



JAMAICA: STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

EARLY GRADE LITERACY

This document depicts key findings of the stakeholder mapping and analysis on Early Grade Literacy (EGL) in the country. This study was produced by LAC Reads Capacity Program (LRCP) and its national partner in Jamaica, EduConnectJA.

The intent of the stakeholder analysis is to identify, collect, and systematize information on key EGL organizational and individual stakeholders within the framework of the LRCP to determine (a) their past, current and potential impact on EGL policy and practice; (b) their knowledge and capacity needs to enhance or sustain this impact in their country and the LAC region; and (c) how the project can utilize their existing skills for capacity building throughout the region. The qualitative study was conducted through semi-structured interviews intended to gain a better understanding of experiences of individuals, whose opinions may be better expressed in a one-on-one format. The stakeholder analysis responded to the following research questions:

I. WHICH ORGANIZATIONS ARE CONCERNED WITH, ENGAGED IN, AND POTENTIALLY ORIENTED TOWARD DEVELOPING EGL POLICY AND PRACTICE IN PRIORITY COUNTRIES AND THE REGION?

The LRCP team delineated six primary groupings of stakeholders, within which we categorized various actors involved in EGL in Jamaica. Table I, below, lists specific organizations the team identified to interview as part of the stakeholder analysis.

Table 1. Stakeholder Classification

	STAKEHOLDER GROUPING	INSTITUTIONS IDENTIFIED
1	Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (MOEYI) Jamaica Library Service (JLS)
2	International Organizations that collaborate with the Gob. of Jamaica	USAID
3	Independent Intl. Organizations	No stakeholders identified in this category
4	Researchers/Academics	University lecturers in Language Arts and Children’s Literature
5	Teacher-Training Institutions	Lecturers in Language and Literacy Development
6	Civil Society and Private Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparatory school Christian-based prep school Public primary school Infant school Child development center Teachers’ Association Parent Teacher Association (primary school) Book industry

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (MOEYI) is the arm of government that is responsible for the formulation and implementation of educational policies and practices, as well as the administration of the educational system at the pre-school, primary, and secondary levels. The Curriculum and Support Services section of the Educational Services Division develops plans, organizes, directs, coordinates input, and evaluates the curriculum for the primary and secondary levels.

Jamaica Library Service (JLS) is an agency of the MOEYI. It provides, under the MOEYI, a public library network and a school library network. The JLS has responsibility for 124 public libraries and 927 school libraries throughout the island, ranging from infant to secondary. Every year, the agency develops a strategic plan and aligns its strategic priorities to the MOEYI’s priorities.

The MOEYI has collaborated with USAID/Jamaica to implement a number of reading initiatives to improve the reading standards of children in the early grades (Grades 1–3). These initiatives have included the training of classroom teachers in effective reading practices, training of a cadre of reading coaches to work

directly with teachers, the development reading standards, and the provision of materials to enhance the teaching of reading in the early grades.

Researchers and academics work at the university level and are engaged in teacher training, research, and producing publications. The stakeholders identified worked directly in the Language Arts Department and had expertise in teaching of reading.

The teacher-training institutions offer EGL programs to the degree, diploma, and certificate levels. These include private tertiary institutions, such as Mico University College and Hydel University College; and universities, such as the Northern Caribbean University and the University of the West Indies. The Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE) and the Jamaica Teaching Council (JTC) play a significant role in setting the agenda for teacher training in these institutions.

The civil society and private sector category includes public and privately run schools (infant, basic, primary, and preparatory). It also includes representatives of the Teaching Association and book industry. Individuals are engaged in EGL at various levels and in various forms such as instructional workshops and the provision of materials.

2. WHAT IS THE INFLUENCE AND INTEREST OF EACH ONE, AND WHAT TYPES OF INTERACTIONS EXIST AMONG THE STAKEHOLDERS?

Stakeholders indicated that multiple synergies existed within and among stakeholder groups—schools, private sector organizations, tertiary institutions, and government entities. However, a fair number of informants also said they do not work at all with other groups.

Other stakeholder groups also work directly with the schools, teacher-training institutions, publishers, libraries, and private organizations. For example, a mutually beneficial relationship exists between tertiary education institutions and primary schools. Student teachers enrolled in EGL programs at the teachers colleges and universities are placed in primary classrooms for teaching practice/practicum. During this exercise, the tertiary-level student teachers who engage in exemplary teaching influence EGL in the classroom, and conversely, exemplary teachers influence the student teachers' practice by providing instructional support and feedback. Lecturers and officers in the MOEYI also conduct workshops with teachers, and as teachers learn about reading strategies, the lecturers and officers receive feedback from the field, which in turn informs their practice.

Similar categories of stakeholders regularly collaborate among themselves. Lecturers collaborate with one another to prepare presentations for delivery at various forums, develop proposals, and engage in grant writing when working on special projects, as well as to mark examination papers. Officers in the MOEYI work with colleagues in different units. Finally, the book industry stakeholders work together through collaborative promotions, collaboration with illustrators, and meetings, and also conduct training for interested writers and publishers of early childhood materials to facilitate the development of books for the Book Start Initiative and Kingston Book Festival. The book industry also works with MOEYI in the writing, reviewing, and publishing of materials to support, for example, the National Strategy, Literacy 1-2-3.

Most stakeholders felt that they had influence on EGL within their professional contexts but not at the national level. For example they could make changes in teaching strategies, modify content to suit students'

needs, implement interventions to meet reading needs, and select additional reading texts to match their students' performance levels. A stakeholder in the Civil Society and Private Sector group reported that, at the policy level, the MOEYI used consultants to develop programs and policies that sometimes did not meet the needs of the students. Thus, the stakeholder felt unable to influence the EGL decisions at the national level. Stakeholders also felt that they were in a position to make greater change in the public primary system than in the private system, as stakeholders in the private system did not know about MOEYI meetings or workshops or other forums that they could attend and share perspectives. Members of the Researchers/Academics stakeholder group felt that they had influence but were not invited to the various forums at which they could share their ideas.

Lecturers from a teacher-training institution felt that they had influence within EGL, as a representative from their group sits on the academic board of the MOEYI. An international organization felt they had influence because they were able to be a part of the curriculum development process at the early childhood level.

3. WHAT TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS ARE CURRENTLY IN PLACE IN THE COUNTRY?

The MOEYI is currently revising its EGL curriculum to be more detailed and more systematic for teachers to implement. This effort highlights the government's current commitment to enhancing early education in the country. Separate from that broader initiative, stakeholders' involvement in EGL ranges from empowering students with reading skills, equipping teachers with teaching skills, providing institutions with suitable materials, identifying reading gaps, and providing tips to guide parents in assisting their children in reading. This section elaborates on the different types of engagement, which center on teacher activities in and out of the classroom and national curriculum initiatives to improve EGL.

National Curriculum Initiatives - The Jamaica Early Childhood Curriculum documents include curriculum guides and scope and sequence to support the teaching of children from birth to 3 years, and 4- and 5-year-olds. In the early years, emergent literacy skills are emphasized throughout the curriculum. These skills include listening, talking, writing, and comprehension. Children are given opportunities to engage in meaningful activities to develop these skills, such as listening to stories, talking about their favorite things, writing their names, interacting with print, and demonstrating their understanding of target words in stories.

The National Standards Curriculum provides opportunities for the holistic development of the children. Their personal experiences are incorporated into pedagogical delivery. The Language Arts Curriculum for Grades 1 through 3, a component of the National Standards Curriculum (2014), focuses on the development of skills in five strands; Speaking and Listening, Word Recognition and Fluency, Comprehension, Grammar and Convention, and Writing (Communication). This curriculum incorporates the Literacy 1-2-3 strategy, which is the MOEYI's national strategy for teaching literacy in all primary schools. The strategy uses the Language Experience and Awareness Approach and is based on themes from the Revised Primary Curriculum (1999) as well as, the New Standards Curriculum. The strategy is supported by culturally relevant literacy materials that make direct links to pupils' experiences.

Teacher Activities - Teachers reported adapting existing successful approaches to suit the needs of their students. One teacher mentioned the 4 Blocks Approach, in which students got opportunities to practice reading and writing in an integrated way. In addition, many teachers expressed the view that assessment was a critical element of reading. Thus, teachers adapted assessment tools and sometimes

developed their own tools to ascertain their children’s reading level, so that appropriate interventions might be applied. Teachers mentioned that such interventions might require pullout sessions, in which they could take children with reading challenges out of their regular classes for a prescribed period per day.

Reading Competitions and Campaigns - Currently, reading competitions were featured among the initiatives that schools and other supporting institutions introduced. Competitions were at the school, parish, and national levels and encouraged students to read for pleasure and to show their understanding of what they read. The national reading competition hosted by the JLS is organized annually and targets participants aged 6 to 21 years. The competition aims to “develop skills in reading and encourage the reading habit, foster an appreciation of books, hone skills in comprehension, literary analysis and criticism, and cultivate and encourage an interest in libraries and information.” The annual national-level “Read across Jamaica Day” is organized by the Jamaica Teachers’ Association and aims to promote the importance of literacy. This initiative engages reading models from the communities, and the private and public sectors, to read to children. The Drop Everything and Read initiative and daily read aloud sessions are regularly scheduled activities in some schools. These activities provide opportunities for students to engage in independent reading and listen to examples of fluent reading.

USAID initiatives - Over the years there have been many USAID-sponsored initiatives aimed at improving the reading levels of students in the early grades in Jamaica. Currently, in collaboration with USAID, the Government of Jamaica implements an initiative for a comprehensive reading activity with the purpose of improving literacy among students in Grades 1-3 in 450 low performing primary schools in the country. The objectives are to enhance Grades 1-3 teachers’ capacity to teach phonological awareness, phonics and vocabulary; improve student performance in reading instruction; equip principals and education officers in the management of literacy instructions; provide parents with basic knowledge and skills on literacy development; and improve the tracking and monitoring of the Ministry’s literacy resources and programs.

Reading Evaluations and Assessments - Each year the MOEYI assesses students’ mastery of literacy through the use of national assessments - Jamaica Early Childhood Readiness Assessment tool (for 4-year-olds), Grade One Individual Learning Profile, Grade Three Diagnostic Test and the Grade Four Literacy Test. The MOEYI’s Informal Diagnostic Reading Inventory is used to assess students’ reading level.

4. WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS’ REQUIREMENTS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING AND THE BEST POSSIBLE DESIGNS (E.G., TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, TRAINING, NETWORKING) FOR DOING SO?

Stakeholders would like support in accessing resources and materials, media assistance in public awareness campaigns, more engagement from the political directorate, more on-site support for teachers, more concentrated time to spend on areas of research with children, and monitoring of the education process in schools. For example, one stakeholder said, “It could be more effective if more concentrated time were spent to the monitoring process.” Areas in which stakeholders could use more support are discussed below.

Stakeholders suggested using campaigns to promote EGL materials and informing parents about their roles as early grade teachers. Participants believed that parents of young children needed advice on ways to “differentiate wants from needs, prioritize [activities], make sacrifices of a personal nature for the sake of

the child,” so that their children’s education was not compromised. They suggested that more workshops that gave a voice to the participants to share their challenges, as well as conferences at which teachers were engaged in simulation exercises, would enhance their work.

Stakeholders also expressed interest in engaging the media to highlight the work being done in EGL and inform stakeholders and the general public. This may enable more buy-in from stakeholders, other key groups, parents, and the general public. Individuals would have a broader perspective and positively have an impact on development by being better informed. Some stakeholders also suggested sharing findings from research through various media, such as Jamaica Information Service News, video, and postings on Facebook.

MOEYI stakeholders and researchers wanted to concentrate on more one-on-one support to teachers, monitor processes, and conduct research with children. Other stakeholders thought teachers need guidance in the selection of materials. This would help them in determining whether they were selecting the right tools that would enable their students’ learning to be more practical.

There is a national focus on the improvement of early grade reading in Jamaica. Recent national curriculum initiatives place this focus at the early childhood level beginning with the 4 year old cohort. This emphasis supports the research that students learn best during their early years. It is hoped that the information presented here will motivate all sectors to become involved in early grade education.



To see the complete stakeholder analysis on Early Grade Reading for Jamaica and other LAC region countries, visit our website: www.lacreads.org.

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