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Early Grade Literacy in Latin America and the Caribbean: Jamaica Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis

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USAID/LAC Reads Capacity Program

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LAC Reads Capacity Program



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Abbreviations

AIR	American Institutes for Research
EGL	Early grade literacy
FGD	Focus group discussion
FLASCO	<i>Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales</i>
ICT	Information and communication technology
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LRCP	LAC Reads Capacity Program
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOEYI	Ministry of Education, Youth and Information
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OAS	Organization of American States
OEI	<i>Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia, y la Cultura</i>
PREAL	<i>Programa de Promoción de la Reforma Educativa en América Latina</i>
TERCE	Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

I. Introduction

The LAC Reads Capacity Program (LRCP) aims to increase the impact, scale, and sustainability of early grade literacy (EGL) activities in priority countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (Jamaica, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, and several countries in the Eastern Caribbean). To achieve this goal, the LRCP uses evidence from international research, but also works to identify evidence of what has worked specifically in Latin America and the Caribbean, with emphasis on the priority countries.

The Program seeks to produce four results:

- a) The collection, consolidation, and use of *evidence* from literacy research in the early grades and *resources* produced in the region for research as a whole (Outcome 1: **Evidence**).
- b) The dissemination of the relevant evidence and the resources among the various audiences and key EGL stakeholders in the region (Outcome 2: **Dissemination**).
- c) Capacity development among key EGL stakeholders in the region so they can implement evidence-based approaches and processes to improve EGL and create new contextually relevant, local evidence (Outcome 3: **Capacity**).
- d) The development of spaces and platforms that ensure the sustainability of initiatives and interventions that strengthen EGL in the region (Outcome 4: **Sustainability**).

The successful implementation of these outcomes requires knowledge from key stakeholders in EGL in each of the countries participating in the Program. The LRCP team developed a stakeholder mapping and analysis process to help identify the following: (1) key EGL stakeholders in each country, (2) their level of influence and interest in EGL according to the proposed methodology, (3) the characteristics of EGL interventions promoted by key stakeholders in each country, (4) the resources or materials they need, (5) the formats through which the information should be disseminated, (6) key stakeholders' inputs to inform the design of local EGL capacity strengthening plans, (7) the type of evidence they need to improve practice, (8) how to create and strengthen the current capacity in each country, (9) the resources available in the region to address these needs, and (10) the opportunities to sustain efforts in each country moving forward.

The report summarizes all main outcomes of the four studies, highlighting the most important findings, and comparing similarities and differences among all four countries. Firstly, the report introduces the conceptual framework used for the design and findings analysis. In a second section the methodology of the study is described. Results are organized following the topics identified previously; results are discussed, and conclusions are drawn. The last section presents each one of the national reports and annexes.

Objective of stakeholder mapping and analysis

The purpose of the LRCP stakeholder mapping and analysis activity is to identify and systematize 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 such impact in their country and the LAC region; and (c) how the project can utilize their existing skills for capacity building throughout the region. We define an EGL stakeholder as one who is concerned with, engaged in, or potentially oriented to developing EGL policy and practice in a specific context (for general definitions and a living table on types of stakeholders, see Annex 1).

We define “**stakeholder mapping**” as “the schematic design of a social reality in which we are immersed (in this case, the situation of early reading in each country) to understand it in its complexity to the extent possible and establish strategies of change for the reality as it is understood” (translated from Spanish; Gutiérrez, 2007, p. 7). The mapping “helps to represent the social reality in which we are working, understand it in its complexity, and design strategies for intervention with more than just the overall feeling or the opinion of one qualified informant” (translated from Spanish; Tapella, 2007). Finally, “the utilization of a social map is seen as a fundamental tool in the design and roll out of the whole project. The mapping of actors permits us to have knowledge of the alliances, conflicts, spokesmen, and as such, permits the better selection of actors that should direct the work in one moment or another” (translated from Spanish; Pozo Solís, 2007). To summarize, the stakeholder mapping helps us to (1) better understand the EGL reality in each country in relation to the actors who influence it, (2) conduct our work based on this social reality, and (3) promote engagement of the actors to carry out and continue the work.

The stakeholder analysis is a secondary step that will build on the stakeholder mapping. We define “**stakeholder analysis**” as “a process of systematically gathering and analyzing qualitative information to determine whose interests should be taken into account when developing and/or implementing a policy or program” (Schmeer, n.d.). The World Bank¹ defines stakeholder analysis as “a methodology used to facilitate institutional and policy reform processes by accounting for and often incorporating the needs of those who have a ‘stake’ or an interest in the reforms under consideration.” Finally a stakeholder analysis “does not only consist of taking a list of possible actors of a territory, but also to understand their actions and objectives for why they are working in the area and their perspectives about the immediate future.” In summary, a stakeholder analysis helps us to 1) determine whose interests should be taken into account and where to incorporate capacity building activities in that country (Results 2 and 3), 2) account for and incorporate stakeholder needs and identify potential in the region that could help support capacity building in other countries (Result 3), (3) determine the areas for developing an EGL research agenda, and 4) identify

¹ <http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/anticorrupt/PoliticalEconomy/PDFVersion.pdf>

participants and formats to build sustainability structures (Result 4).

The overall stakeholder activity “identifies the stakeholders and maps out their relative power, influence and interests in a certain domain or in regard to a specific initiative, identifies the role and action arena of each stakeholder, and indicates the relative priority to be given to meeting the interests of the stakeholders” (Dragos Aligica, 2006; Morgan & Taschereau, 1996; Varvasovszky & Brugha, 2000). This includes exploring the political influences that underlie technical policy in EGL within each country. Given the constant shifting of political agendas, it is important to understand the systems of communication, networking and mutual influence among stakeholders beyond just the current state, as fluctuations could affect dissemination efforts and impact on policies and practices during the project and beyond.

II. Conceptual Framework and Research Questions

The conceptual framework used to guide this research is divided into two parts. The first part outlines the LRCP definitions and understanding of stakeholder mapping and analysis concepts, on the basis of which we aim to determine the influence of and relationships among various stakeholders in EGL. The second part involves an explanation of the way the LRCP defines EGL.

Stakeholder Mapping: Key concepts

Stakeholder mapping is a methodology linked to the theory of social networks, which is characterized by the idea that society can be understood in terms of structures that manifest themselves as types of relationships among stakeholders—whether at the group, organization, individual, or institutional level. Groups of social relationships create networks, and the positions that the various stakeholders occupy in these networks define the stakeholders’ values, beliefs, and behaviors (Tapella, 2007) (EC/FAO, 2006); (Guedes, 2004); (Overseas Development Administration, 1995); (Pozo Solís, 2007).

The activity enabled the LRCP team to identify the main stakeholders that work in and influence EGL policies and practices in the LRCP target countries. For the purposes of the activity, we define a *stakeholder* as “any person, group, organization, network, governmental or nongovernmental entity, or international agency, that has a position and participates directly or indirectly—or that does not participate but whose intervention is considered important—in the field of EGL.” We also consider that such participation translates into resources, rights, responsibilities, challenges and—over time—a local or national impact in this field.

Identifying key stakeholders, existing networks, and the types of relationships will help guide future LRCP activities in each country and across the region. The LRCP team will

use two key concepts—*influence* and *interest*—to understand, at least in part, the relationships among key stakeholders.

Early Grade Literacy: Key Concepts

Below is a sketch of the LRCP conceptual framework for EGL (LAC Reads Capacity Program, 2015). The elements of this conceptual framework serve as the reference for analyzing the information collected during the research process.

Reading and writing are fundamental skills that enable lifelong learning. Learning to read is a process that involves deriving meaning from a text. Writing is a skill that is intimately linked to reading and that supports reading development through the production of text. Reading and writing are critical not only because they enable children to learn about all content areas (reading to learn) but because these skills enable children to succeed in school in all their subjects and to become active citizens. Learning to read and write is a complex process both for the student and the teacher (Ehri, 2003), and becoming fully literate is the result of an intentional process that should begin very early in life.

Evaluations around the world indicate that there is a large percentage of children who struggle to read and write at their grade level. For example, in the United States, the National Literacy Panel reports that approximately 20% of children face problems learning to read before third grade (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Torgesen (2005) and Reynolds et al. (2011) argue, furthermore, that it is difficult to recover lost ground in the case of students who experience difficulties reading in the first 3 years of school.

However, there is strong evidence to suggest that, if teachers and schools take positive and appropriate measures during these early grades (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Juel, 1988, in Reynolds et al., 2011), almost all students can improve their performance in reading and overcome their initial challenges (Scanlon et al., 2005; Reynolds et al., 2011). This justifies the assertions that interventions in the first three grades of school are incredibly important and endorses the promotion of programs and projects to improve literacy learning as a condition contributing to achieving quality education for all.

There are different stages of literacy learning: emergent or pre-alphabet, EGL, established literacy, and the stage of autonomous readers and writers—the end of the entire process (Camargo, Montenegro, Maldonado, & Magzul, 2013). For each of these stages, there are critical periods, priorities, and appropriate methodologies.

Literacy is a complex competency, and achieving this competency is a long process that is intentionally promoted through teaching; however, in alphabetic languages, literacy is composed of a group of specific, interconnected components: phonological awareness, knowledge of the alphabetic principle, vocabulary, reading fluency, oral and reading comprehension; and writing (RTI, 2009; Camargo et al., 2013).

International research indicates various practices that, because of their effectiveness, are recommended for good EGL learning. Each practice is categorized within one of the following six main themes that provide evidence of the practice's effectiveness. The six themes are as follows:

1. The role of the literate environment at home and in the community.
2. The exposure of children to printed materials to handle and read.
3. The appropriate training, coaching, supervision, compensation, and professional development of teachers.
4. The support of networks, associations, and incentives to promote EGL.
5. Literacy learning in the native language in multilingual contexts.²
6. The promotion of effective pedagogical practices, among which are the following:
 - a) Early language learning, language games, pre-reading and pre-writing pedagogical strategies from the first levels of the child's development, even before formal schooling
 - b) Teaching in an intentional way and with sufficient time dedicated to each of these six fundamental abilities, emphasizing comprehension and the crucial importance of including language learning and critical thinking processes in the development of reading comprehension, including reading aloud every day
 - c) Organization of children in groups with a similar literacy level, which require adequate skill assessment tools and classes designed for each level of reading and writing
 - d) Working with fathers, mothers, families, communities and teachers, giving them support to create an environment centered on positive messages and thoughts about language and literacy (making the task easier even when the parents or members of the community do not know how to read and write).

The subsequent analysis aims to identify the elements of this conceptual framework that are present in the policies, priorities, interventions, and discourse of key stakeholders. The following questions guided the mapping and analysis of key stakeholders in EGL:

Stakeholder Mapping

1. Which organizations and individuals (key stakeholders) are concerned with, engaged in, and potentially oriented toward developing EGL policy and practice in priority countries and the region?

² One of the most important principles of learning to read in multilingual contexts is that the child must begin literacy in a familiar language (Alidou et al., 2006; National Literacy Panel, 2006), as reading acquisition can only occur in a language that the child understands. In addition, learning to read in the native language facilitates reading acquisition in a second language (National Literacy Panel; Koda & Reddy, 2008).

Stakeholder Analysis

1. What evidence formed the basis for EGL programs, projects, actions, processes, or policies that are in place (derived from the evidence review, as well as from the ways stakeholders indicate they use the evidence)?
2. What influences, aside from evidence, do stakeholders consider in designing, implementing, and/or evaluating their work?
3. What are the strengths, weaknesses, and actual or potential capacities of these stakeholders in terms of using evidence-based and locally relevant EGL practices?
4. What are the barriers to reaching these capacities?
5. Where are the synergies among stakeholders and areas where groups can better coordinate to enhance service delivery for teachers and students?
6. What are the comparative political influences on various stakeholders, and what types of influence do they themselves exert?
7. In what areas do stakeholders need support in order to have more impact on EGL?
8. What are the most appropriate ways (e.g., media, format) to disseminate information among different stakeholders?
9. What are stakeholders' requirements for capacity building and the best possible designs (e.g., technical assistance, training, networking) for doing so?

III. Methodology

Given the importance of linking the program's activities to the needs of LAC region stakeholders, the team developed an approach to systematically engage country-level stakeholders in the conversation of regional EGL requirements for capacity building and the most contextually relevant designs for doing so. Qualitative research is uniquely appropriate for the following reasons:

- Depicting a process requires detailed descriptions of what happens and how people engage with one another.
- People's experience of processes typically varies in important ways, so respondents' experiences need to be captured in their own words.
- The process is fluid and dynamic, so it cannot be summarized fairly on a single rating scale at one point in time.
- The process may be the outcome (Patton, 2014, p. 195).

Furthermore, qualitative data collection is well suited to understanding sustainability because this method enables the researchers to explore not only formal activities and anticipated outcomes but informal patterns and unanticipated interactions (Patton,

2014). Qualitative data collection also gives the researcher flexibility to explore unforeseen areas of interest. The LRCP team engaged its national partners to lead this effort, as “the process of stakeholder mapping is as important as the result, and the quality of the process depends heavily on the knowledge of the people participating” (Morris & Baddache, 2011). The details of the process we used build on the work of Pozo Solís (2007), which outlines stakeholder mapping as follows:

1. Initial proposal of the way to classify actors
2. Identification of functions and roles of each actor
3. Relationships and levels of power of each actor
4. Visual representation of stakeholders
5. Possibilities for ways stakeholders could interact
6. Understanding the networks that exist

The following sections outline the methodology we used to implement the stakeholder mapping and analysis, including the initial review, research sample, tools, training, data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Stakeholder Mapping

The team conducted a review of literature to understand structures and interactions of EGL stakeholders within each country, comparatively and regionally, as well as a review of existing literature on the state of EGL in the region. Using this information and local/contextual knowledge, national partner organizations identified key stakeholders in EGL in each target country, developing and using a “country profile” to explain the state of EGL in the country. The team aimed to identify the relationship of each of these groups to EGL. These country profiles are intended to expand over the life of the project and have already been modified from their original versions to include relevant contextual information the teams learned during data collection. As part of this initial activity, the country profiles comprise a review of information that contextualizes the overall stakeholder analysis.

Research Sample

On the basis of the country profile, country teams used purposeful sampling to identify key informants to participate in semi-structured interviews and focus groups based on the following criteria³:

1. Is the person/organization working in EGL? How?

³ BSR Stakeholder Mapping (2011) provides the following example criteria for ranking the relative importance of engaging different stakeholders: contribution to the project, legitimacy (or relation to activity), willingness to engage, influence in the field, and necessity of involvement. We may include any variety of these or other criteria on the basis of team suggestions and discussion.

2. Could the person/organization provide pertinent information? Describe what types.
3. Could the person/organization be a strong potential project collaborator? Describe why and in what way.
4. Does the person/organization
 - e) have at least 2 years of direct work (with students, teachers, communities, or teacher trainers) in promoting reading and writing—specifically, from birth to third grade;
 - f) *or* work in research in reading and writing between birth and Grade 3;
 - g) *or* work in identifying best practices in EGL between birth and Grade 3?

The research team identified six categories to define key stakeholders during the Tegucigalpa Regional Training in February 2016. The categories, examples, and definitions are presented in Exhibit 2 below.

Exhibit 2. LRCP Stakeholder Categories Definitions

	Key Stakeholder Group	Examples	Definition
1	Government	Ministries of Education, local governments, First Lady Office.	All entities funded by the State with State-funded personnel with the exception of research and teachers' training centers.
2	International Agencies	OEI, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, IDB, UNDP, OAS, etc.	Organizations that have multinational agreements and frameworks
3	International NGOs, and donors	USAID, Save the Children, <i>Fe y Alegría</i> , World Vision, etc.	Foreign organizations that are implementing programs locally.
4	Academia and researchers	Universities, think tanks, government research centers, PREAL, FLACSO.	All entities which main objective is knowledge advancement, research, and analysis.
5	Teacher training entities and programs	University education departments, normal schools, teacher training centers.	All teacher training institutions (pre-service, in-service).
6	Civil Society	Non-Governmental Organizations, faith-based organizations, primary	Local organizations without subsidiaries in other countries, and funds come from a variety of sources outside the organization.

	education schools, networks, private foundations.	These organizations are not State-dependent.
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Semi-structured interviews intend to gain a better understanding of higher-level individual experiences, since opinions may be best expressed in a one-on-one format. The teams conducted 1-hour semi-structured interviews with the key informants they had identified.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) allow the research team to understand the experiences of a greater number of stakeholders in a short period of time, in a group environment with their peers, and in a comfortable space where the team can observe interactions among participants. They also provide a context in which stakeholders feel comfortable and empowered to discuss the evaluation topics with their peers and react to each other's opinions and experiences with the program. The team conducted up to 2-hour FGDs with informants they determined may prefer working as a group. Each country detailed the characteristics of the stakeholders they selected in the individual reports to follow.

Data Collection Tools

The interviews and focus groups were semi-structured, using protocols that each included fundamental topics but that allowed for the addition of probes in a more free-flowing conversation that could capture information that might otherwise be missed. Namely, the tools covered the following research questions that the team proposed in the planning document for this task:

1. Which organizations and individuals (key stakeholders) are concerned with, engaged in, and potentially oriented toward developing EGL policy and practice in priority countries and the region?
2. What is the influence and interest of each one, and what types of interactions exist among the stakeholders?
3. What are the strengths, weaknesses, and actual or potential capacities of these stakeholders in terms of using evidence-based and locally relevant EGL practices?
 - a. What are the barriers to reaching these capacities?
4. What are stakeholders' requirements for capacity building and the best possible designs (e.g., technical assistance, training, networking) for doing so?

Overall, the protocols aimed to understand stakeholders' requirements for capacity building and the best possible designs doing so.

Ethical Considerations

The team vetted the tools through AIR's Federal-wide Assurance from the Office of Human Subjects Project of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (FWA00003952). We have systems to ensure that there is no conflict of interest related to Institutional Review Board (IRB) members, or to submission and determination

reviews. The IRB determined that this research was exempt from participant consent. However, the study team received verbal consent from all adult participants and handled the qualitative data according to procedures and protocols approved by our IRB. Standard practices included digital recording for accuracy (with permission), transcription, and protection of confidentiality. Consent protocols can be found in Annex C.

Training and Data Collection

The core team trained national partners' specialists in qualitative research processes and techniques across a period of six months. This period included constant follow-up and teleconferences with all partners, group calls, webinars, and two face-to-face trainings over five days. The first training (February 2016) focused on data collection techniques and modifying the interview and FGD protocols to better address the research questions within each country context. The second training (May 2016) focused on data analysis, report writing, and technical criteria for producing a high-quality qualitative research paper. A webinar and follow-up virtual trainings (May 2016) focused on data coding and categorization of the information collected. These topics aimed to ensure data quality and reduce bias. In addition, the training covered administering the instruments and IRB requirements. The training materials are included in Annex D.

During the initial training, each national team member took part in role-playing activities to practice, using the protocols, to conduct a face-to-face interview or FGD with other researchers, and the entire group provided feedback. The team practiced administering the protocols in the language appropriate for each stakeholder group. Finally, the first interviews provided teams the opportunity to gain experience administering the interview protocols, as well as to assess the appropriateness of the discussion questions. Teams noted challenges in administering the interviews, which we discussed during debriefings. The teams adapted protocol language and procedures accordingly.

The national partners collected data between February 2016 and June 2016. It was appropriate for them to conduct the research, as they were closest to the national and regional contexts and thus best able to understand the objectives on the basis of the interactions with the subjects they were engaging. Two researchers attended each interview, one to drive the conversation and the other to take full and comprehensive notes. Researchers also recorded the interviews as a backup.

Analysis

National partners provided an initial analysis of information gained from the interviews and focus groups to summarize key takeaways and experiences that comprised a summary of emerging themes found during interviews. The teams used these field notes, in addition to the interview notes and transcripts when necessary, to analyze the data. Teams selected the NVivo or MAXQDA program to code the information collected.

The first step to analyzing qualitative data is to develop a coding structure that helps systematically categorize information. The team started with the analytic framework of the study to guide the reporting of the research. Researchers from the various country teams separately open-coded data to independently identify the themes in the discussion. These themes formed the coding structure that we used to categorize raw data from interviews and focus groups within subthemes, which are the most detailed findings. The teams defined each theme and subtheme to ensure consistency across coders and over time, and coded the data.

While incorporating the information into the coding structure, researchers met to discuss new codes that emerged during the coding process, as well as any other necessary revisions to the coding scheme (e.g., deletions, re-categorizations, clarifications). In addition, the team met throughout the coding process to discuss emerging findings and to compare similarities in thematic analysis. Next, guided by the theoretical framework, the teams recorded all possible explanations, conclusions, and suggestions, in order to ensure the most objective, unbiased analysis possible.

In this process, the team did not start with a hypothesis but rather, using grounded theory, developed ideas that came directly from the collected data. This type of research advocates a systematic approach to data collection that involves the methodical coding of data through an iterative process that promotes consistency in all facets of data collection, analysis, and reporting. The team met consistently during the coding process to discuss emerging prominent theories that could guide the reporting of the research. It is important to note, however, that we did not utilize methodologies that systematically counted the prevalence of opinions. Using the coded information, the teams analyzed the categories to specifically answer the original research questions.

Outputs

On the basis of the research, the national partners developed separate reports that answered the Result 2 research questions. The stakeholder analysis reports and regional results include the following:

- Current country capacities, given the stakeholder landscape
- Most frequently mentioned needs overall at the country and stakeholder levels.

The analysis will allow the team to:

- Triangulate information with findings from evidence and resource searches
- Provide input into where LRCP could contribute to or facilitate capacity-building needs.

Country Profile and Analysis of Stakeholders in Early Grade Literacy

Abbreviations

BJAJ	Book Industry Association of Jamaica
CCETT	Caribbean Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training
ECC	Early Childhood Commission
EEH	Expanding Educational Horizons Project
EGL	Early grade Literacy
GOJ	Government of Jamaica
JC	Jamaican Creole
JLS	Jamaica Library Service
JTC	Jamaica Teaching Council
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LRCP	LAC Reads Capacity Program
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOEYI	Ministry of Education, Youth and Information
NHP	New Horizons for Primary Schools Project
RISE Life Management Services	Reaching Individuals Through Skills and Education Life Management Services
SJE	Standard Jamaican English
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

I. Jamaica Country Profile

The Jamaica Country Profile begins with an orientation to the context of EGL in Jamaica, including an overview of the Language Arts Policy and EGL-specific programs and interventions. The country profile also describes the national curriculum for children aged 0 to 5 years and Grades 1 to 3, as well as other educational materials used to support the delivery of the curricula. The profile then outlines teacher education standards for the teaching of reading, followed by an overview of EGL evaluations and assessments. The final section provides a description of the USAID National Education Strategy.

1. EGL Context

Jamaica’s formal education system has four levels: early childhood/pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary. Special education services are offered at all levels. The government is the main provider of education with a relatively small degree of private sector participation. The school year begins in September and ends in July. The following sections provide information specific to early childhood and primary education in Jamaica.

Overview of Early Childhood Education in Jamaica

Jamaica’s Ministry of Education, Youth, and Information (MOEYI) provides free early childhood education for children 4 and 5 years old in “infant schools,” as well as in infant departments of primary, all-age (combined primary and junior high schools, which Jamaica is beginning to move away from), and junior high schools. Children between the ages of 3 and 5 years are offered early education in nurseries, kindergartens, and basic schools. The focus in early childhood is on early stimulation, which is described in the section on curriculum.

Primary education is offered to students 6 to 11 years old, in grades 1 to 6 of primary, all-age, and preparatory schools. Primary education is compulsory, but early childhood education is not.

Special education spans early childhood and primary levels of the education system. It caters to children who find it difficult to learn in the regular school setting without specialized support services. Special education provides for children who are blind, deaf and hearing impaired, mentally challenged, with multiple disabilities, physically challenged, learning disabled, and gifted and talented.

There are approximately 2,936 early childhood institutions in Jamaica, of which 135 schools are privately owned. There are 933 primary-level institutions; 141 of these are private. See Exhibit 1 for details on the types of institutions and information on their teachers.

Exhibit 1. Summary of Teaching Staff, by Training Status and Type of Educational Institution, Ministry of Education Statistics, 2012–2013

Educational level and type	Institutions ^a	Trained teachers	Untrained teachers	Number Of teachers
Early childhood				
Early childhood institutions (recognized)	2,661	8,820
Infant schools	34	384	18	402
Primary (Infant Departments)	88	302	17	319
All-age (Infant Departments)	10	30	1	31
Primary & junior high (Infant Departments)	8	31	5	36
Kindergarten ^b	135	345	316	661
Subtotal	2,936	1,092	357	10,269
Primary				
Primary (Grades 1–6)	595	7,623	517	8,140
All-age (Grades 1–6)	111	974	52	1,026
Primary & junior high (Grades 1–6)	86	1,301	55	1,356
Preparatory ^b	141	835	347	1,182
Subtotal	933	10,733	971	11,704
Special schools				
Government/government aided	10	223	47	270
Special educational unit	7	30	3	33
Independent special schools	13	54	68	122
Subtotal	30	307	118	425

Note. The information in Exhibit 1 is the latest statistical information available. Statistics Unit, Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 10, Exhibit 1-2a.

^a Number of institutions offering education at the various levels

^b Data represent institutions that responded to the Annual Schools Census Questionnaire

Most schools are run by the government and are referred to as public schools; others are privately owned, in many cases by churches. Some of the privately owned schools are called preparatory schools. Public schools use a prescribed curriculum and reading materials from the MOEYI, while private institutions have autonomy, for the most part, to use any alternative curriculum they believe best suits the achievement of their objectives. Usually, these private institutions receive financial support from private enterprises and alumni. Thus, they are able to enhance their delivery through the use of materials that public institutions might not be able to purchase because of limited funding.

Most private schools are housed in the urban areas, while public institutions are spread across Jamaica. Some of the higher performing schools are overpopulated because of high parent demand.

Common challenges in the education system include student absenteeism, which is lower for girls than for boys; low socioeconomic status; an inadequate number of trained teachers in many of the early childhood institutions, specifically basic schools; and repetition (retention) rates at Grades 1 and 2. As expected, dropout rates are low at the primary level. Exhibit 2 below details attendance rates by region and school level for infant and primary school students.

Exhibit 1. Percentage Daily Attendance, by Region and Level (2011–2012)

	Infant			Primary		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Kingston	80.7	83.1	81.9	86.8	88.7	87.8
Port Antonio	72.7	74.3	73.4	85.3	87.4	86.3
Brown's Town	79.9	81.9	80.9	87.0	88.9	87.9
Montego Bay	78.9	79.0	79.0	85.0	87.1	86.0
Mandeville	74.1	75.8	74.9	84.2	86.7	85.4
Old Harbour	79.7	79.3	79.5	84.2	86.1	85.1
National	78.4	79.5	78.9	85.2	87.3	86.2

Note. The information in Exhibit 2 is the latest statistical information on daily attendance at the infant and primary level. Statistics Unit, Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 114, Exhibit 3-41.

Government Focus on EGL

Research has shown that students who learn to read in the early grades (1–3) will perform better in school, while those who do not acquire basic reading skills early on will have more difficulty as they progress into the upper grades. This can be related to the Matthew Effect, i.e., the rich get richer and the poor get poorer; or in this case, the rate of growth maybe be strongly linked to the initial reading level as strong readers continue to get better and the weaker readers lag further behind (Stanovich, 1986). To this end, the MOEYI has been concentrating more on improving learning in the early grades. The Ministry has emphasized formative and summative assessments, curriculum development, and in-service and pre-service teacher training to enhance the curriculum delivery. Reading is included in the Language Arts Curriculum, including areas on early development, assessment, Introduction to Children’s Literature, and Advanced Reading. The MOEYI has also provided support in the form of reading materials and Reading Coaches, and has been sensitizing the public to the importance of early stimulation.

Partnerships and Programs to Support EGL

There are several partnerships supporting EGL in Jamaica at varying levels of involvement. Stakeholders are involved at the policy level, as is the case with the MOEYI; the resource-providing level, such as the publishers, library services, and international funding agencies, like USAID; the preparation of teachers, such as in the colleges and universities; and the implementation level, such as the teachers.

Recently, more training institutions have been focusing on early childhood teacher education programs, part of which includes training on emergent reading strategies.

This initiative is in keeping with the government’s mandate of increasing the pool of teachers qualified with knowledge and delivery strategies to execute lessons in the early grades (Jamaica: Interview, 2015). The teacher-training program in the teachers’ colleges is a 4-year program, at the end of which teachers receive an undergraduate degree. Other accredited institutions also offer courses in early childhood education at the certificate level.

A public campaign to get students interested in reading has catalyzed various efforts, including advertisements in the media, the establishment of a national Read Across Jamaica Day, the prevalence of pull-out programs to focus on improving the reading skills of struggling students, dedicated periods for Read Aloud, and instruction for parents on ways to engage their children, especially during the children’s early years. Some schools have developed additional interventions to assist the struggling readers and have a special teacher or coordinator to be responsible for reading interventions. We elaborate further on these efforts as part of the stakeholder analysis.

2. EGL Policy Overview

English is the official language of instruction in Jamaica. The indigenous language, Jamaican Patois, or Creole, is spoken in all regions. Students come to the classroom environment speaking Patois; so teachers are encouraged to use this as a base for helping students to speak and write in English.

There is no bilingual education policy that addresses mother-tongue language education in early grades, and/or learning of English as a second language. Neither is there an official EGL (or early literacy) policy document. However, the government does have a Language Education Policy (2001) document. The policy describes Jamaica as a bilingual country, with Standard Jamaican English (SJE) and Jamaican Creole (JC) being the two languages in use. This policy states, “The fluid nature of language usage between these languages, as well as the peculiar nature of the linguistic relationship they share, creates difficulties for the majority of Creole speakers learning English” (Language Education Policy, p. 4, 2001).

Following reviews of research on policy options, and on language and literacy acquisition in second language learning environments, the MOEYI adopted a policy position that accepts the “SJE as the official language” and advocates “the policy option that promotes oral use of the home language in schools, while facilitating the development of skills in SJE” (p. 4, 2001). Teachers are encouraged to use bilingual teaching strategies, particularly at the early primary level.

Two documents guide the teaching of literacy and language in the early grades: the National Comprehensive Literacy Strategy, developed in 2011, and the Language Education Policy (2001). Explanations of these documents follow.

National Comprehensive Literacy Strategy

According to the National Comprehensive Literacy Strategy (NCLS, 2011), the goal of the strategy is to “consolidate all literacy interventions to inform a national

comprehensive literacy program” (slide 4, 2011). The objectives of the strategy are shown in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3. Objectives of the National Comprehensive Literacy Strategy

Define age-appropriate levels of performance in reading

Institutionalize literacy standards and benchmarks

Provide in-service training in literacy methodologies and practices for teachers at the primary level

Set targets (national, regional and individual school) and hold teachers and school administrators accountable for literacy performance

Monitor performance (along the chain of accountability)

Build capacity within the Ministry of Education to support the literacy initiatives—through the appointment of a regional literacy coordinator and reading coaches, reading specialists

The National Comprehensive Literacy Strategy is reinforced by 12 pillars, as shown in Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4. 12 Pillars of the National Comprehensive Literacy Strategy

1. Age-defined Taxonomy of Reading Competencies
2. Prescribed National Primary Curriculum—was revised and is currently being piloted
3. Defined Literacy Standards and Benchmarks
4. Standardized National Assessment Program
5. Prescribed Mechanism for Transitioning to the Secondary Level
6. Sustained Parental Involvement
7. Structured Specialist Support to Classroom Teachers
8. Expanded Support for Special Education
9. Enforced System of Accountability
10. Structured Stakeholder Involvement
11. Targeted External Funding and Stakeholder Involvement
12. Targeted Literacy Campaign

“The National Comprehensive Literacy Programme was initiated in March 2007 as a direct response to one of the recommendations of the Task Force Report on Education in Jamaica (2004), that the MOE should address the low levels of literacy among school aged children, particularly at the primary level” (National Comprehensive Literacy Programme, Ministry Paper 88). The development of the NCLS is part of the push by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to achieve 100 per cent literacy at the primary level by 2015 and to enable students to successfully transition to secondary school. To do this it promotes the establishment of literacy standards and benchmarks, training for primary grade teachers on the teaching of reading, increased partnerships with other organizations working in the field of literacy, and improved public awareness.

The Language Education Policy

The Language Education Policy (2001) for Jamaica is “A set of principles agreed on by stakeholders, enabling decision making about language and literacy issues in the formal education system at all levels: early childhood, primary, secondary, and the teacher education segment of the tertiary level” (2001, p. 6). This policy addresses the following areas for language education: the Language Learner, Language Goals in Schools, Language Instruction, Literacy Teachers, Special Education, Assessment, and Teacher Education.

The Language Education Policy acknowledges that Jamaica is a bilingual nation, states that English is the official language, even though Jamaican Creole is the language most widely used by the population, and finally that Spanish is the official foreign language. There are ongoing discussions among EGL stakeholders about how to use these two languages in schools. The MOEYI currently supports the option to retain SJE as the official language for EGL and encourages the use of the home language (JC) as the basic means of oral communication in the early years.

Over the past decade, academics have published numerous articles and texts advocating the use of Jamaican Creole as a legitimate medium for literacy instruction. However, the MOEYI maintains that SJE is the official language for instruction.

The policy goes on to state that the language learner should be provided with (p. 24):

- increased exposure to English, and particularly to idiomatic English, through different types of immersion;
- guidance by linguistically aware teachers who can appreciate the importance of Creole;
- opportunities to utilize a variety of indigenous forms – songs, poems, stories;
- exposure to a significant amount of material with culturally relevant content and illustrations;
- opportunities to hear and speak the target language in a variety of situations.

In addition, the policy states that in the early years (up to Grade 4) teachers should (p. 25):

- operate on the principle of transitional bilingualism which entails
 - acceptance of children’s first language;
 - flexibility; using children’s first language to facilitate comprehension;
 - extensive use of communicative strategies such as role play for practicing forms (structures) of English, particularly those which differ from Creole forms.
 - comparison of JC and SJE structures (contrastive analysis) and other bilingual teaching strategies;

- employ strategies of immersion in English through
 - the wide use of literature;
 - content-based language teaching (integration across curriculum areas);
 - modeling of the target language in the classroom

3. USAID National Education Strategy

The USAID National Education Strategy (2011–2015) included three goals, the first of which focused on improving reading skills of 100 million children in primary grades by 2015. “Goal 1 builds upon USAID’s long experience in primary education and more recent leadership in supporting interventions to improve learning outcomes. It recognizes that learning takes place at all levels but adopts a particular focus on EGL improvement as the foundation for future learning” (Education Opportunity Through Learning 2011, p. 9). Over the years there have been many USAID-sponsored initiatives aimed at improving the reading levels of students in the early grades in Jamaica. This section describes four of these initiatives.

USAID/New Horizons for Primary Schools Project (1998–2005)

The New Horizons for Primary Schools Project (NHP) in Jamaica sought to improve the numeracy and literacy of 72 of the poorest performing primary schools in the country. Through the development of customized school improvement plans, the Jamaican Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture, USAID, and Juarez and Associates worked in unison to improve the quality of teaching through in-service teacher education and training, increase student attendance, develop a strong system support, and improve student performance in literacy and mathematics.

According to the 2004 New Horizons for Primary Schools Report on the Formative Evaluation, NHP was successful in improving the quality of teaching, showing a small but steady increase over the years of the project. However, the decline in the percent of Grade 3 students meeting the literacy requirement and the lack of increase in student-initiated conversations percentage in the classroom limited the expected increase (NHP Formative Evaluation, 2004, p.5). In the system support area, NHP successfully provided support through school visits by Resource Specialists (Literacy and Numeracy), teacher professional development, the implementation of school development plans, and increase of community involvement. Regarding student academic performance, “both NHP boys and girls registered increases of 12.7% over

the baseline position” for Mathematics (NHP Formative Evaluation, 2004, p.6). In Language Arts, girls’ performance decreased by 7.9% from the starting year to the end of the project. However, boys showed an increase in performance, from 17.3% in 1998 to 24.8% by 2004 (NHP Formative Evaluation, 2004, p.6).

The 2006 NHP Impact Evaluation showed that NHP schools received greater support for literacy and numeracy than their statistically matched non-NHP schools counterparts. However, learning outcomes in NHP schools were not consistently higher than the matched non-NHP schools (NHP Impact Evaluation, 2006). Through a multiple regression analysis of the effects of NHP inputs on school literacy and numeracy, the report found few systematic impacts of any inputs. Lastly, because the existing national tests were not precise and had drawbacks that limited their utility as indicators, the report recommended the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation procedures to better measure the impact of the project and provide guidance for system improvement.

USAID/Expanding Educational Horizons (2006–2009)

The Expanding Educational Horizons (EEH) Project was established in 2006 as the center-piece of USAID Jamaica’s education strategy. The project aimed to provide technical and supervisory assistance to 71 schools in Jamaica, targeting 30,000 students in Grades 1-4 (ages 6-9). EEH built on the successes of NHP, working with the same schools and addressing new components such as gender and socialization issues, the use of data-driven decision making, and increasing emphasis on instructional technology to support teaching and learning.

The 2008 Evaluation of the Expanding Education Horizons Project highlighted the success of EEH’s multiple approaches towards training. The findings showed that the beneficiaries valued their training experiences and boosted their morale to provide guidance on educational and instructional leadership as well as garnering public private partnership support. Participants found school-based workshops by Resource Specialists invigorating. They also gained insight in the training of literacy, numeracy, technology, and gender, and benefited from collegial sharing during national workshops. In regard to literacy training, teachers reported a better sense of capacity to handle literacy materials for teaching. Although numeracy performance improved in EEH schools, the improvement was found difficult to measure due to new tests, which did not allow for fair comparison. The evaluation showed a significant investment in the training of technology resource teachers; however, concerns regarding sustainability were found, particularly due to the high dependency to supply, maintain, and replenish the technology stock.

School level partnerships had a great impact at the local level; EEH project schools principals were trained in grant writing, research, and submission techniques. According to the report, EEH was also able to increase parent’s involvement in schools, providing them with new skills, and building on the knowledge of their role in their children’s education. Last, the report found that although the technology component could be difficult to replicate, all of the EEH practices are replicable.

USAID/Jamaica Basic Education Project (2010–2013)

The USAID/Jamaica Basic Education Project, which began in 2010 aided the Ministry with improving the reading skills at Grades 1-3 in 250 primary schools in its first two years, and in its third year focused on 172 schools across Regions 1, 4 and 6. The project aided the MOEYI in the improvement of reading skills in the regions and supported the Education System Transformation Program. Reading Coaches were employed to assist in fulfilling the mandate of the project.

The initiative was an extension of the previous EEH and NHP projects, and incorporated best practices from the Caribbean Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (CCETT). The project sought to establish literacy and numeracy standards for grades 1-3, increase teacher and principal accountability for improved student performance, increase reading fluency in the target primary schools, strengthen public-private partnerships, and increase various governmental organization's ability to monitor school management.

According to the 2013 Audit of USAID Jamaica's Basic Education Project, the project helped the Ministry of Education establish reading and math standards for Grades 1-3, and provided training to 383 principals and 382 teachers (USAID Audit, 2013). Nonetheless, the project made very little progress in seven of the nine expected results intended to strengthen the quality, efficiency, and equity of the primary education system due to a shift in USAID strategy, funding constraints, and lack of institutional capacity in the MOE.

USAID/Ministry of Education Partnership for Improved Reading Outcomes (2013–2016)

In collaboration with USAID through a Government to Government (G2G) initiative, the Government of Jamaica implemented 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 objective of this G2G activity was to enhance Grades 1-3 teachers' capacity in 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 tracking and monitoring of Ministry of Education's literacy resources and programs. Reading Coaches were employed to assist in fulfilling the mandate of the project.

4. National Curriculum and Education Materials

The National Curriculum for the early childhood program and Grades 1 through 3 can be found online (<http://www.moe.gov.jm/curricula>). Below, we summarize some of the main parts of the curriculum, as well as the Literacy 1-2-3 program.

Early Childhood Curriculum

The Jamaica Early Childhood Curriculum (2009, 2010) 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 activities include 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

The National Standards Curriculum (2014) provides opportunities for the holistic development of the children. Their personal experiences are incorporated into pedagogical delivery.

The Language Arts Program for Grades 1 through 3, a component of the National Standards Curriculum, focuses on the development of skills in five strands:

1. Speaking and Listening
5. Word Recognition and Fluency
6. Comprehension
7. Grammar and Conventions
8. Writing (Communication)

The Language Arts Curriculum incorporates the Literacy 1-2-3 strategy, but provides more details in terms of the reading skills and concepts to be taught, as well as activities and teaching strategies (based on a team review of draft MOEYI Language Arts Curriculum Grade 1, 2015). The Curriculum articulates with the Literacy Standards for Grades 1-6 that are a part of the National Comprehensive Literacy Strategy (2011). See Figure 1 for Literacy Standards.

Figure 1: Literacy Standards

Students:

- Engage in active listening for a variety of purposes.
- Recognize and make distinctions between home language and language of texts to improve/ acquire language and literacy competencies
- Use spoken, written and visual language that varies in content and form, for different audiences and purposes
- Are able to use and apply a wide range of strategies in the reading process.
- Read a wide range of texts to understand self and respond to the demands of society.
- Use elements of the writing process effectively and are able to employ a wide range of strategies to communicate to different audiences for a variety of purposes
- Apply knowledge of language structure and language conventions to create, critique and discuss print and non-print texts.
- Engage in research activities on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions and by communicating their discoveries to a variety of audiences

Literacy 1-2-3 (2008)

Literacy 1-2-3 is the MOEYI's national strategy for teaching literacy, implemented in all primary schools. The strategy is governed by the Language Experience and Awareness Approach and incorporates themes in the Revised Primary Curriculum (1999) and the new National Standards Curriculum (2014). The strategy is supported by culturally relevant literacy materials that make direct links to pupils' experiences. The materials are outlined below, as follows:

- Big Books and accompanying little books for Grades 1 and 2
- Pupils' activity books for Grades 1 and 2
- A phonics chart for grade 1;
- A grade 3 textbook with stories, expository pieces, poems and literacy activities;
- CDs and tapes that support the text;
- Curriculum guide, teacher's guides, a training manual, and a companion manual.

In February 2014, the Jamaica Observer reported that 90 Reading Coaches were trained to administer the Early Reading Assessment Instrument (ERAI) to grade two students in the selected project schools (Government moves..., 2014). The administration of the ERAI was completed in 150 project schools nationwide. The Literacy 1-2-3 strategy also achieved completion of sensitization sessions with school principals concerning the work of Reading Coaches, training workshops in lesson planning, and the procurement process for the supply of computers, projectors, and cameras to be used by Reading Coaches.

5. Teacher Education Standards for Teaching of Reading

Teacher education in Jamaica is designed to train pre-school, primary, and secondary school teachers, as well as subject specialists. To become eligible to receive teacher training education, a candidate must have five Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) subjects, including Mathematics and English, and must pass an interview. On acceptance, the candidate is enrolled in the Bachelor of Education program for 4 years. During the 4 years, teacher trainees will engage in four practicum exercises. The Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica is responsible for developing the syllabi which they submit to the relevant body at the University of the West Indies to ensure that the syllabi have reached the standards of a bachelor's degree.

Pre-service Teacher Education

Pre-service teacher education (primary) is offered at nine teachers' colleges; private tertiary institutions, such as Mico University College and Hydel University College; and universities, including the Northern Caribbean University and the University of the West Indies.

In general, prospective teachers who wish to teach students at the early childhood or primary level can opt to pursue one of three programs:

- Bachelor's Degree in Education—Primary Program
- Bachelor's Degree in Education—Early Childhood Program
- Associate Degree in Education—Early Childhood Program

The **Bachelor's Degree in Education—Primary Program** comprises four categories of courses: specialization courses, professional courses, general education, and electives. See Annex B for courses related to the teaching of language.

The **Bachelor's Degree in Education—Early Childhood Program** comprises four categories of courses: specialization courses, professional courses, general education, and electives. See Annex B for courses related to the teaching of language.

The **Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education** is offered at some teachers' colleges in 2 years. Minimum requirements for entry into this program are three (3) CSEC subjects, including English language. A candidate may enter through mature matriculation—that is, he or she should be at least 30 years of age and have had a minimum of 5 years teaching experience at the early childhood level.

Certification in Early Childhood Development—HEART Trust/NTA

The Human Employment And Resource Training Trust/National Training Agency (HEART Trust/NTA) offers courses in early childhood development at Levels 1, 2, and 3 to adult learners who are seeking employment in the Early Childhood Sector. The program at Levels 1 and 2 lasts for 6 to 9 months. The entry requirement for Level 1 is one CSEC subject. Applicants must pass an entrance test. Persons who are currently

teaching in basic schools, as well as high school leavers who are interested in teaching at the early childhood level, are encouraged to get certified through this program.

The unit competency standard for each level is available from HEART Trust/NTA. A competency standard is made up of a unit title, elements, performance criteria, and range statements containing an evidence guide and key competencies. See Annex B for the EGL/language courses in early childhood development Levels 1 and 2.

In-Service Training (e.g., Graduate Studies and other Teacher Professional Development)

Some training institutions offer graduate courses at the Masters and Doctoral levels as well as short professional development courses designed for in-service teachers who wish to strengthen their content and methodology in regard to their practice. These courses may include short courses in literacy instruction, particularly at the early grade and primary levels. Some of these courses are scheduled MOEYI activities, and all teachers are required to participate. The professional development takes the form of workshops, conferences, and lesson demonstrations. Private sector organizations, such as Digicel Foundation and various USAID-funded projects, support in-service training in EGL.

6. Reading Evaluations and Assessments

Each year the MOE assesses students' mastery of literacy through the use of national assessments—the Grade Four Literacy Test, Grade Three Diagnostic Test, Grade One Individual Learning Profile, Jamaica Early Childhood Readiness Assessment tool (for 4-year-olds), and the Informal Diagnostic Reading Inventory. We describe these further in the following section.

Grade Four Literacy Test

The Grade Four Literacy Test is a group-administered, paper-based examination, conducted at the end of Grade 4 to ascertain students' mastery of the critical literacy skills. Students who do not master the test are given a second opportunity to take the examination. Students' mastery on the Grade Four Literacy Test is a prerequisite to taking the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT). The GSAT is the exit exam for primary-level education. The Grade 4 Literacy Test focuses on three subtests: word recognition, reading comprehension, and a writing task (<http://www.moe.gov.jm/all-place-grade-four-literacy-and-numeracy-tests>). If students fail, they repeat the test but do not repeat Grade 4. Exhibit 5 below describes categories for mastery, near mastery, and non-mastery.

Exhibit 5. Grade Four Literacy Test Category Description

Mastery	Near Mastery	Non-Mastery
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Pass in all 3 components/subtests	Pass in 2 components/subtests	Pass 0–1 components/subtests
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Jamaica’s Grade 4 cohort exceeded the target for mastery of literacy in the 2015 Grade Four Literacy Test, with 86.5% of the 38,700 first-time candidates achieving mastery. This is a 1.5% increase over the 2015 target of 85%. In an article in the Jamaica Observer, the Education Minister said, “While there has been a steady increase in the percentage of the Grade Four students achieving mastery in literacy during the 14-year period prior to this year, the change in mastery jumped by 9.1 percentage points between 2014 and 2015” (Grade Four, 2015). More than 80% of boys who sat the literacy test achieved mastery, which is up from a 68.6% mastery level the previous year. Females achieved 92.5%. Exhibit 6 below shows student performance on the test between 1999 and 2013.

Exhibit 6. Student Performance on the Grade Four Literacy Test, 1999–2013

Year	Percentage mastery at 1st administration	Percentage mastery at 2nd administration
1999	52	57
2000	47	58
2001	43.3	60
2002	53.3	58
2003	58	71
2004	57	63
2005	64	74
2006	64	75
2007	64	79
2008	71.8	81
2009	70.1	80
2010	67	81
2011	71	83.7
2012	72	86
2013	76.3	84.2

Note: from Jamaica Ministry of Education National Comprehensive Literacy Program.

Grade Three Diagnostic Test

The Grade Three Diagnostic Test is administered at the end of the school year to Grade 3 students as a group to determine their starting point for Grade 4. They are assessed in the following skill areas: phonics, structure/mechanics, vocabulary, study skills, and reading and listening comprehension. The students are also required to complete a communication task for which they write a story based on a picture that is provided.

Grade One Individual Learning Profile

In 2008, the Grade One Individual Learning Profile (GOILP) replaced the Grade One Readiness Inventory. The GOILP is individually administered prior to students’ entry into Grade 1. The assessment provides some baseline information for each student, including the skills that they possess. Teachers can, therefore, create a profile of each

student, which helps them to instruct the students appropriately. The GOILP assesses the proficiency level of students in six subsets, namely: general knowledge; number concepts; oral language, reading, writing, and drawing; work habits; and classroom behavior.

Jamaica Early Childhood Readiness Assessment Tool

The Jamaica Early Childhood Readiness Assessment tool is used for diagnostic purposes. Since May 2016, 4-year-old students have been assessed using this tool. Students are assessed in the cognitive and socioemotional domains. Some of the skills that are tested in the cognitive domain are phonics, retelling, simple sentence construction, basic concept development, and the ability to recognize letters and names. In the socioemotional domain, students are observed to establish their working habits, such as their ability to work independently or in groups, to complete tasks, and to follow simple instructions.

Other Reading Assessment and Monitoring Tools

Informal Diagnostic Reading Inventory

This Informal Diagnostic Reading Inventory is used for diagnostic and formative purposes. This is the country's national assessment tool used to standardize assessment of students' literacy achievement from pre-primary to Grade 9 across the island. This inventory is administered orally and helps identify students' strengths and gaps in literacy, with a view to respond to the literacy needs appropriately. The tool is individually administered by the classroom teacher at the beginning of the school year. The areas assessed include word recognition, word meaning, comprehension, and reading strategies.

Early Reading Assessment Instrument (ERAI)

This is used as summative assessment. This tool was developed under the USAID funded Jamaica Basic Education project (2010-2013). It was used to assess Grades 1-3 students' reading competencies in targeted project schools. The ERAI comprises alphabet knowledge, word recognition/decoding, oral reading and comprehension. It is individually administered by specially trained personnel. The students' reading levels are determined by mastery of the oral reading and comprehension exercises.

Mico Diagnostic Reading Test

The Mico Diagnostic Reading Test (<http://themicocarecentre.org/>) is used for clinical diagnostic purposes. This test was designed by the Mico University College Child Assessment and Research in Education (CARE) Centre to provide a locally based test that could not only identify the level at which individual children were reading but provide insight into weaknesses that needed to be addressed in school. School personnel who are trained to administer the test include principals, resource room teachers, reading teachers, and guidance counselors.

Early Reading Assessment Checklist

The Early Reading Assessment Checklist (ERAC) is used for formative purposes. This instrument was developed under the USAID/Jamaica Basic Education Project to help teachers monitor Grade 1 through 3 students' reading progress throughout the year, in order to intervene on a timely basis. This tool outlines the skills to be developed at different grades. Some of these areas include concept of print, phonemic awareness, word identification, vocabulary and concept development, and reading fluency and comprehension.

Literacy Competencies Checklists for Grades 2 & 5

These checklists were developed by the MOEYI, and are intended to reflect each student's growing competency in different areas of literacy. The instruments should help to identify which students are performing at the grade level as well as those who might be struggling or above average.

II. Stakeholder Mapping

As described in the overarching methodology section, the stakeholder-mapping portion of the research enables the LRCP to (a) better understand the EGL reality in each country in relation to the actors who influence it, (b) conduct the LRCP work on the basis of this social reality, and (c) select the appropriate actors to carry out and continue the work. The LRCP team delineated six primary groupings of stakeholders, within which we categorized various actors involved in EGL in Jamaica. This section introduces the stakeholders who form part of these categories and justifies EduConnectJA's selection of stakeholders to participate in the qualitative research. Exhibit 7, below, lists specific organizations the team identified to interview as part of the stakeholder analysis. We then provide definitions for each stakeholder group.

Exhibit 7. Stakeholder List

Stakeholder Groupings	Stakeholder
1. Government	MOEYI JLS
2. International Organizations that collaborate with the government of Jamaica	USAID
3. Independent International Organizations	No stakeholder 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	Preparatory school Christian-based prep school Public primary school Infant school Child development center Teachers' Association Parent Teacher Association (primary school) Book industry
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1. Government—Ministry of Education Youth and Information

The 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 MOE’s priorities.

2. International Organizations

The GOJ has collaborated with USAID/Jamaica to implement a number of reading initiatives to improve 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 of reading standards, and provision of materials to enhance the teaching of reading in the early grades.

The Jamaica team did not identify any international organizations that operate in the country independent of coordination with the GOJ.

3. Researchers and Academics

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

4. Teacher-Training Institutions

The teacher-training institutions offer EGL programs to the degree, diploma, and certificate levels. We described teacher education standards in a prior section and mentioned some of the insitutions, including private tertiary institutions, such as Mico

University College and Hydel University College; and universities, including the Northern Caribbean University and the University of the West Indies. Here we describe the role of the Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE) and the Jamaica Teaching Council (JTC) in setting the agenda for teacher training in these institutions.

The JBTE is a unique association in which the following organizations are partners in the decision-making processes involved in the certification of teachers and the development of teacher education and accreditation: The University of the West Indies; the governments of Jamaica, the Bahamas, Belize, and Turks and Caicos Islands (through their Ministries of Education); and the teachers' colleges.

In accordance with University Ordinance 14.4 Section (e), each Joint Board has the following functions:

- To consider and recommend or approve the syllabi of teachers' colleges
- To examine and assess the work of students in training
- To make recommendations on teacher training to the appropriate authorities
- To certify teachers

The JBTE is being phased out and its role is being assumed by the Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica, a representative body of lecturers from the colleges.

Also, the JTC has the responsibility of enhancing and maintaining the professional standards in teaching and the professional status of teachers. The JTC's core functions include the development of standards for registering, licensing, and certifying teachers.

5. Civil Society and Private Sector

This civil society and private sector category includes public and privately run schools (infant, basic, primary, and preparatory) and organizations such as Jamaica Teachers' Association and the book industry. These organizations are engaged in EGL at various levels and in various forms through instructions and provision of materials.

For example:

a), The **Jamaica Teachers' Association** is a democratic organization which advocates for the financial well-being and social advancements of its members. This teachers' union seeks to promote the educational interests of Jamaica through professional development workshops and conferences aimed at improving teaching and learning. They have hosted conferences on early childhood education, special education and primary education for school managers and teachers and out of these have made recommendations to the MOEYI for implementation;

b) The **Digicel Foundation**, a private sector agency, supports literacy enrichment at the early grade level through the provision of reading and instructional materials, as well as teacher training in literacy strategies. Information and communications technology (ICT)

integration forms an important part of the enrichment activities. The Enrichment Program is a nationwide ICT partnership with the MOEYI that supports the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to accomplish 100% literacy by 2015.

According to the program's website (Enrichment Programme Portal, 2016), the Enrichment Program seeks to accomplish the following targets:

- Establish 35 Enrichment Centers (ECs) – retrofitted, self-contained classrooms equipped with computer-based teaching aids, interactive whiteboards and computers loaded with literacy software. The methodology used to execute the initiative in the centers is based on the special education practice of “pulling” children out of the traditional instructed classroom and providing instruction to individual or small groups, for a set amount of time each week
- Distribute 60 Mobile Enrichment Carts (MECs) - a four foot wheeled cart, containing all the materials found to be most effective in ECs, that can be wheeled into classes
- Train 190 MOE teachers – these teachers will manage and administer the intervention in each selected school
- Reach 10,600 students using either an EC or an MEC over three years
- Engage 3,930 parents to support and sustain student's performance.

To date, over 100 schools have benefitted from literacy interventions. The students involved showed an average improvement of two grade levels within the first year of engagement.

III. Methodology

The intent of the stakeholder analysis is to identify, collect, and systematize 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 methodology section outlines the research setting, data gathering, and analysis specific to the Jamaica team's procedures. The section also presents a profile of the participants and a synopsis of the participant interviews.

1. Research Design

The most suitable approach to capturing participants' experiences is qualitative research, as described in the overall methodology section. Qualitative research implies “direct concern with direct experience as lived or felt or undergone” (Sherman & Webb, 1988, p.7). Stakeholders participate in a comfortable setting—in this case, in Jamaica, at their place of work. Here the researcher can observe the experiences they encounter and how complex these experiences are (Glesne, 2005). Because of the subjectivity of qualitative research, there can be multiple interpretations of the data as readers bring

their own experiences to bear on such interpretations. The findings, therefore, cannot be generalized to the broader population but do form a basis for understanding peoples' views and experiences. The intent is to give "voice" to the participants. Finally, the Jamaica team followed all ethical procedures in accordance with AIR's IRB.

2. Research Setting

The research conducted in Jamaica focused on the capturing of data mostly from urban communities. Jamaica has most recently focused on early grade education in public and private educational institutions, since more material resources have lately been allocated to early childhood education, to training of teachers to improve pedagogy, and also initiatives to help parents understand how they can support their children's early education. The participants were interviewed, for the most part, in their normal settings. Thus, we were able to observe the conditions under which they operated and also observe examples of the resources they used.

3. Research Sample

The LRCP team conducted the stakeholder analysis in Jamaica and focused primarily on capturing data from urban communities, as invited representatives from rural communities did not respond favorably.

Semi-structured interviews intended to gain a better understanding of experiences of decision-makers, whose opinions may be better expressed in a one-on-one format were employed. The team conducted six, 1-hour semi-structured interviews.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) allowed the research team to understand the experiences of a greater number of stakeholders in a short period of time, in a group environment with their peers, and in a comfortable space where the team could observe interactions among participants. FGDs also provided a context in which stakeholders felt comfortable and empowered to discuss the evaluation topics with their peers and react to one another's opinions and experiences with the program. The team conducted nine, 1-hour FGDs.

The interviewees represented 5 categories of individual actors and institutions that were concerned with EGL: Government, International Organizations, Researchers/Academics, Teacher-Training Institutions, and Civil Society and the private sector. These stakeholders had interest in and some amount of power in influencing EGL. The participants were chosen because they had experiences that, the team thought, could help illuminate our understanding of the research questions. The participants were engaged in some way in EGL and were willing to have their stories recorded. Exhibit 8 below lists the stakeholders included in the interviews and focus group discussions, followed by explanations of why we chose each type of stakeholder.

Exhibit 8. Research Sample

Group	Stakeholder	Interview	FGD
1. Government	MOEYI	X	
	JLS		X
2. International Organizations	USAID project	X	
3. Researchers/Academics	University lecturer in Language Arts	X	
	University lecturer in Children's Literature	X	
4. Teacher-Training Institutions	Lecturers (Language & Literacy Development)		X
5. Civil Society and Private Sector	Preparatory school (principal and teachers Grades 1–3)		X
	Christian-based preparatory school (principal and kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers)		X
	Public/primary school (Grades 1–3 teachers)		X
	Infant school (principal and teachers of 4- and 5-year-olds)	X	X
	Child development centre (teachers of K1 to Grade 1)		X
	Teachers' Association (representative)	X	
	Parent Teacher Association (parents of Grade 1–3 students in a primary school)		
	Book industry (writers and publishers of EGL materials)		X
		6	9

Government

The perspective of the Ministry was deemed critical, as it would tell us about the Ministry's involvement in the development of EGL in Jamaica. An officer from the Curriculum and Support Services Division of the MOEYI was interviewed. This person was a key officer in the development of the Language Arts Curriculum for Grades 1 through 3.

The JLS provides library service free to schools island-wide, including to infant and primary schools. This entity supports EGL through the establishment of libraries, reading materials, and reading competitions. For example, the Infant School Library Development Program works to remodel infant school libraries and equip them with cozy reading corners, new books, stuffed toys, and electronic learning materials. The

JLS also visits schools to do model reading. One stakeholder said, “The JLS also uses the American Library Association (ALA) Ready to Read kits for ideas on how to introduce books to young children.”

International Organization: USAID Project Reading Specialists

USAID projects operating in Jamaica have been engaged in EGL activities for more than 15 years. Reading specialists who worked on this project would likely have experiences in EGL-related activities, including the development of reading standards and benchmarks, conduct of workshops to expose teachers to reading strategies, development of teaching manuals to support the teaching of reading, and assessment of students’ early reading skills. Interviewing these people would give us a “big picture view” of USAID’s involvement and impact on EGL, in the rural context, as the project was implemented mostly in the rural under-resourced communities.

Teacher-Training Institutions

Lecturers from teacher-training institutions are important given their role in preparing teachers to teach at the early grades. We expected that they would be familiar with the EGL curriculum and strategies that enhanced the delivery of the curriculum, and could therefore give a perspective on issues related to the preparation of EGL teachers. Most important, they offered the early childhood development program in the institutions—hence, their perspectives would be very important for understanding the EGL landscape in Jamaica.

Researchers/Academics

Research informs teaching and learning. The researcher’s perspective assists in the development of content, teaching, learning stages, and learning strategies. Researchers had engaged in local and international research on EGL, curriculum development, and curriculum delivery. They had also taught and supervised pre-service and in-service teachers who worked in the early grade setting. Researchers who functioned in these areas would give a more informed and authentic perspective—hence, their selection for an interview.

Civil Society and Private Sector

Publishers and writers in the book industry were selected because of their involvement in the development of early grade materials to support the early childhood and primary curriculum. They were also familiar with the local context within which students were learning, and had published and written materials that were culturally relevant and suitable to students’ learning needs.

Principals and teachers of both public and private schools were selected because they delivered the curriculum and could therefore articulate the issues pertaining to EGL from different perspectives. Public schools used the MOEYI curriculum and MOE-approved reading texts. Private schools, on the other hand, might use independent reading

programs and other resources to complement the reading program. We chose two private institutions that used an international reading program because we wanted to understand more about this program, and the similarities to and differences from the offerings at the early grade level of public schools.

Parents were selected because of their interest in participating in their children’s early development. This interest was expressed by parents sending their children to school at an early age and by the fact that they were their children’s first teachers. We felt that they also had a story to tell about ways they engaged their children in early reading and that they could give us valuable information that could shape the EGL landscape in Jamaica.

Before the team engaged participants, we contacted them by telephone and with letters outlining expectations to make them aware of their potential involvement and the likely benefits of this exercise. Participants were also given consent forms that outlined the ethical issues, such as confidentiality, and all IRB guidelines were followed. After participants agreed to participate, we negotiated the time and place of the meeting.

4. Data Collection Tools

The interviews and focus groups were semi-structured, using protocols each of which included fundamental topics but allowed for the addition of probes in a more free-flowing conversation that could capture information that might otherwise be missed. Specifically, the tools covered the research questions that the team proposed in the planning document for this task.

5. Data Analysis

The Jamaica team followed the regionally established LRCP procedures for analyzing the qualitative data using Nvivo Qualitative Software. Marshall and Rossman (1999) suggest that data analysis is the process of bringing order and structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Preliminary analysis of the data began as soon as we started gathering data. As the participants spoke, we identified emerging patterns and discussed as a team throughout the data collection process. Recorded interview data were later transcribed. Miles and Huberman (1994) say that data reduction is necessary, as it sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data so that conclusions can be drawn and verified. Therefore, we identified themes across participants in their answers to our research questions and selected illustrative examples to elaborate these themes throughout the report. More details on data analysis are included in the introductory sections. We present the overarching themes in Exhibit 9.

Exhibit 9. Qualitative Data Analysis Themes

Research questions	Themes and subthemes
1	Engagement in EGL policy and practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National initiatives guide stakeholders at all levels

Research questions	Themes and subthemes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are creative with classroom activities
2	Use of resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders engage in collegial collaboration and consultation Practitioners regularly consult curriculum for instructional guidance Stakeholders use the internet or some other media for information
3	Research-based evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of use or production of research-based evidence, especially specific to the Jamaica context
4	Capacity to use EGL practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government focus on EGR in Jamaica Lack of materials and personnel Lack of teacher training opportunities
5	Synergy among stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synergies with colleagues Some engagement with wider networks Interest in forging national and international partnerships
6	Education-related policy influences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revision of the national curriculum Establishment of the parenting commission
7	Stakeholders' need for support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources and materials Public media Electronic resource database
8	Sustainability of LRCP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder buy-in Building partnerships
9	LRCP information dissemination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media

6. Limitations

We were unable to access some stakeholders at the tertiary and policy level, which limited the variety in perspectives that we would have gotten from interviewing multiple people at the same level. In addition, stakeholders in rural areas were less willing to be interviewed, leaving out an important contextual perspective that may have revealed challenges that are particular to less accessible areas. We hope to be able to talk with them throughout the project and in a subsequent interview.

IV. Results

Inherent in the qualitative approach is the notion that there are multiple themes and interpretations of the results. The discussion of each theme is intended to provide a better understanding of the participants' responses to the questions and provide insights

into their contribution to EGL. The results section presents information on (a) stakeholder engagement in EGL, (b) use of resources, (c) research-based evidence, (d) capacity, (e) synergies, (f) education-related political influences, (g) stakeholder support, (h) LRCP communication, and (i) LRCP sustainability.

1. Engagement in EGL Policy and Practice

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 national initiatives and teacher activities in and out of the classroom to improve EGL.

National Initiatives

Most notably, the MOEYI is in the middle of revising its primary literacy curriculum. Government and practitioners noticed gaps in the prior curriculum that resulted in teachers not being able to deliver content as expected. The Ministry is aiming to make the content “sequentially appropriate” that would “not necessarily be tied to themes.” One practitioner described the curriculum change as follows:

“For example, the ‘brain’ ‘br’ comes up, and [the teacher] would say ‘ok, I am going to teach ‘br’.’ Maybe the students don’t know ... the ‘b’ sound ... but you just dive into ‘br,’ and that would be the sound total of the literacy of the language; so there will be no structured analysis – nothing else – it would only be phonics and its linked to ‘br’.”

However, the same stakeholder noted that the schools have temporarily retained the materials from the prior curriculum (Literacy 1-2-3) and teachers are instructed to use the old materials with the new curriculum to the extent possible. The BIJA has been working with the government to understand the new curriculum and develop materials that align.

Currently, reading competitions featured among the initiatives that schools and other supporting institutions initiated. 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. These competitions “forced” students to read, one teacher said. 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.

The government and training institutions have responded to the need for early grade education with programs at the bachelor's and master's levels to equip teachers to teach reading in the early grades. Other accredited institutions prepare students to the certificate level, and there are some initiatives in place to improve teachers' competences. Some of these reported initiatives include MOEYI workshops, internal school workshops run by literacy specialists, and attendance at literacy symposiums that are coordinated by one teachers' college.

One challenge with participants' discussion of national-level initiatives was the general way in which stakeholders described programs, indicating a possible lack of knowledge on the specificities of the methodologies or pedagogies the programs promoted. For example, one informant said, "The USAID project is also an initiative of the Ministry of Education working with the American government to give special focus to the early grades." However, the informant did not elaborate on the "how" of this project, making it difficult for stakeholders to apply the strategies at the implementation level or to adapt it to their own context.

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 get opportunities to practice reading and writing in an integrated way. In addition, many teachers expressed the view that assessment was a critical component 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. In these sessions, the children could get individual attention in areas of reading to fill the gaps. Some schools had institutionalized the pullout program and made referrals to other institutions that had programs for children who were experiencing reading challenges. As a result of assessments, teachers are able to identify gaps and develop IEPs to cater to student needs. As one teacher remarked, teachers also benefit in that assessment "allows the teacher to spend her time more wisely. . . . Rather than re-teaching what students already know, teachers will know the strengths and weaknesses of students."

Many schools also mentioned the use of technology, including smart boards, iPhones, and Internet, as teaching aides that helped "focus students' attention on reading." One group of teachers noted that these tools motivated children to read. One teacher in the group commented, "Boys are very interested in using technology. They are quiet in the sessions and focus on the task." Teachers have also been affected by observing their

colleagues using technology as a teaching tool. Thus, one school reported that it had “conducted training sessions for teachers to help them use the available technologies to teach. The use of technology ha[d] filtered down to the other teachers.”

A practitioner informant said that the challenge for EGL is out of school support, and that, “The children whose parents are behind them, you see mark improvement.” One school described the establishment of the initiative, Parents Places, to educate parents on how to engage their children in reading. During sessions with parents, teachers provided them with tips on ways to help their children read. Some private schools invested in programs that were different from those in the public system. One such program was the Accelerated Christian Education, which believed that students learned to read from an early age and should not be pressured. They believed that systematic teaching would yield results. Another program was the A Beka, which focused on progression in the selection of reading materials to meet students’ needs.

Teachers who used the A Beka program believed this program resulted in improvements in students’ attitude toward and performance in reading. The program, according to one teacher, “ties in phonics with the reader. So if they are doing a particular letter sound or a blend in phonics, the reader will follow through.” Other participants mentioned local “Reggae Readers” that include topics which complement the curriculum in child-accessible ways, such as with “interesting activities, [colors], children of varying colors, more things that were contextually appropriate to Jamaica.” However, teachers also said they have suggestions for publishers on how to improve these materials, indicating an area where collaboration may be mutually beneficial for practitioners as well as publishers.

2. Use of Resources

In keeping with the LRCP definition of *resources*, the team assumed that stakeholders at all levels would utilize various resources in their work that did not necessarily stem from evidence-based research. Part of this project was to identify what types of resources practitioners used in their work and ways they adapted them specifically to the context of Jamaica. Stakeholders for the most part relied on collaboration and consultation with colleagues to inform their work, but were also guided by the government-prescribed curriculum and various sources in the media. Materials were reportedly easy to access and to use (with guidelines or without), but lack of Internet access at times could be challenging, when a lesson could be enhanced by using products on the Internet. In addition, some stakeholders reported using evidence-based materials. The sections below describe stakeholders’ use of these resources.

Collaboration and Consultation

Although participants come from varied sectors of the EGL community, they all agreed on the value of consultation and collaboration in informing their work. Participants, especially teachers and teacher trainers, reported that frequent consultation with their peers at work and during workshops helped to inform their practice. For example, participants including lecturers, classroom teachers, and librarians, mentioned

discussions with colleagues about best practices and selection of suitable materials. Teachers also said they consulted their reading coaches. Heads of Departments also played a visible role in helping shape classroom teachers' practice. The department heads made decisions with regard to strategies and student assessment, and provided feedback on teachers' classroom delivery. In addition, participants representing the university level mentioned that they had good relationships with some colleagues locally and abroad and so they collaborated in matters of literacy through presentations at conferences both locally and internationally.

Finally, in addition to purchasing texts to inform its work, the library industry participates in training courses and online group discussions in which those involved post and access information. Library services informants said they also purchase personal copies of texts to inform their work.

One challenge with the interactions overall was the reactive nature in which participants described their consultation. For example, multiple informants said in-service teacher training only happened "as the need arises." This implies that teachers are not getting regular in-service trainings, and that they are in large part self-identifying their challenges. In addition, discussions with teachers indicated that the demand-driven trainings are not so much working, as they indicated a desire for more professional development opportunities. However, one informant also said the Ministry of Education had formerly used, "direct training of teachers, [but] most of it could not be sustained because their focus is not only on early grade literacy but on the entire system, and there are challenges [with] being able to meet all the teachers who need to be trained." The informant described that the response was to use a cascading model for training, which presented its own challenges with delivering high quality training. The MOEYI found some success with having cluster-based reading specialists, though one informant also said the specialists—who responded to the needs of the MOEYI on the ground—saw their role less as support and more as a "stop-gap."

Curriculum

As mentioned previously, the GOJ is currently testing out a new curriculum in the country. One participant described the current curriculum as follows, "In Jamaica, EGL focuses primarily on the strand of phonics. ... The other strand that gets a lot of attention is oral reading, but not oral reading in terms of dealing with the dynamics or the elements, but just reading aloud and word recognition." Another said that teaching focused on rote learning. The new curriculum aims to be more detailed and teacher friendly. In addition, "The revised primary curriculum is meant to have more of an emphasis on reading for leisure and reading across the curriculum." One informant described, "Reading has so many dimensions – you have reading with recognition and fluency which is the word recognition, you have reading for meaning and enjoyment which is a comprehension and lit[erature], you have reading for information ... [and] we have tried to treat the different elements."

On the basis of the curriculum, practitioners are guided in the selection of student texts, as well as teacher texts. The book industry is also guided by the curriculum in making

decisions about the content to include in their texts, which are prescribed by the MOEYI. Supplementary texts are sometimes used by teachers in cases when students have challenges managing the prescribed ones. Teachers operating on the A Beka program, for example, may change their texts to a lower or higher level to suit student needs.

Media

Participants consulted varying media sources to get information. Teachers reported using the print media, such as the *Children's Own* and *Daily Gleaner*, libraries, textbooks, and journals, as well as online sources in their work. For example, one teacher particularly mentioned a website they used, "Teacher Pay Teachers' ...every month it gives freebies and I will go through the freebies and send them to the teachers. You have to be a member. Every month they give ten free downloads." Parents mentioned using media, such as local newspapers that provided tips on parenting practices. One parent mentioned watching a program on cable television on how to read to babies before birth to stimulate reading. When her baby was born, she began to read to her child using the information from the television program, and her child had become a good reader. Finally, members of the book industry said they consulted market research to the greatest extent possible.

3. Research-Based Evidence

Although the LRCP uses the term *evidence* to describe scholarly articles, research participants interpreted *evidence* to mean other types of information, including the Internet and magazines. When asked whether they used research-based evidence, practitioners provided answers such as, "sometimes" and "not really." However, some stakeholders at all levels were aware of research-based evidence, though they did not seem to have as much access to it or ability to use it as they would have liked.

As expected, stakeholders at the tertiary level stated that they subscribed to journals and used databases such as EBSCO and ProQuest. An informant in the researcher/academic category said, "If I am preparing a class typically there is a huge book on the world of literacy—really looking at literacy and the importance of it. And then there are a number of academic reading books that talk about reading and how to teach reading. And then you try to merge it." Similarly, publishing industry representatives mentioned that they used the internet and international publishers to promote their work. However, a representative from the book industry summarized the challenge with accessing research-based evidence in saying, "There is a lack of empirical data to inform your strategy but once that is in place you will see an improvement in accurately pairing or accessing resources."

One principal interviewed recognized the value of utilizing evidence-based research but stated that it was difficult for implementers themselves to collect data. The principal said, "Anything with language, especially from experts that conduct the research from the university, is more authentic than me trying to juggle our busy schedule doing the temporary ... meaning we research on the ground." The principal also described that the school had partnered with university researchers to learn from their results. The

parenting group mentioned that they used the Internet Café and the work of the Early Childhood Commission (ECC) to inform themselves on children’s literacy. The ECC provided the parents with magazines that explained the developmental levels of children, which parents found useful as a guide about ways to interact with their children at various ages. One teacher specifically described the use of evidence, saying, “This is personal it has nothing to do with the school. I got the idea from Reading research materials and implementing them in the classroom. I read probably one or two but there are other things that like give you pointers on how to deal with particular children and how to get them to read—especially boys.”

4. Capacity

Almost all the participants at every level supported the view that Jamaica had a strong focus on reading in the early grades. Some participants commended the government for supporting early childhood education. This focus was observed in the emphasis on more teachers being trained to teach in the early grades. One participant at the university level said, “The culture of reading is almost sacred to Jamaica. Literacy is promoted as a desirable trait.” Other strengths included “parents taking greater responsibility for their children’s development at the early years” and having a designated person responsible for language in each educational region. The following sections discuss some organizational strengths and challenges, including a lack of resources and personnel.

Organizational Strengths

Some participants who represented the tertiary level mentioned that the strengths in their organizations included their engaging in research regarding content and pedagogy, and the offering of early grade courses to pre-service teachers. Representatives of the school community described strengths that included the enabling of parents to work with their children during the early years, the use of tablets as a tool in instruction, a high level of student participation in clubs such as reading clubs, the large number of children attending pre-school, and the ability of some schools to assist students with learning disabilities. The book industry reported that there was a strong demand for local titles, a strong potential for selling books, and a strong distribution channel through which they could very easily get books into the hands of children. Another stakeholder agreed with this sentiment, indicating that because of the shortage of Jamaica or Caribbean-specific texts, there is a tendency to use American texts—then encouraging the idea that foreign-produced texts are superior.

Particularly, the data indicate that teachers as a whole implement creative activities to help students learn to read. Teachers in one focus group described ways in which they assess the strengths and weaknesses of their students during the term. One teacher said they (teachers) ask students to come up with three sentences using the day’s focus word, and “the students will see that as a story and read it back. [...] And at the end of that we will ask questions [for] comprehension. So it’s building their confidence in reading the sentences, it’s coming from them.” Teachers also mentioned labeling items in the classroom to help students read and having students go to a “letter station,” which

focuses on sounds and a “reading station” to then practice practical applications of those sounds.

Despite teachers’ independent efforts, however, one informant from a teacher training institution described the difficulty that teachers have teaching in a way that is contrary to what they learned. That is, if teachers did not learn to engage with text, they will have a hard time teaching in that same way. The informant said, “The problems we faced with students at the tertiary level starts from way back ... you're suddenly trying to get them to engage with a text when all this time they read for punishment.” The informant also mentioned teachers’ pre-occupation with teaching to the syllabus and completing all lessons in order to please their supervisor, so “there is no point in response orientation.” Though the prevalence of such an attitude is unclear, it does exist, making the new curriculum important for changing teaching practices.

Challenges with Resources

Participants mentioned weaknesses in capacity, including the high cost of teaching materials, the general lack of teaching materials, and insufficient funds to support early childhood programming. Specifically, teachers of public schools discussed a problem with book distribution, as many times books were distributed late to schools. The book industry mentioned challenges such as the high cost of producing books, too many imported books, and the fact that in spite of the positives, “there was too much talk about prioritizing early childhood education but necessary funding was not provided to support this new stance.” On top of this, another participant mentioned the challenge that, “even if the ECC were to solve its procurement issues, there would not be this mass of materials to buy because stuff has come out that has not taken advantage of all the guidelines that are available.” In a similar manner, informants at the tertiary level stated there was a challenge with the availability and selection of texts. One informant said, “I veer away from traditional texts a lot these days and go towards online ... because texts are so expensive for my students.”

Participants also mentioned various personnel-related challenges. One participant at the university level said that the faculty was not able to “boldly influence policies . . . is supposed to but there is a fear factor.” The MOEYI representative shared that officers experienced challenges completing their tasks on time because they had to “give too much attention to a multiplicity of tasks—early grades, secondary grades, conducting workshops.” At the tertiary level, one participant’s concern was the difficulty experienced in changing “teachers’ mindset, having them think outside of the box,” having them see that literature could be used to inform the teaching of literacy. Multiple stakeholders also mentioned needing a literacy specialist in schools, with some of the schools having had success with specialists. One informant said, “In recent years we have been having Reading Coaches within the school which was a great help.” Finally, one practitioner described the challenge with, “completing tasks—so while I am to give attention to the early grades, I am also to give attention to the upper grades and I am also to give equal attention to the secondary grades.”

5. Synergy among 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. One informant said, “Generally, there needs to be a tightening up where ... everybody has certain vision.” The following sections detail the synergies that exist at the school level, within stakeholder groups, and those across wider networks. The final section presents recommendations from stakeholders on ways collaboration could be enhanced.

School Level

Teachers we talked to said they worked with other teachers within their schools during the designated Common Planning Time, when they planned lessons and shared resources, websites, skills, experiences, and ideas. New teachers were also mentored by more experienced ones during Common Planning Time. The senior teacher and reading experts also shared information— such as ways to handle difficult topics—with teachers in the school. One teacher described making use of parents when students were struggling with reading and writing:

“I came up with this writing log ... and I said let's just do it as a flipped classroom then so parents will interact with their children more and help the children more at home. So in a class meeting I instructed the parents how to help the children to write to help them to write in lines on their own ... I would give them a sentence to write in the writing log and give the instructions at the top ... I find that it helps them a lot and I find out that ... going over the words ... and doing the formation properly—it helps them to read also.”

Finally, teachers reported that there was school-to-school communication in which they exchanged ideas about materials selection and strategies for teaching reading, especially to children with special needs.

Parents said they worked with the principal, teachers, and the school-based *Parent Places*. Parent Place is a special room or space at the school where parents can visit at any time to have meetings with classroom teachers, peruse various brochures geared toward helping parents help their children to be good readers. There were also monthly meetings with parents in which the teachers gave updates about students' progress. Some parents mentioned that the Parent Place was effective in helping them encourage early literacy. They received tips on ways to bring literacy into the home by labeling objects. Parents reported that doing this helped with spelling, putting words together to form sentences, and identification of colors; putting the names of the colors on the objects prompted further discussion. The children would ask, “If blue and yellow go together, what would you get?” The children would then discuss when they came to school.

Wider Networks

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 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 feedback. Lecturers and officers in the MOE 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. Finally, one teachers' college holds an annual symposium on various subjects, including language arts; past topics included interactive ways to teach phonics and teaching grammar effectively in schools.

Publishers encourage private schools to purchase EGL materials and offer training or support in the use of the materials. One newspaper publishing enterprise conducts workshops with coordinating teachers on ways to use its publication *Children's Own* in a classroom setting. Students purchase this newspaper to read the articles and engage in literacy activities, among other benefits. There is also a synergy between the JLS and the schools. Students participate in the library service's annual National Reading Competition, and feedback from this helps librarians select books for future competitions. Librarians from local libraries also read books for students, share strategies for reading books, and provide books relevant to the teaching of a particular topic. Finally, librarians work with the National Parenting Commission, the Early Childhood Commission, and the Child Development Agency by mounting displays at educational functions.

Some private organizations and individuals donate EGL resources to schools to enhance their reading programs. One organization has built and furnished rooms to house EGL materials, and has conducted training in the use of the resources provided. Parents are assisted in the community through Community Development Centers, churches, clubs, and the local library, which provides EGL reading programs after school and on weekends. One stakeholder at the tertiary level did mention, however, that, "a children's literature specialist could help immensely with a reading program. I don't see how you could leave that person out of a reading program. We don't have any."

Synergies within Stakeholder Groups

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 MOE work with colleagues in different units. For example, the Language Unit works with Resource people, the National Literacy Team, and the Special Education Unit to develop curriculum and also

to conduct training for reading specialists and classroom teachers in effective language strategies. Librarians encourage ideas from staff from the network of libraries island-wide and internationally on projects to be initiated. Parents said they worked with other parents at the workplace, exchanging information on reading programs utilized by their own children. 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 MOE in the writing, reviewing, and publishing of materials to support, for example, the National Strategy Literacy 1-2-3.

Recommendations for Coordination

There are areas in which groups can better coordinate their endeavors to enhance service delivery to end users. The following recommendations were offered by stakeholders who were interviewed:

- Forge more partnerships with entities that can help with parenting. One such entity is RISE Life Management Services, which offers specialized training sessions in their **Parenting Skills Training Program** (Social Services, n.d.). In this program, parents learn effective parenting skills. Training is open to all parents in the target communities.
- Lobby for an increased presence of social workers who can assist with disadvantaged students. If disadvantaged children receive social intervention in a timely manner, then this could result in improved attitudes and reading performance in early grades.
- Involve private schools more in MOE workshops, so that they can form networks with public schools and build relationships, and exchange effective pedagogical practices in EGL.
- Forge partnerships between (a) local children’s literature authors and educators and (b) EGL practitioners to present a balanced approach to the teaching of literacy.
- Encourage partnership between the JLS and the MOE to expand the reach of the “We likkle, but we tallawah” project so that mothers can get reading starter kits when leaving with their newborn babies.

All stakeholders reported that partnerships across different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean would help them enhance the quality of their work. This sharing of strategies and ideas can forge partnerships that will be mutually beneficial. For example, the JLS indicated that partnerships with Chile and Cuba would enhance their work because of Chile’s Book Start program and Cuba’s strong library system. One participant said, “We can always learn from each other. They can learn our strengths and how we think.” Another said that a collaboration would be strong “Because our cultures are similar, our heritage is similar, we can exchange ideas . . . our contexts are similar also, and our resources.” Stakeholders also thought that, because there were

similar challenges across LAC region countries, collaboration would encourage stakeholders to understand that others share their challenges.

6. Education-Related Policy Influences

Stakeholders identified the following recent changes in education policy in Jamaica that have affected their work in EGL: (a) the focus on early childhood education and development of the Early Childhood Curriculum, (b) the establishment of the Parenting Commission, (c) the introduction and promotion of technology in schools, and (d) the revision of the primary curriculum so that it is more detailed and easier for teachers to follow. There was not a consensus on the effect of changes in education policy on EGL, but some individuals mentioned specific changes that, they believed, had influenced the field.

One stakeholder reported that the establishment of the Parenting Commission had heightened awareness about the importance of parenting in learning. “I have always said to my students that the most important place to set the foundation for primary learners is at home. So I think that policy is extremely important.” Some stakeholders identified the recent introduction of technology, through the Tablets in Schools project and the provision of Jolly Phonics, a child-centered approach to teaching literacy through synthetic phonics that includes CDs. Stakeholders also mentioned that apps and Internet access provided opportunities for students to explore reading activities. Finally, one stakeholder reported that the revised primary curriculum—the National Standards Curriculum (2013)—had more emphasis on reading for leisure and reading across the curriculum.

Influence in EGL Decision Making

Most stakeholders felt that they had influence on EGL within their professional context 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 MOE 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 were not always aware of 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. A participant representing 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.

Stakeholders suggested that, if they had the opportunity to change the realm of stakeholder influence within EGL, they would do the following:

- Promote broader participation of parents and other stakeholders, including churches, in the process. Churches are responsible for more early childhood institutions than any other places in Jamaica because most of the basic schools are housed in churches.
- Target key players, including mothers, teaching them strategies for using the reading text. Use social media to disseminate reading tips.
- Share the importance of what teachers are doing and the benefits. Show the statistics of the findings to get buy-in. Identify best practices that are indicated by research and adopt these across the board.
- Encourage teachers not to force children to read.
- Conduct more special education workshops.
- Implement a public education campaign.

7. Stakeholder Support

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.

Resources and Materials

The most common suggestions from classroom teachers revolved around the provision of adequate funds for procuring teaching materials. Teachers wanted more support to obtain appropriate readers and multisensory support—for example, puppetry or a CD with songs. Schools generally wanted more resources to help their students, with no clear preference for financial support or direct material donations. Respondents from teacher-training institutions also wanted more resources. One cited that computers (for lecturers) and on-campus Internet service should be provided so that lecturers would not have to leave campus to use the Internet. Another respondent wanted support in materials procurement and development to create materials that were more relevant to the development of early learners in the Jamaican context. Finally, a MOEYI representative called for additional officers to execute the job; in this way, more schools would “get coverage” by the officers. The representative also suggested that additional resources, especially supplementary materials, be provided to schools.

Public Media

Some stakeholders provided non-material recommendations to address the challenges. The book industry suggested using campaigns to promote EGL materials and informing parents about their roles as early grade teachers. The parent group said that parents of young children needed advice on ways to “differentiate wants from needs, prioritize, make sacrifices of a personal nature for the sake of the child,” so that their children’s education was not compromised. One university lecturer 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. This lecturer also believed that sessions should be videotaped for the purpose of reflection, to improve practice.

Stakeholders, outside of the schools and parent groups, wanted to engage the media to highlight the work being done in EGL, to inform stakeholders and the general public. These entities wanted 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. Parents suggested sharing findings from research with stakeholders through various media, such as Jamaica Information Service News, video, and postings on Facebook.

Other Areas

Generally, respondents said the availability of relevant evidence and resources could help them. Librarians thought that a database of information could help them with the early introduction to another language for students and provided information on types of materials available to teachers in training (student teachers/studying teachers). Teachers thought resources would be useful, as this would mean they could spend more time in class with their students. MOE stakeholders and researchers wanted to concentrate on more one-on-one support to teachers, monitor processes, and conduct research with children. Other stakeholders thought a database would be helpful if it helped determine whether trainers of teachers were looking at the right things, helped students process their realities in a more cogent and coherent manner, and helped students to see themselves in materials and to make reading/writing and other competencies look more familiar to them.

LRCP Communications

Stakeholders largely preferred online communication with e-mail being the most popular; social media, such as Facebook and WhatsApp, also featured. Communication could be in the form of online newsletters, flyers, or bulletin boards. Stakeholders generally wanted short electronic communications: “They are fast and I can do it at my own pace, not a lot of paper cluttering, store electronically.” In addition to e-mail, one school wanted small-group workshops, cluster or school-based. The independent parental interest felt newspaper articles highlighting best practices would be preferred; she wanted parents involved at every forum, so that parent-to-parent meetings and observation of a parent day would be supported.

Although stakeholders still preferred online means of communication with the LRCP and among other EGL groups, there was good support for face-to-face interactions—site visits, workshops, and conferences being among the suggestions. One stakeholder suggested printed materials. Suggestions for online communication included an LRCP Facebook page, an online community/electronic group, a discussion group/online forum, and WhatsApp groups. Some stakeholders made suggestions to keep the LRCP database relevant by building a network where they could still communicate and share materials. These stakeholders suggested that the database be open access, allowing organizations in the various countries to add resources over time.

LRCP Sustainability

Stakeholders had varied suggestions on how to continue the work so that the LRCP activities would continue past the end of the project, but generally thought the LRCP activities could be sustained by sharing its successes and getting buy-in from stakeholders. One stakeholder suggested that the LRCP help partners understand that, even though ideas might come from other areas or even the project, stakeholders could develop their own ideas. For example, if teachers are showing students ways to make a book, a school might want to develop a book competition. Overall, stakeholders advocated selling the idea that “we are helping you to help yourself,” promoting self-efficacy among actors, and developing a can-do cognition in all partners.

School-level stakeholders suggested that the LRCP try to build partnerships with the private sector to get funding and resources to help with early readers. Two schools suggested that the LRCP use resources to create a local reading program. One stakeholder suggested a pull-out reading program to give extra lessons in groups. In sharing best practices, schools wanted LRCP to conduct ongoing workshops, preferably face to face, provide a good website that gave teachers access to a variety of materials such as videos, and a textbook list that makes the journey with the children across grades. The parents interviewed wanted to see the LRCP target weaker schools, as they thought improvements at those institutions would make sustainability more likely and could be beneficial to the nation on a whole. Finally, one school wanted periodic monitoring and assessment by the LRCP, as well as feedback on what is working and what needs to be changed.

The wider stakeholders favored documentation and partnerships to extend the LRCP. Stakeholders mentioned that the LRCP should forge partnerships through face-to-face and virtual meetings, and use the interactions to create publications. Actors suggested trying to convince funders or others with similar interests to support the development of materials to address gaps. These actors could then share the information in the right forums and get buy-in from policy heads (show them the hard facts on the basis of LRCP input and progress made). One stakeholder summed things up: “Once you are informing policy, once you can show that you have transformed a situation, people are always going to keep coming back to you.” One teacher trainer also wanted some way of maintaining contact specifically with donor agencies, stating that there needed to be a symbiotic relationship between teachers’ colleges and USAID in which they interface and collaborate.

V. Discussion

This research aimed to understand the current stakeholders engagement with EGL practices in Jamaica, specifically (a) their past, current, and potential impact on EGL policy and practice; (b) their knowledge and capacity needs to enhance or sustain such impact in their country and the LAC region; and (c) ways the LRCP could utilize stakeholders' existing skills for capacity building throughout the region. There is a range of social, political, and geographical contexts that help frame the ways people view EGL and the inputs the various stakeholders provide. Therefore, an understanding of these contexts, strengths, and challenges can help stakeholders to recast, where necessary, ways to move forward with EGL.

Overall, the stakeholder analysis revealed a high level of engagement and interest among stakeholders in EGL. At the national level, the government has catalyzed various initiatives that encourage children to read and emphasize the importance of doing so throughout the population. Stakeholders seem to interact with one another, to enhance their work and maximize resources, especially with others in their same profession. Finally, parents and teachers are engaged in helping children read and seem to utilize the available resources to the extent possible.

Jamaica's emerging strength in EGL at the government level is seen through the number of institutions training teachers for the early childhood level, the establishment of the ECC to oversee the standardization of the early childhood institutions and the formalizing of curriculum, and the upgrading of libraries in the basic and primary schools with the support of the private sector. Also, recently, early learners (4- and 5-year-olds) took formal national assessments for the first time to determine their readiness in EGL. Stakeholders also discussed strengths, such as the introduction of technology (e.g., Tablets in School project) to support teaching and learning in EGL and internal collaboration among teachers through the exchange of ideas during common planning time. An additional strength is the recent development of the National Standards Curriculum (2013), which gives an expanded and defined focus on the teaching of reading, as it includes a more structured reading program with all reading strands clearly outlined, along with suggested strategies for teaching the various strands.

Stakeholders have been resilient in promoting EGL in Jamaica through creative means despite challenges. Schools have managed to fill the gaps created by the lack of local relevant EGL materials by seeking donations of books from private and public sector organizations and other stakeholders. In response to the lack of adequate workshops that immerse teachers in authentic learning situations, schools have conducted their own on-site workshops in which they share challenges and solutions, using their own teaching experiences, and plan as a team to execute lessons and achieve reading goals. Many schools also implement their own interventions to address students who are having reading challenges. Such interventions include pull-out sessions, afterschool reading activities, and homework centers, where students can get additional assistance tailored to their reading needs.

Finally, although teachers have low power in terms of policy making, they have a high interest in EGL; they are passionate about their students' education and assess the students regularly to determine their reading levels and fill the gaps. For example, because of the limited access to resources for the Caribbean region, teachers have sought to use the internet to find alternative materials that can be adapted to suit their cultural context. Part of the challenge in moving forward will also be to change the mindset with regard to continuous teacher training—away from holding the teacher completely responsible for his/her own success, which was indicated by a teacher trainer, “I don't think that guidance and support are absolutely necessary, because I think the educator's role is to open these resources ... and because these resources are ... self-explanatory.”

VI. Recommendations

For all the above reasons, we propose the following concrete ways to direct LRCP activities specifically in Jamaica moving forward.

1. Dissemination

All stakeholders expressed interest in receiving information from LRCP about EGL in the LAC region. They felt that such information would enhance their practice, as there were similarities in the cultures and challenges. For example, teachers' skills might be enhanced with the availability of resources, since they would have access to a range of instructional reading materials and different genres of texts. It would also be useful for pre-service teachers to have access to the EGL resources. Parents would also benefit from additional resources, for they would be able to use the resources with their children in the home and share them with other parents.

Stakeholders expressed interest in more collaboration and knowledge sharing among practitioners at all levels. The LRCP could look to disseminate materials in a way that would allow for discussion among practitioners through means such as talk shows (radio, television, and Internet), online forums, or webinars. Some participants also suggested public education campaigns to inform parents about how they might engage their children in EGL from the home, and also to highlight the work being done in EGL. Specifically, all stakeholders would like to have access to more locally produced and culturally relevant EGL materials and programs. In light of this, policy makers should engage the local book industry to describe the demand for local materials.

Participants' preferred mode of dissemination of information is through technology. The lack of funds and the limited availability of culturally relevant EGL materials indicate that the LRCP should aim to produce free, culturally relevant materials online. For those who have trouble accessing online materials, the program could look to providing shorter, paper-based materials, or possibly information that could be distributed via radio, newspaper, or magazines. LRCP could host webinars for teachers and aspiring writers on ways to develop EGL materials (chart making, story writing, and ways to conduct action research in their institutions). Finally, stakeholders also confirmed that the

currently in-progress database of EGL resources from throughout the LAC region would be useful for their practice.

2. Capacity Building

In addition to the capacity building that would result from making materials and other resources available through the LRCP, stakeholders expressed interest in having more conferences and workshops in which teachers could share their challenges and also be immersed in authentic learning situations. One informant said teachers are overwhelmed and, “need more support in terms of understanding the strands of Language Arts ... phonemic awareness, phonics, sight words, a structural analysis that has so many elements, and some people even do spelling, comprehension.” The same informant commented that teachers need help in structuring their teaching to include all elements, as “when they are delivering ... they just maybe grab an element here and there and do what they can reasonably do.” One other participant mentioned that a literacy symposium was helpful, saying, “You are able to get information on various things that are happening up there ... I have found it to be very useful in terms of my own work, in shaping my perspective, and also in just providing information on what is happening within the system.” Another stakeholder emphasized the importance of modelling behavior for teachers in workshops, rather than simply talking. Such events could potentially motivate stakeholders in the country to engage with EGL in a deeper way.

Stakeholders also expressed interest in opportunities to participate in policy making with regard to EGL—not only at the implementation stage but at the developmental stage. One informant said, “We will have to ensure that the political directorate is sufficiently informed of all aspects so that when they speak they can be speaking to the needs that are there.” This would help ensure greater stakeholder buy-in for EGL programs and more relevance to students’ needs. Practitioners—especially teachers—voiced various needs and ideas for filling those needs during interview. For example, multiple informants mentioned the particular difficulty of engaging boys in reading, and data shows that they are more likely to drop out of school in Jamaica. Activities that may tailor to boys’ specific needs—especially if embedded in the curriculum, which was another key takeaway from the Jamaica data—may be something to consider in education policies.

Finally, stakeholders will also have easier access to research documents through the LRCP evidence database. However, since few people described using research to inform their practice, it might also be helpful to expose stakeholders to the value of research and guide them to use the information to inform practice. In addition, potentially making high-demand, sharable materials available among stakeholders may add to the ability of practitioners at all levels to enhance their work. For example, one stakeholder described, “For the early reader, picture books are so crucial, because the picture books initiate this visual literacy that helps to pull them into the world of reading without seeing reading as this very technical rigid [task].” Given the limited availability of picture books—as well as Caribbean-produced texts—collaborating to provide more potential to access through formal means may help resource scarcity.

It will be important to ensure that any materials to help stakeholders are explicitly related to the new curriculum that the GOJ is rolling out. Multiple informants expressed difficulty or perceived difficulty with handling multiple types of learners as well as the various elements of reading; for example, “we have been really emphasizing the coverage of the different strands of reading to ensure that teachers pay to have a balanced approach to the delivery.” As the new curriculum should be more tailored to helping teachers be able to teach in both an effective and engaging way, it may be helpful specifically in this context to link any materials to sections of the new curriculum and provide descriptions of how the materials are useful in that context. The LRCP database could be useful for this if it allows practitioners to make notes on how and on what topic they utilized certain materials. Alternatively, one stakeholder suggested that making tailored plans could help teachers cover all of the strands, “you should more generate a unit plan to say, ‘ok, for this month this is what I’ll over in phonics,’ so ... over a block of time, and you would have simultaneously covered the different strands.”

3. Sustainability

Stakeholders would like to be kept aware of successful EGL programs and practices in other countries such as Cuba, Chile, and Trinidad and Tobago, as this information could be adapted to suit the Jamaican context. Also, contextually relevant materials seemed extremely important to motivating EGL practitioners at all levels. A representative from the BIAJ described that with publishing books, “There is also strong cultural contribution, opportunity as well is a chance to really imprint and solidify children’s attachment to their culture, to their sense of identity.” Stakeholders expressed interest in the establishment of a local and regional online network, so that they would be able to consult one another on EGL matters at the school and policy levels. Stakeholders would welcome a forum in which reading events and programs could be posted so that the stakeholders could plan accordingly for their own events and participation.

Stakeholders believe that there is need for greater collaboration among the government, practitioners, and the private sector from the conception stage, not only at the implementation stage. Many of these players reported that they had the requisite field experiences and information, supported by research, to inform policy making of EGL, so that they would “get it right from the start”. These stakeholders also believe that they are key to the development and execution of EGL. Serpell (1997) notes that assuming responsibility and carrying out effective actions require a “quite different type of social interaction . . . one that involves the negotiation of a shared understanding” (p. 595), among stakeholders. In addition, private schools requested that they be officially informed of MOEYI activities such as workshops, as they currently only heard about MOEYI workshops from their public school counterparts. Private schools also expressed interest in more regular opportunities for private schools to interact with public primary schools on issues related to EGL. The LRCP could work to create opportunities for open dialogue in which stakeholders could voice their opinions about EGL and feel comfortable that their voices were respected.

Finally, one stakeholder emphasized the need for continuity and realistic goals, saying,

“We have to bear that in mind as we design these programs and perhaps look at them as stages instead of trying to do everything all at once within a 5 or 3 year period. So we have to re-think the entire structure, the policies, the program design and perhaps not bite off more than we can chew, but to have it truncated—so, you might have 3 projects, each project handling a particular area along the spectrum of the continuum as we hit the goal.”

4. Possible Future Research

Given the lack of evidence-based research being utilized or produced in Jamaica, this analysis may help determine ways to move forward with local research. Preliminary ideas for locally-relevant research include: (1) best practices in working with students with disabilities; (2) various levels of implementation of the new curriculum, including student outcomes; (3) pre-service teacher engagement and learning with new curriculum; (4) the new reading standards and benchmarks and how they align with the new curriculum; (5) insights into teaching and learning higher level reading comprehension skills; and (6) how the relationship between Jamaican creole and Jamaican Standard English and affects students’ reading abilities. Qualitative research and monitoring systems are also particularly important in the Jamaica context given that resources may not be immediately available to conduct rigorous quantitative research.

This research revealed that many classroom teachers did not have access to research-based materials. LRCP will make available online findings from this research conducted in the LAC region so that practitioners could be informed about EGL practices across countries in the region and get ideas that they could incorporate within their own reading programs. LRCP will also help widen teachers’ repertoire of EGL instruction by sharing examples of action research, conducted regionally and internationally, including areas such as effective comprehension strategies at the inferential level and strategies for teaching special needs students.

Exhibit 11 below summarizes the preceding sections according to the project results.

Exhibit 11. Summary of Discussion Points and Recommendations

Products	Information to identify in the stakeholder mapping and analysis	Possible ideas for discussion and Next Steps
1. Result 2: dissemination	1.1 Recipients of dissemination plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers expressed interest. • Parents seemed engaged and likely to utilize additional resources.
	Areas or themes in which key stakeholders need information (identify gaps, difficulties, and strengths for the communication campaign and materials to disseminate)	Private school teachers need access to more materials, programs, and a bigger network.

Products	Information to identify in the stakeholder mapping and analysis	Possible ideas for discussion and Next Steps
	Resources or materials to disseminate and the formats we will use that best deliver the messages to the stakeholders	<p>Non-Internet-based materials for teachers in rural areas where it is challenging to access the Internet</p> <p>Consultation and collaboration among school-level stakeholders</p> <p>A forum to see when there are events or programs from other entities</p> <p>Collaborations with magazines and newspapers and other easily accessible materials that practitioners seem to use</p> <p>Locally relevant contexts—i.e., information in a way that is relatable to the Jamaica context</p>
2. Result 3: national capacity-building plan	According to the needs and strengths, the results that a capacity building strategy should aim to reach	<p>Helping teachers to identify where pull-out sessions for struggling students may be helpful</p> <p>Helping teachers to identify which institutions and programs for struggling students already exist</p> <p>Helping with a shortage of personnel at the national level by involving practitioners in EGL-related discussions and initiatives</p>
	The areas where we should center the strategy	Free materials sharing, utilizing existing available materials
	The recipients of the strategy based on findings from stakeholder mapping	<p>Teachers—especially those at private institutions who do not always have access to the resources and networks provided by the government</p> <p>Government capacity strengthened using existing knowledge of practitioners as input, including those from private schools</p>
	The modalities of implementation and the characteristics that the strategy should have according to the type of stakeholder	<p>In-person workshops</p> <p>Online forums for related stakeholders</p> <p>Availability of experts to discuss problems with colleagues</p>
3. National research agenda	Gaps or areas around which key stakeholders in the country lack information or capacity	Lack of use and availability of evidence-based research

Products	Information to identify in the stakeholder mapping and analysis	Possible ideas for discussion and Next Steps
	Within these gaps and themes, identify those that we would consider key to construct a research agenda for EGL in Jamaica	Strategies for teaching reading to students with special needs Teaching comprehension at the inferential level Implementation and outcomes of the new curriculum Alignment between standards and curriculum
	Identify existing resources to use as a base for the research agenda	MOEYI Lecturers at teachers' colleges and university JLS Schools

The findings revealed that there were varying levels of involvement in EGL among practitioners in Jamaica. If those individuals were given a voice in discussions about EGL at the implementation stage, then greater success might be achieved in EGL. The MOEYI has great power in the education of the students, so greater effort could be exerted on their path to systematize the various components of EGL—resources, curriculum, and so forth—so that there is greater equity and quality assurance in service delivery. Assessment of students’ performance within a group-referenced context will give a clearer understanding of ways students should generally perform in a specific grade so that the requisite intervention can be implemented.

Although the research has limitations in terms of its ability to generalize because of the nature of qualitative research and limited purposive sampling, it is our hope that the findings will resonate with stakeholders in EGL and provide a forum for further research and collaboration nationally and internationally. The team proposes incorporating these ideas into the LRCP work, moving forward at the country level, as well as incorporating some of these ideas into the international-level strategy. We intend to combine these ideas with any input from USAID, as well as any ongoing input from our national-level stakeholders.

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The Jamaica Early Childhood Curriculum for Children Birth to Five Years: A Conceptual Framework:

http://www.ecc.gov.jm/Downloads/Manuals/Conceptual%20Framework_revised.pdf

The Jamaica Early Childhood Curriculum Guide: For Children Four and Five Years:

[http://www.ecc.gov.jm/Downloads/Curriculum/JECCG_\[Four-to-Five-Year-Old\]_\(final\)_intrnt.pdf](http://www.ecc.gov.jm/Downloads/Curriculum/JECCG_[Four-to-Five-Year-Old]_(final)_intrnt.pdf)

The Jamaica Early Childhood Curriculum Guide: For Children Birth to Three Years:

[http://www.ecc.gov.jm/Downloads/Curriculum/JEC_Curriculum%20Guide_\[BirthToThree\].pdf](http://www.ecc.gov.jm/Downloads/Curriculum/JEC_Curriculum%20Guide_[BirthToThree].pdf)

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Glossary

Parent Places

Parent Places were encouraged under the USAID/MOE Partnership for Improved Reading Outcomes project. A Parent Place is a special room/space at the school where parents can visit at any time to have workshops organized by the school or just to peruse the various brochures geared to helping parents educate themselves about general parenting, learn to create a safe educational environment at home, learn to communicate with the school and keep up to date with the various programs/events of the school. Each Parent Place was equipped with a large-screen television, DVD player, books, chairs, and tables.

RISE Life Management Services

RISE Life Management Services is a nongovernmental organization, established in Jamaica in 1989 as Addiction Alert. The organization operated the island's first outpatient treatment center for addictive disorders. However, over the years the direction and focus of its programs were reviewed and adjusted in order to meet the current needs of the young at-risk population in Jamaica, particularly those living in inner cities. In order to reflect these developments, the organization changed its name to RISE Life Management Services. RISE is an acronym for Reaching Individuals Through Skills and Education. Source: <http://www.risejamaica.org/about-us>

Tablets in Schools Project

The Tablets in Schools Project is a technology-based project implemented by e-Learning Jamaica Company Limited. This project involved training of teachers in infant, primary, and high schools in tablet integration strategies. Students and teachers were given tablets to enhance the teaching and learning of all subjects, including reading. Read more: <http://www.elearnja.org/tabletsinschools/>

Annex A. Jamaica Materials

Annex A.1. Bachelor's Degree in Education Courses

Bachelor's Degree in Education - Primary Program

Specialization Courses	Semester	Course Code	Credit
Introduction to Literacy Development	1	LA100PRB	3
Teaching LA in Primary 1	3	LA201PRB	3
Teaching LA in Primary 2	4	LA211PRB	3
Addressing Children's Literacy Development	5	LA300PRB	2
Teaching Writing/Introduction to Writing	5	LA301PRB	3
Children's Literature in Primary Education	8	LA400PRB	3
Advanced Studies in Literacy 1	6	LA142GE	3
Advanced Studies in Literacy 2	9	LA100PR	3

Bachelor's Degree in Education - Early Childhood Program⁴

Specialization Courses	Semester	Course Code	Credits
Assessment in ECE	6	ED300ECB	3
Introduction to Literacy Development	4	LA200ECB	3
Introduction to Children's Literature	5	LA300ECB	3
Advanced Reading 1	5	LA301ECD	3
Advanced Reading 2	6	LA311ECB	3

EGR/Language Courses in Early Childhood Development Levels 1 &2⁵

Competency Description	Level	Hours	Code	Type
Support Children's Language And Cognitive Development	1	15	CSEECD0061B	CORE
Make Learning Resources For Children	1	15	CSEECD0121B	CORE
Demonstrate Knowledge Of The Stages Of Child Development	1	20	CSEECD0141B	CORE
Facilitate Children's Language And Cognitive Development	2	15	CSEECD0032B	ELECTIVE
Facilitate Children's Creative Expression Through Art, Drama, Music And Movement	2	15	CSEECD0082B	ELECT

- ⁴ For additional courses in each category, visit: <http://www.sjtc.edu.jm/Generator.aspx?xfv=657>
- ⁵ See http://www.nqrjamaica.org/nationalregister/generalinfo/frm_QualFramework.aspx for competency standards for Early Childhood Development Levels 1-3 and Early Childhood Special Needs Level 3.



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