



EDUFOCUS NUMBER # 14

CAMP SUMMER PLUS EXPANSION: MORE STUDENTS RECEIVED SUMMER LEARNING INTERVENTION



Credit: US Ed. Bussey

Camp Summer Plus 2012 students

USAID/Jamaica in collaboration with the Ministry of Education implemented Camp Summer Plus 2012, an intensive, rigorous five-week academic programme that began on July 9, 2012. This camp was organized based on the [Summer Advantage USA model](#) and aimed to “harness the possibilities of summer learning to raise the educational achievement levels of disadvantaged students.” This year, Camp Summer Plus expanded to 912 students, up from approximately 120 last year, across seven camps in St. Andrew, St. Catherine, Clarendon, Westmoreland and St. James. This camp gave students the opportunity to advance their skills in reading and mathematics during the usually idle summer months, which is especially important given that many are at risk of failing the much

anticipated, high stakes Grade Four Literacy test.

STUDENT SELECTION

Students in Grade 3, who were functioning two or three years below grade level, were targeted for this intervention. Primary school principals identified students who were tested in reading and mathematics using the Early Reading Assessment Instrument and Early Math Assessment Instrument. Novelette McLean Francis, advisor attached to the Jamaica Basic Education Project, noted that the initial assessment results indicated that the bulk of the camp’s beneficiaries were functioning below the Grade 1.

THE CAMP SUMMER PLUS APPROACH



Student studies word wall

Students were bused in from their respective schools to eat breakfast before beginning their lesson at 9 a.m. Each class had approximately 23 students, an Academic Leader and a teaching assistant who were armed with a curriculum and lesson plans developed by the Jamaica Basic Education Project. Students were taught reading and mathematics until noon, which was followed by lunch and then enrichment activities. Each day, students were given reading tips that taught them how to read unfamiliar material and words. An Academic Leader located at the camp site explained that reading tips “help them to self correct, analyze words, and use the skills

they have in decoding one set of words to decode other words.” These tips were disseminated around the classroom, and incidental teaching was used to point out reading tips and model how to use them.

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Pull-out programme

In addition to establishing a baseline, the initial assessment results were used to identify students in need of special attention through the pull-out sessions with the Special Educator. These students were functioning way below Grade 1, and usually displayed attendant behavioural problems. As a result, they could not be instructed meaningfully in the camp's regular classroom that used a Grade 1 or 2 curriculum. Small groups of these students met with the Special Education teacher outside of the regular classroom to focus on their reading needs. However, due to the large number of students identified with these needs in Region 1 and 4, a regular class was designed for them in addition to the pull-out programme.



Student gets help from Teaching Assistance

Data driven instruction

Students' progress was monitored through weekly quizzes and adjustments made to ensure that weak areas were addressed. In the last week of the camp, students were tested in reading and mathematics,

which will be compared with results of the initial assessment. This comparison will be used to assess the camp's effectiveness in promoting literacy and numeracy.

EXPECTED STUDENT OUTCOMES

- *Improved reading levels & fluency*
- *Increased repertoire of strategies that students can use independently to problem solve*
- *Marked behaviour change*

PROMOTING DISCIPLINE

In the initial week, students' rambunctious behaviour was especially challenging for non-teaching staff. Parent volunteers and bus drivers were overwhelmed while conducting their duties. Ms. Jacobs, Camp Coordinator for Region 1, explained that as a result, "some of them refused to come back because of the behaviour on the bus."

One useful behaviour change strategy used to resolve this problem was to harness the natural leadership qualities of students to promote discipline. During a meeting with students about their behaviour on the bus, one boy volunteered to help supervise his peers. Some individuals were concerned about the choice because they identified him as a troublemaker, but the Camp Coordinator decided to let him remain in charge. Ms. Jacobs recounted that soon after, she observed "when the bus came, he just stepped out in the front, and all

of them were in a line." Further problems were not reported. This example shows that given the chance, the talents of mischievous students can be channelled in a positive way to promote a positive learning environment.

NOTEWORTHY CHANGES

The camp is an initiative that is about turning negative into a positive. Ms. Wray, Guidance Counsellor in Region 1, explained that the camp's method of teaching students, believing in them, and encouraging them, motivated the students. She noted that even parents observed their children's eagerness to attend the camp. Camp staff from three camp sites noted that behaviour improved significantly over the five weeks. Nurse Fiona said she observed a lot of interesting personalities and varying behavioural issues. She was visibly in awe when "they really calmed down" over the five weeks. Additionally, improvement in reading was observed. An Academic Leader described the camp's influence as fantastic. She noted that students "have learnt to maintain their focus, and that in itself tells me that they want to learn in spite of the distractions and challenges".