six geographic administrative regions, providing strategic leadership and policy direction which includes a management and accountability framework for the sector (pg. 36)**

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# **POSSIBILITY PATHS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS, TEACHERS AND SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS**

School Leaders, Teachers and System Administrators should:

- Evaluate their school's performance regularly and develop an annual school plan that includes clear strategies, indicators and targets (the school needs to be considered as a whole system and teacher plans should feed into Department or Grade plans which in turn feed into school plans. The plans and strategies should be evidence-based and the results of student achievement tests and school evaluations used to help identify areas of strength and weakness).
- Develop clear strategies to reduce the persistent under-performance of boys and other vulnerable groups.
- Develop and implement a mechanism for the early identification of students who are struggling academically and act quickly to help overcome deficits. Interventions appropriate to the specific child should be developed and implemented.
- Help teachers strengthen their knowledge and performance by giving them opportunities to work together in communities of practice. Their efforts should be recognized.
- Put programmes in place to address absenteeism (which is significantly higher among students from households from lower socio-economic groups).
- Build partnerships with civic groups and the community in

order to leverage resources, share experiences, and create a broad coalition of actors working towards improving schools and the education system.

- Implement differentiated instructional methods in classrooms to engender a more inclusive learning atmosphere. School leaders should monitor teaching to ensure that these methods are being used.
- Conduct annual human resource assessments so that appropriate professional development opportunities can be sought and to ensure that skills are being matched effectively.
- Create a supportive school environment for both students and parents.

**Government is taking steps to safeguard the teaching profession through standards and professional development (p. 40)**



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# POSSIBILITY PATHS FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

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Parents should:

- Capitalize on offers made by the private sector to fund examination fees for selected CSEC subjects.
- Become more active in the monitoring and development of school activities, through discussion of documents like the Jamaica Education Report Card and the findings from school and student assessments and their implications for your school.
- Demand better information on teacher qualifications, use of school resources, and progress towards education goals.
- Participate in school improvement planning and develop regular lines of communication with teachers.
- Instill/reinforce the value of education and its connection to adult life from home so that students will more clearly see how education is relevant to their lives.
- Work closely with schools to improve attendance and keep absences to a minimum - families should aim to exceed the Government's target of students attending at least 85% of scheduled school days.
- Seek ways to keep students enrolled in schools for the entire secondary cycle, which currently ends at Grade 11 (16 years old), and longer if possible (extending the mandatory school

age to 18 years should provide students with additional incentives to stay in school and hopefully better prepare students for possible entry into tertiary level institutions).

Students should:

- Set personal goals that can be incorporated into class plans and ultimately help influence school plans.
- Become active in their Students' Council Associations as this will provide an avenue for them to express their views about the education system.
- Provide feedback to school leaders on the quality of education being offered.
- Become more involved in volunteering opportunities and civic bodies.

**Students and parents are not just clients of the education system, but are active participants who should consider their roles as being critical to the success of the system (pg. 38)**





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