



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**Alternative Secondary Transitional
Education Programme (ASTEP)**

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



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Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	3
1.1	Policy Goal	3
1.2	The Policy Driver.....	3
1.3	Grade Four Literacy Test (First Sitting)	4
1.4	Grade Four Literacy Test Supplemental Examination (Second Sitting)	4
1.5	Performance Gains	5
2.0	The Alternative Secondary Education Programme (ASEP)	5
2.1	Rationale.....	5
3.0	Transitional Year 1	6
3.1	Primary Level	6
3.2	Institutional Arrangement	6
3.3	Projected Number of ASEP Centres.....	6
3.4	Geographical Location of Centres	7
3.5	Centre Selection.....	7
3.6	Curriculum Offering	8
3.7	Specialist Support	8
4.0	Transitional Year 2.....	8
4.1	Secondary Level.....	8
4.2	Student Placement	9
4.3	Curriculum Offering	9
4.4	Specialist Support	10
4.5	Terminal Assessment.....	10
5.0	Programme Support.....	10
5.1	Institutionalize the National Comprehensive Literacy Programme.....	10
5.2	Strengthen and Redirect Existing Interventions.....	11
5.3	Establish an Agency for Assessment and Referral	11
5.4	Expand Training of Specialists	11
5.5	Institutionalise “Child Find”	11
5.6	Implement an extensive In-service Teacher Training Programme	12
6.0	Key Consideration	12
7.0	Appendix 1	13

Ministry of Education

The Alternative Secondary Transitional Education Programme (ASTEP)

1.0 Introduction

The Ministry of Education in its policy thrust to raise the literacy level of the school-aged population, implemented in 2009, the Competence-Based Transition Policy to regulate the flow of children from the primary to the secondary level. This new direction will link eligibility for Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) to certification in literacy based on the externally administered Grade 4 Literacy Test.

1.1 Policy Goal

Under the Competence-Based Transition Policy:

- no child will be allowed to sit the Grade Six Achievement Test unless he/she is certified literate
- each child will be given four opportunities to be certified as literate
- a parallel pathway will be provided for students who will require special intervention

1.2 The Policy Driver

The Grade Four Literacy Test functions as the standardised measure of literacy at the primary level, consistent with international practice of benchmarking Literacy skills at that Grade level. The Test comprises three sections; Word Recognition, Reading

Comprehension and a Writing Task. Only students who master all three sub-tests are considered literate. Under the policy each child will be provided with **four (4)** opportunities to be certified literate.

1.3 Grade Four Literacy Test (First Sitting)

The external administration of the Grade 4 Literacy Test to approximately 48,000 children in June 2009, marked the first stage of the Competence-Based Transition Policy. Public schools accounted for 41,662 (87 percent) of the total number of children who sat the first external administration of the Grade 4 Literacy Test. Of this group, approximately 67 percent attained Mastery; 23 percent fell in the Almost Mastery and 10 percent in the Non-Mastery categories. This performance provided the trigger for the first supplemental examination.

1.4 Grade Four Literacy Test Supplemental Examination (Second Sitting)

The December 2009 administration of the Grade Four Literacy Test represented the first supplemental examination under the Competence-Based Transition Policy. A total of 15,791 children from 747 Public, 156 Independent and 5 Special Schools were registered for the examination. Approximately 13,763 children sat the examination (13 percent or 2,028 children were absent). Of this group, approximately 33 percent or 4,606 achieved Mastery; 3,285 (24 percent) achieved Almost Mastery and 5,872 (43 percent) Non-mastery.

1.5 Performance Gains

An analysis of the performance of public school children revealed that 3,831 (44 percent) of the children who were at the Almost Mastery level after the first sitting were now at the Mastery level, 2,612 (30 percent) remained at the Almost Mastery level and 2,264 (26 percent) fell to the Non-Mastery level. Of the 3,526 children at the Non-Mastery level only 176 children attained Mastery. This data indicate that more than 10,000 children from the 2009 Grade four cohort will be expected to sit the Literacy test for the third time (second time for the 2,028 children absent). This group will join the 2010 Grade 4 cohort.

Note: *Performance data for the Grade Four Literacy Test administered in June 2010 is not yet available.*

2.0 The Alternative Secondary Transitional Education Programme (ASTEP)

2.1 Rationale

The UN estimates suggest that 10 to 15 percent of any age cohort will require special intervention. Applying this projection to the Jamaican context, it is estimated that approximately 20 percent of the 2009 cohort will require special intervention. Consistent with this, is that, approximately 25 percent or 10,254 children in public schools are yet to be certified as literate and therefore, will not transition to the secondary level via the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT). It is within this context that consideration is being given to the provision of alternative instructional arrangements designed to provide adequate and appropriate measures to address this subgroup of learners.

The Ministry of Education in its response will develop and implement a structured programme, *The Alternative Secondary Education Programme* (ASEP). This programme will be a **two (2) year** transitional programme designed to provide a safety net for the approximately **9,000 children annually**, who at the end of the primary level will require special support and intervention.

3.0 Transitional Year 1

3.1 Primary Level

Children who after the four mandatory sittings of the Grade Four Literacy Test have not achieved Mastery and who are therefore not eligible to sit GSAT, **will not transition to secondary schools**. This group of approximately 9000 students will spend the first transitional year in dedicated ASEP Centres.

3.2 Institutional Arrangement

ASEP Centres will be established in selected Primary, All Age and Primary and Junior High Schools. Each Centre will be provided with the capacity and resources to appropriately treat with either the specified minimum of 20 to 25 students (one group) or a maximum of 40 to 50 students (two groups).

3.3 Projected Number of ASEP Centres

Based on the dispersion of student who will require special intervention (Appendix 1), 280 Centres will be established as follows:

- 80 Centres (2 Groups, maximum 50 students) 4000 students
- 200 Centres (1 group, maximum 25 students) 5000 students

3.4 Geographical Location of Centres

The Quality Education Circle (QEC) model will guide the choice of schools to serve as ASEP Centres.

Example:

QEC #. 20: St, Mary			
School	Almost mastery	Non-Mastery	Total
Beecham Hill Primary	1	2	3
Richmond Primary	2	1	3
Zion Hill Primary	2	14	16
Total	5	17	22

Beecham Hill Primary, Richmond Primary and Zion Hill Primary Schools are in the same cluster and in close proximity of each other. Centre selection will however, be dependent on the criteria detailed below.

3.5 Centre Selection

Each Region will establish a selection panel comprising Territorial Education Officers, School Administrators and Building Officers. Each panel will be provided with a master list of the number of students in individual schools in the Mastery and Non-Mastery categories (Appendix 1).

Selection of Centres will be based on the following criteria:

- Availability of Space
- School leadership (Board of Management and Principal)
- School performance on National Assessments
- Proximity of Centre to neighbouring schools
- Accessibility to Centre
- Availability of resources

3.6 Curriculum Offering

Curriculum offering with emphasis on:

- Reading
- Writing
- Mathematics

Students will also be exposed to Art & Craft, Drama, Music and Physical Education. Student learning will be enhanced by interactive technologies.

3.7 Specialist Support

At least one (1) dedicated Teacher/Specialist will be assigned to each ASEP Centre. The teaching support for ASEP Centres will be supplemented by the existing pool of teachers in overstaffed schools, based on voluntary transfer and through other mechanisms available to the Ministry.

4.0 Transitional Year 2

4.1 Secondary Level

At the end of the first year of ASTEP, students will transition to selected secondary schools via a special placement mechanism to be determined by the Minister. Under this arrangement students will technically repeat Grade 7. ASTEP Centres will be established and resourced in selected High Schools. High schools may volunteer or be pre-selected to participate in the programme.

4.2 Student Placement

Pursuant to the Education Regulations, 1980, Section 35 (1),

The secondary schools entrance examination shall be a basis for admission to high or comprehensive public educational institutions and shall be a competitive examination open to all students who are not less than ten years and eight months nor more than thirteen years of age on the first day of September of the school year (as prescribed in Regulation 7 (1)) in which such students seek to enter the high or comprehensive public educational institutions.

This provision does not preclude the placement of students via alternate means, consequently, students will be appropriately placed according to availability of space and proximity.

4.3 Curriculum Offering

The second year of ASTEP will function as a vocationally oriented parallel pathway. Students will be exposed to the following curriculum areas:

- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Integrated Science
- Social Studies
- Information and Communication Technology
- Technical and Vocational Subjects
- Citizenship
- Music
- Physical Education

4.4 Specialist Support

Each Centre in a High school will be provided with a Centre Manager. It is expected that students will be mainstreamed for instruction depending on their area specialisation.

4.5 Terminal Assessment

- National Council on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET) – Level 1 or Level 2
- The Caribbean Examinations Council – CCSLC

5.0 Programme Support

5.1 Institutionalize the National Comprehensive Literacy Programme (NCLP)

The National Comprehensive Literacy Programme to be strengthened through the adoption of methodologies and strategies developed under major interventions aimed at improving Literacy, such as:

- GOJ/IADB Primary Education Improvement Project II (PEIP II, 1994-1998)
- GOJ/USAID New Horizons for Primary Schools Project (1998–2005)
- GOJ/IADB Primary Education Support Project (PESP)
- GOJ/USAID Expanding Educational Horizons Project
- GOJ/ROSE II Literacy Initiative for Grades 7-9
- Caribbean Centre of Excellence in Teacher Training (CCETT)
- GOJ Competency Shelter Project
- GOJ/Student Empowerment Programme

5.2 Strengthen and Redirect Existing Interventions

Redirect the financial and curriculum support, of existing interventions: Student Empowerment Programme, Competency Shelter and the Grade Four Summer Literacy Intervention, to support the Alternate Secondary School Programme.

5.3 Establish an Agency for Assessment and Referral

This Agency will supplement the services currently provided by the Mico Child Assessment and Research Education (Mico CARE). Currently, Mico CARE provides screening and assessment services for children with special needs, however, the demand for service outstrips the ability of the Unit to respond to requests on a timely basis.

5.4 Expand Training of Specialists

Currently only Mico and Sam Sharpe Teachers' Colleges offer specialist training programmes. Increased output will be required to serve the target group. This may be achieved through the expansion of participating Colleges or by the inclusion of the Specialist Training Programme in other institutions.

5.5 Institutionalise "Child Find"

Introduce "Child Find" for all new entrants at the Primary level to ensure early detection and treatment of children with special needs.

5.6 Implement an extensive In-service Teacher Training Programme

The Caribbean Centre of Excellence for Teacher Training (CCETT) project has developed a special strategy for training teachers to treat with children who will require special intervention. The project is a preventative initiative to improve reading performance at Grade 1 to 3 and is currently in forty (49) schools.

6.0 Key Consideration

To ensure comparability with global reporting standards children 12 years old and over will be treated as part of the secondary cohort despite the institutional arrangement

7.0 Appendix 1

Appendix 1