

EDUCATION MATTERS



SEPTEMBER 2016

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**



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EDUCATION Matters

September 2016

Vision

Each Child Succeeds

Mission

*To educate and prepare all students to live productive
lives in a complex and changing society.*

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Students of the Dominica State College use facilities at the newly opened Centre of Excellence in Information Technology, funded by the Republic of India.

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CONTENTS | page

EDUCATION
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Messages

- 4 Editor's Note
- 5 Minister for Education and Human Resource Development
- 6 Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
- 7 Chief Education Officer

MoE in Action

- 8 One Tablet Per Child!
- 9 Tablets in Dominica Classrooms
- 11 Making Dominica ICT Ready
- 13 Centre of Excellence in Information Technology Opens at the Dominica State College
- 15 Broadband for Development
- 16 EMIS - Modernizing Record-keeping in Dominican Schools
- 18 Routing Students to Their Roots with Technology
- 20 Ministry of Education Responds to Tropical Storm Erika
- 23 Renovation Works at Schools Impacted by TS Erika
- 24 In Aid of Dominica in the Aftermath of TS Erika
- 27 TVET on the Rise
- 29 Dominica Hosts TVET Consultation
- 30 New Newtown Primary School Opens
- 32 CFS in Action
- 34 Dominica and Argentina Collaborate on Spanish Teaching Programme
- 36 Dominica, Martinique Sign New Cooperation Agreement
- 37 Library Week Observed Under the Theme 'Libraries Evolving'



- 38 Toward Improved Literacy & Numeracy Skills
- 39 Caribbean Examination Council - Online Testing
- 41 Government Investigates Dropout Rates
- 42 DEEP at a Glance



Best Practices

- 44 How the Roseau Primary School is Improving Achievement Levels
- 47 Roseau Primary School Teachers Excel

Improving Teaching & Learning

- 49 Peer Meditation: Benefits for Teaching and Learning
- 50 Rethinking Gender Differences In Students' Performance: Creating Gender Sensitive Classrooms (Part I)
- 52 From the Known to the Unknown
- 55 Aiming Higher: Access, Quality and Value at Dominica State College

2015-2016 Highlights

- 57 SMSS Wins Sagcor Visionaries Challenge for the Third Time
- 58 Vieille Case Primary School Renamed Baroness Scotland Primary School
- 59 Math Power • Lets Talk Parenting
- 60 Grand Fond Primary School wins Mademoiselle Francophone 2016 • Paix Bouche Primary School Wins Kweyol Spelling Bee Title
- 61 Roseau Primary School Tops G6NA • Dominica Improves Performance at 2016 CSEC Exams
- 62 Tete Morne Primary School Wins Literacy Prize • New Library For Roosevelt Douglas Primary School
- 63 Ross University Funds New Kitchen For Savanne Paille Primary School



Featured...

- 64 Heimish Blaize: Number 1 in 2016 G6NA
- 65 Vanessa Seraphine - Winning at Science
- 66 Castle Bruce Secondary School Excels in Sports



EDITOR'S NOTE



Dear Reader

Welcome to the September 2016 edition of Education Matters, the official publication of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development.

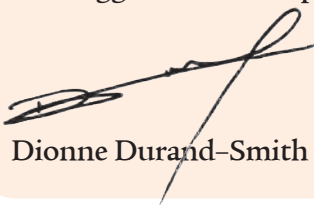
This issue is special because it is our first since the passage of Tropical Storm Erika, which significantly impacted the education system and prompted us to shelve the planned issue due for release in September 2015. We look back at the Ministry's efforts to return the education system to a state of normalcy in the immediate aftermath of the storm.

The main focus of this edition of Education Matters is integrating Information and Communication Technologies, (ICTs) in Education. We examine the efforts of the Ministry of Education to empower teachers and students as users of technology in a manner that enhances teaching and learning. This is within a wider national context as the Government of Dominica continues to invest in opportunities for citizens to fully utilize the available information and communication technologies to improve lives and build the economy. Education Matters examines recent strategic investments in the education sector, to include the provision of tablets to secondary and tertiary school students, the new Centre for Excellence in Technology at the Dominica State College as well as moves to develop the ICT sector through the provision of universal broadband access.

The magazine also highlights other important work ongoing within the Ministry including the Child Friendly School (CFS) initiative supported by UNICEF, developments in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and the achievements and successes of our students and teachers.

We hope that you find some inspiration from our section on '*Improving Teaching and Learning*,' to guide your classroom practice and/or interaction with our children.

Thank you for reading this edition of Education Matters. Your feedback and suggestions for improvement are welcome!



Dionne Durand-Smith



Messages

Hon. Petter Saint-Jean

Minister for Education and Human Resource Development

Investing In ICT Education for Future Development

I am pleased to contribute to this edition of *Education Matters*, which focuses on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Education.

We live in a constantly evolving digital world and consequently, our lives are impacted in every way by technology. The digital age has transformed the way we communicate, network, access information and learn. Our children are also exposed to a wide array of digital devices from a very early age. As technology becomes more embedded in our culture, we must provide our learners with relevant and contemporary experiences that allow them to successfully engage with technology and prepare them for life after school.

The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development is at the core of this transformation. This is clearly reflected in the Ministry's unwavering effort to equip our schools with the resources for teachers and students to engage with the new technologies to inform and enhance the learning experience. In collaboration with the Ministry of Information, Science and Technology we are forging ahead with plans to upgrade all our classrooms to revolutionize and modernize the way students learn, while encouraging independence and alternative modes of expression. Plans to introduce Broadband Internet to all schools in Dominica are well underway. This will significantly facilitate e-learning - the digitalization of curricula, lesson plans and demonstrations.

“The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development is at the core of this transformation. This has been clearly reflected in the Ministry’s unwavering effort to equip our schools with the resources for teachers and students to engage with the new technologies to inform and enhance the learning experience.”

The Government of Dominica is currently reviewing an ICT policy, which envisions the use of broadband technology for the development of key sectors such as education, tourism and health. The policy is also expected to guide the use of technologies in classrooms.

The Centre of Excellence in Information Technology at the Dominica State College, funded by the Republic of India, which opened this year, is a sterling example of the government's commitment to ensuring that our human resource capacity is fully utilized. There, citizens will access knowledge of the latest technologies and develop their skills in software development and programming. The Government of Dominica hopes the Centre will provide new avenues for job creation.

The development of the ICT sector is high on Government's agenda as we look to train competent users of ICT technologies to allow them to participate successfully in the rapidly evolving global environment. We believe it is strategically important to develop citizens who can competently and efficiently operate and add value to the new systems in the 21st century workplace.

The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development continues to play its role in empowering our children with ICT knowledge, to cultivate leadership and innovation, fostering an ICT - savvy generation ready to contribute to economic growth and prosperity.



Messages

Marcella Powell

Permanent Secretary (Ag.)

Welcome to another edition of *Education Matters*! This issue focuses on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Education. It reflects the goal of the Ministry of Education to promote ICT in learning for the enhanced success of all our citizens.

We are working towards this goal through the development of curricula, and investments in infrastructure that will expose students and teachers to the requisite tools and systems for effective teaching and learning. We intend to continue encouraging teachers to integrate ICT into their teaching in order to improve students' performance.

Our primary and secondary schools continue to acquire and utilize new tools in the form of desktop and laptop computers, tablets and projectors to facilitate classroom instruction. The fully functional Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), used to effectively manage and retrieve data, assists the Ministry in making accurate assessments to direct improvements across the education sector. These investments in the infrastructure are aimed at facilitating student learning and the dissemination of knowledge and skills through ICT platforms.

The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development remains committed to its mission to educate and prepare all students to live productive lives in a complex and changing society. The acquisition of ICT skills will allow all citizens to participate fully as they are equipped with the competencies required to meet the challenges of their world. The Ministry will continue to play its part to ensure that both teachers and students are provided with the support to adjust and thrive in a world that demands exposure to information systems.

We do hope that this edition of *Education Matters* is for your reading pleasure.

Pleasant Reading!



Messages

Melena Fontaine
Chief Education Officer

The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development continues its focus on quality education for all, keeping true to its vision, 'Each Child Succeeds.' As we prepare our students to participate fully in the global economy we recognize our responsibility to utilize the available technologies and to facilitate wide participation of students, teachers and other school officials in the Information Communication Technologies, (ICTs). Our aim in this regard is to create new avenues for improved teaching and learning in Dominica.

In recent times, the Ministry of Education has been actively engaged in providing students with a myriad of educational experiences that will position them as major players within their chosen academic and professional fields. As a system we are catering to approximately 1,621 children in 89 early childhood facilities, 7,535 students in 60 primary schools and 5,561 students in 15 secondary school. We therefore take seriously, our role, to mold each and every student into productive 21st century citizens who can make valuable contributions to our country's development and beyond.

Our commitment to students' personal and academic growth can be seen through the Ministry's efforts to, for example, develop programmes in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), engender strong leadership, support and create professional development opportunities for teachers and develop our ICT offerings up to internationally accepted standards.

The education system of any country has an obligation to meet the skill requirements of its people in a rapidly advancing society that is becoming largely dependent on new skills and knowledge to fuel social and economic growth. Adequate training of teachers to use ICT effectively in the classroom is an essential prerequisite for success. We continue to seek ways to equip our teachers with the tools and knowledge to access and make use of technology and to integrate it into their classrooms. Likewise, our goal is to get our students up to date with the ways they can use the internet as a research resource for more effective learning of subject matter.

We have worked towards these goals with several targeted interventions and investments aimed at ensuring equitable access to ICT resources by all students and teachers within the education system. Among these interventions is the introduction of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) with a team of support staff charged with assisting in the efficient management of information pertinent to the education system. We continue to equip our schools with computers and Wi-Fi access to allow learning that is relevant and promotes active rather than passive participation in the process. Recent interventions by the Government of Dominica have added significant value to our efforts to make our schools ICT ready.

This publication of *Education Matters* therefore, gives focus to our efforts to integrate ICTs in our education system. From the articles, one will realize that it is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development and our partners. Generally, education is a partnership and involves all stakeholders. We value the contribution of all our stakeholders and thank them for the support of the education system and our children's future.



ONE TABLET PER CHILD!

GOVERNMENT KEEPS CAMPAIGN PROMISE, LAUNCHES TABLET-PER-CHILD INITIATIVE

The Government of Dominica made good on a December 2014 promise to provide every secondary school student with a tablet.

The devices were distributed to all students of secondary schools and the Dominica State College in October 2015 to coincide with the start of the new academic year. The personal tablets were intended for use both at school and at home to facilitate and improve learning.

Prime Minister Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit had announced the decision to supply students of the island's secondary schools and the Dominica State College with tablets at a political rally of his Dominica Labour Party. The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development collaborated with the Ministry of Science, Information and Technology to distribute the tablet computers over a two-week period.

Each school was also provided with a complement of the devices for use as teaching aids in the classroom.

The Ministry of Education prepared curriculum guides to assist teachers to incorporate the devices into their classroom instruction. Teachers were also provided with basic training in the use of the tablets and training has been provided for technicians and support staff of the Ministry of Education who will assist schools in managing the devices.



Photo: Minister for Education and Human Resource Development Hon. Pelter Saint-Jean presents tablet to Principal of the Pierre Charles Secondary School Jerome Bardouille.

TABLETS

in Dominica Classrooms

By Raymond Henderson

General Editor, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development



The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development introduced tablets to the classrooms of secondary schools as a teaching and learning tool last school year. This means that it is now impossible to ignore New Teaching and Learning Technologies in the classroom. But whether we are looking at new teaching and learning technologies in the richer nations or poorer countries of the world, implementing their use in difficult environments requires that some basics be covered.

What is the motivation?

It is not an attempt to create a paperless, chalk less or wireless environment in schools. It is not an attempt to build a digital backpack; a tablet that will replace books, textbooks, and notepads. It will not be a transfer of the education curriculum onto a digital format.

The introduction of tablets to secondary schools in Dominica is an attempt to tackle/improve the learning experience of Dominican students. The OECS Education Sector Strategy (OESS) 2012 - 2021 identifies the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning at all levels using learner-centred experiences as a strategic imperative.



Photo: Students of the Convent High School use their Government issued tablets to keep up to date with class assignments.

Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) can answer the need to implement new methods that are learner-centred approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. These methods will consider the needs of all students or learners inclusive of those with special educational needs and will address inequality, improve achievement and meet the economic and social needs of the OECS in the 21st Century.

The March to IT in the Classroom

Dominica has made steady strides in the last six years to bring new Internet Technologies closer to the classroom. As part of the process, 20 networked computer labs have been set up in 15 secondary schools. They were set up under the European Union funded ICT Development Project. All have been supplied with supervisory and IT related staff. These labs are heavily utilized to meet demands for external exams and core courses. The Ministry also recognizes the need to broaden its offerings in ICTs to meet future demand. There is constant training in the use of IT in the classroom. There is also an overarching Government policy to provide e-skills to the population and to improve the necessary infrastructure on island.

These efforts to improve student achievement drive administrators to look at the realities facing our schools and to search for answers to important challenges. The introduction of tablets, the securing of reliable access and bandwidth, and the training of teachers to use the appropriate applications will assist in driving the process forward.

All students are not the same. They

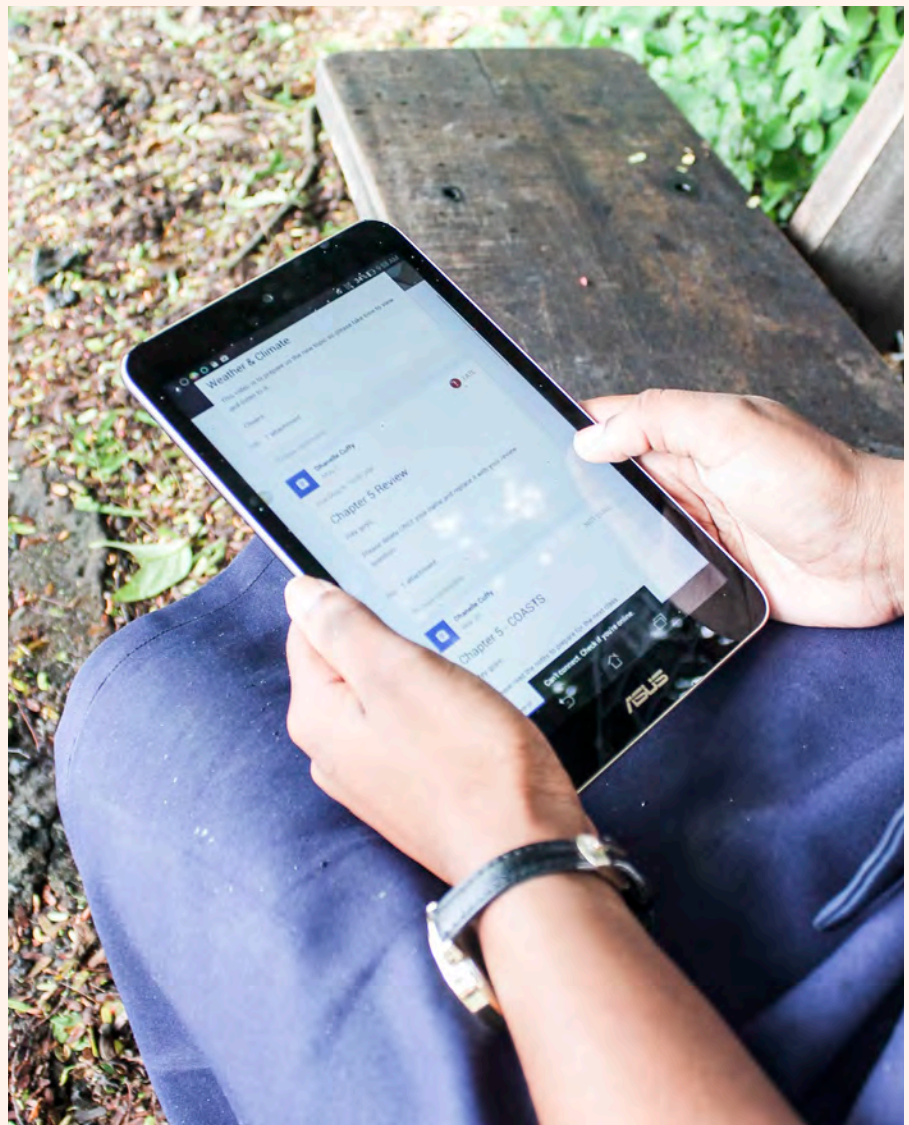


Photo: Student of the Convent High School use their Government issued tablets to access Geography notes.

learn differently. Students need different schedules because some need to move ahead while others require an adjusted pace. Parents and students need timely feedback on performance. At the same time, they need a greater range of activities to choose from. And more students need greater access to the best teachers who tend to be concentrated in the central education district. New teaching and learning technologies are expected to bridge some important gaps in our schools.

On a recent visit to a high school as part of an orientation activity for first formers, it was observed that nearly half

the session used Internet Technologies (IT). More and more of the activities in our schools are done using New Internet Technologies and it does not stop there. The government, private sector, media, and the wider public are using IT to conduct business and in social interactions. Therefore, if we are preparing students to function meaningfully in their communities in this rapidly advancing society, we must bring the relevant technology into the schools. The introduction of tablets is therefore, a welcome addition to the process.

Making Dominica ICT READY!

**INFORMATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MINISTER KELVER DARROUX
WANTS ALL CITIZENS TO HAVE ACCESS TO INTERNET SERVICE**

Dominica's Minister for Information, Science and Technology, Kelter Darroux, took office at a time of high demand for skills and competencies to meet the challenges of today's technological world.

The young, dynamic Kelter Darroux, a former President of Dominica's National Youth Council, came with a wealth of knowledge of Information Communication Technology (ICT). He is a former instructor of computer studies with the Youth Development Division.

"My time with the Youth Development Division gave me the technical knowledge, the background in ICT and even the ability to take a computer apart and fix it. It has allowed me to broaden my perspective on ICT.

"Now that we have so many young people who are ICT savvy, I think Dominica has a lot to benefit, particularly with young people and technology, and our best years are ahead of us," Darroux tells *Education Matters*.

"We have to provide students with the tools. We have already provided full Wi-Fi access at the Dominica State College and we intend to do the same thing with the secondary schools to give the students all they need to access information to improve their learning."

Since assuming the office in December 2014, Darroux has led an initiative to introduce Broadband Internet to all schools in Dominica. He says it is a collaborative effort with the Ministry of Education and Human Resource



Photo: Hon. Kelter Darroux, Minister for Information, Science & Technology

Development that will see schools equipped with fully functional computer labs and Wi-Fi access to facilitate teaching and learning using the available technologies.

"We have to provide students with the tools. We have already provided full Wi-Fi access at the Dominica State College and we intend to do the same thing with the secondary schools

to give the students all they need to access information to improve their learning,” he said.

His focus, however, is not limited to schools. Darroux wants to develop and expand the ICT sector by providing universal broadband coverage and working with service providers to put in place the necessary infrastructure to facilitate access island wide.

“I want to revolutionize the ICT sector to empower every Dominican citizen to utilize the skills and technologies available in an increasingly fast-paced world,” he noted.

“The vision I have for ICT is to ensure that all our citizens will have the requisite skills, the expertise to transform the entire economy of Dominica. That is to say, whether you are a farmer or fisherman, in your own little way, you are able to use the technologies available to you to improve your business activities,” Darroux explained.

Under his guidance, an ICT policy is being developed to guide the development of an industry, he believes, is one of the most “dynamic and exciting” today. This view seems to reflect the policy direction of the Government of Dominica. In a first for the island, Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit announced in December 2014, that Government would provide every secondary school and Dominica State College student access to a tablet for use in learning. Over 7000 devices were distributed to students in October 2015.

Darroux believes the devices will assist in developing students’ skills and knowledge, setting them on a path to success in an

increasingly technological environment.

“The Dominica Labour Party made a promise to the students of the country and we kept that promise.

“We have had some challenges and we are working to overcome these challenges. Once this is done, I believe we will see a complete transformation as it relates to students and the use of technology in the country,” he said.

Government is also focusing on innovations in ICT with the establishment of the Center of Excellence in Information Technology at the Dominica State College, with assistance from the Government of India. There, citizens will become proficient in computer related technologies and receive training in software development and programming.

Darroux wants to create competent, technologically savvy citizens who will change the Dominican economy by revolutionizing the financial services, health, tourism and education sectors.

He envisions changes in how companies do business, a transformation of public service delivery and increased innovation among youth who will be empowered to lead the way in ICT development.

“Once we are able to achieve this, as a country, we will have a brighter future for our citizens and ICT will play a pivotal role in developing the economy of our country,” Darroux concludes.

Photo: Minister for Information, Science and Technology Hon. Kelter Darroux cuts ribbon to officially open Center of Excellence in Information Technology at the Dominica State College while Prime Minister Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit looks on.

Photo Credit: D.A. Vibes



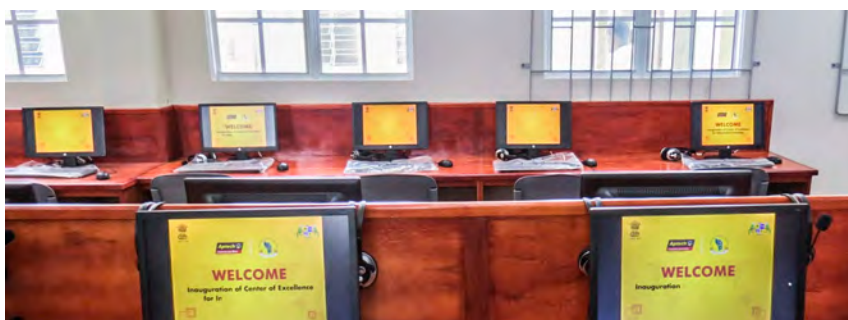
CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OPENS AT THE DOMINICA STATE COLLEGE

ICT Training for National Development

The Centre of Excellence in Information Technology opened at the Dominica State College this year to train citizens in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for national development.

The goal of the centre, established with funding from the Republic of India, is to position Dominica as a leader in ICT innovation and development. It is expected that citizens will see the centre as an avenue to develop their interests in technology and hone their skills in preparation to enter a competitive workforce, characterized by rapid advances in technology.

The Centre of Excellence boasts two computer labs, each containing thirty-six computers, an administrative block, library and a study room and central server room. It is also fully equipped with state of the art electronic equipment and software tools with high capacity Internet capabilities.



Minister for Information, Science and Technology Kelter Darroux told the opening ceremony, the new facility was poised to develop and train citizens to acquire international expertise in software engineering, computer programming, data management and cyber-security.



He hoped the Centre would attract “innovative and savvy” young people equipping them with the skills and knowledge to contribute to nation building.

“The government of Dominica is fully cognizant of the need to provide the enabling environment necessary to allow ICT to flourish and become meaningful to its citizens.

“We believe the centre will further exploit both the academic competencies and innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of our citizens as they look to open their own businesses for the creation of quality employment for themselves and their fellow citizens,” he said.

The minister said Information and Communication Technology along with its related services, have the ability to, not only transform the technical and intellectual abilities and capabilities of Dominicans, but also to significantly increase Dominica’s Gross Domestic Product through the creation of employment, high quality paying jobs and increased productivity.

“With a resilient modern infrastructure and realignment of the consciousness of the nation to the realities of an era of technological advances, the centre will provide Dominicans with the ability to be connected twenty-four-seven and to be in touch with IT professionals locally and internationally,” he added.

A team of experts from India will run the Centre for a two-year period after which control will be turned over to the Dominica State College.



Photo: Government Officials get their first look at the New Centre for Excellence in Technology at the Dominica State College

BROADBAND FOR DEVELOPMENT



Director of Telecoms, Bennett Thomas, Looks to Improved Connectivity to Fuel Economic Growth

The Government of Dominica is currently working to improve its broadband capacity through the installation of fibre-optic networks at key points in Dominica. And this, it is believed, has the potential to revolutionize the country's economy.

Broadband is defined as a high-capacity technique, using a wide range of frequencies, which enables a large number of messages to be communicated simultaneously.

Plans for improved broadband capacity includes full connectivity and networking of all Dominican schools to facilitate teaching and learning.

Director of Telecommunications, Bennett Thomas, has been actively engaged in liaising with the relevant service providers on island and planning and preparing for broadband capacity that facilitates the work within the education, health and financial sectors.

He assures that the development of broadband is a core priority for the Ministry of Information, Science and Technology. His Ministry has been actively pushing for the necessary regulatory and policy reforms as well as pursuing public-private sector partnerships and making strategic investments.

One such investment is the Centre of Excellence and Innovation at the Dominica State College, which is expected to position Dominica to make significant strides in areas such as e-education, e-voting, crime fighting and e-tourism. The Government of Dominica has also stayed true to a December 2014 promise to provide tablets to students of secondary schools and the Dominica State College. The Ministries of Information, Science and Technology and Education and Human Resource Development jointly coordinated the distribution of the tablets to the schools.

"I believe this can lift Dominica out of its economic woes. Broadband has been proven to develop the expanding GDP of countries," Thomas tells *Education Matters*.

"Broadband is a major factor in assisting in the development of countries, especially small island states. Dominica is very small and it can be transformed into a leader in broadband technology," he adds.

His enthusiasm is not without reason. According to a 2010 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report, 'broadband facilitates the development of new inventions, new and improved goods and services, new processes, new business models

and it increases competitiveness and flexibility in the economy.'

Thomas believes access to high-speed networks takes on added significance in the new knowledge based economy. Dominica, he says, now has to acquire the proper forms of broadband infrastructure, address issues related to user needs, and remove all remaining barriers to connectivity.

"If we do what we say we are going to do, just by putting the broadband in place, we will create the right environment for growth. We can create jobs. We will have people running fibres. We will need security experts, network experts...

"When that is done we will need to create a legal frame work and we will also need economists and accountants. When e learning is introduced you will need specialized teachers to provide the training," Thomas explains.

As the Telecoms Director continues the work to secure universal broadband access, he is looking forward to improved connectivity changing the lives of Dominican citizens in unprecedented ways, promoting new economic and social opportunities for all.



EMIS - Modernizing Record-keeping In Dominican Schools

Photo: EMIS Officer Bershana Bethel generates online report card for printing.

The Education Management Information System (EMIS) is changing the way schools keep records and modernizing the approach to data collection and analysis within Dominica's education system.

The EMIS is a data warehouse used to effectively manage and retrieve student data. EMIS provides real time feedback on the state of education in Dominica and is easily accessible at anytime from anywhere.

Officer responsible for the programme's implementation, Timothy Lavinier, believes EMIS can strengthen the

Ministry of Education's monitoring system and add accountability and transparency to the practice of record-keeping at schools.

Lavinier says in a technological era characterized by rapid advances, there is a need for even more accurate data for decision-making. EMIS, he says, also assists in ensuring that accurate education data is collected, collated and reported to all stakeholders in a meaningful manner and within a reasonable time-frame. With EMIS, a single centralized portal provides comprehensive education data to stakeholders at the click of a mouse.

"EMIS provides focused and timely feedback on students' performances to direct future learning and identify students who need additional support.

"It makes administrative functions more efficient with more accurate assessment of operational and teaching staff performances and improved record-keeping," he noted.

Currently all schools in Dominica are EMIS compliant, recording information related to grades, attendance and punctuality for easy online reference.

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What is EMIS?:

The Education Management Information System (EMIS) is a Data Warehouse used to effectively manage and retrieve student data. EMIS provides real time feedback on the state of education in Dominica and is accessible at anytime, anywhere in the world. EMIS also provides focused and timely feedback on students' performance to direct future learning and identify students who need additional support. EMIS makes administrative functions more efficient with more accurate assessment of operational and teaching staff performances and improved recordkeeping.

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ROUTING STUDENTS TO THEIR ROOTS WITH TECHNOLOGY

HOW A COLLEGE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM IS HELPING YOUNG STUDENTS APPRECIATE LOCAL HISTORY



A relatively new program at the Dominica State College (DSC) is working to expand digital content for academic use right here in Dominica. Create Caribbean Research Institute at the DSC, established only two years ago, is a think tank by design, offering services in academic and policy research. However, its education and outreach programs place technology at the centre of building and sharing knowledge about Dominica and the Caribbean.

Its signature Create and Code technology education program is a favourite among parents who want to expose their young children to games, apps and website building while focusing on content built on social awareness – anti-bullying, drug abuse awareness, crime prevention and environmentalism, among others. But it is the Research and Service Learning Internship Program for DSC students that really makes an impression and certainly prepares students to be future leaders of the country with technology and other disciplines.

So far, the interns in the program have worked on a wide range of academic research projects under the guidance of Dr. Schuyler Esprit, the Founder and Director, and Dr. Hermancia Eugene, the Assistant Director. One of these projects uniquely highlights the potential for technology to change the face of education in Dominica and to get students more invested in Dominica's history and culture. This project, made by students for students, can be found at www.dominicahistory.org.

Create Caribbean has partnered with the Division of Culture to change the way students learn and think about history, particularly the complex history of Dominica. The Dominica History project, first launched in 2015 with the theme "The Road to Independence" was launched as the signature event of History Week 2015. History Week is a cluster of activities, held annually in the weeks leading up to Dominica's Independence celebrations, to highlight a particular aspect of Dominica's rich history to primary and

secondary school students around the country.

Getting students interested in history in general can take a lot of theatrics. Many of us may remember the stories our grandparents told us about “the old days” when we would visit on the holidays. But outside of the fun oral storytelling traditions, students are generally apathetic or apprehensive about the formal study of history, whether in social studies courses in primary school or history courses at secondary school or college.

Teachers tend to face the battle of the myths of memorizing dates (although those are important) or too much reading, before they can convince students that the events of our past have a critical bearing on our present and their futures. While some may take a liking to the material in the classroom, it is admittedly difficult to get students thinking about the issues of slavery or the importance of Kalinago culture outside the classroom. This can take a lot of creativity and, frankly, a lot of luck.

Traditionally, History Week includes lectures and school presentations by historians and history enthusiasts, cultural officers and specially invited speakers. While those elements still remain part of the week’s programming, the launch of the web resource each year will be the signature event.

So what makes this web resource more special than a regular searchable website. Well, yes, the fact that these college students have expanded their own interests in history to do primary, sometimes archival, research is definitely impressive. They use the skills of formal research taught within the program and pair that with building or enhancing software and other digital tools to make the final project possible.

The 2015 “Road to Independence” site has interactive time-lines of the various decades from 1950-1978, the formal time-line of the project, that illustrates major social and political events taking place in Dominica in the post-

colonial times leading up to our national independence. Further, the archive is a repository of many primary source news clippings, newspaper and periodical issues, oral histories, private correspondences, photographs and videos with content applicable to this theme.

But some of the impressive work of the students appears in the Exhibits, short photo and text essays on various topics, broad and specific, that help outline important themes of that time period. Most of the essays were written and researched by the Create Caribbean interns and made available based on topics that would be relevant to primary and secondary school learning. The site also features some creative displays for primary school audiences, and a contribution page where adults who remember their lives in that time can share their own stories.

The project is only possible with the support and influence of all sections of the Dominica Library and Information Service in addition to the Division of Culture, who provide technical guidance and source materials to be made available on the website. Regional and international resources, including the Digital Library of the Caribbean, a resource of the University of Florida Library System, have also granted permission to source documents and later shared the website through their digital platforms. These college students are getting not only authorship credit for their work, but also unique exposure in the academic world as many of them prepare to transfer to four-year universities.

So while many educators may be busy trying to manage the use of cellphones in classrooms, which certainly can be a distraction to learning, these college students have found a way to bring technology into the classroom and to make it valuable for students all over the country. Create Caribbean Research Institute at the Dominica State College will be producing more projects like these so it is hopeful that teachers and students all around Dominica will be aware of this great learning tool.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION RESPONDS TO TROPICAL STORM ERIKA

Tropical Storm Erika hit Dominica on August 27, 2016, just two weeks before the official reopening of school for the 2015-2016 academic year. The storm left widespread devastation in its wake and Dominica's schools were not spared.

Education officials immediately sprang into action establishing an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at the Government Headquarters, which would provide daily updates to the National EOC based at the Financial Centre.

Quick decisions were taken to return as many schools to normalcy within a short space of time, on a phased time-line. To do that the Ministry needed to ascertain the extent of damage to school plants across the island.

Assessment teams took to the field while education officers made contact with principals to determine TS Erika's impact. Most schools were without a reliable water supply, a problem that would persist for weeks after the storm. Others had suffered some form of physical damage, which would need attention before school could resume. At other schools extensive cleaning was required for the removal of silt and debris that had accumulated due to the passage of rivers and engorged streams through the plants.

In the South of the island, while most of the physical plants were not significantly impacted, access was severely curtailed. Roads and pathways would have to be cleared before students could return to school. In Bagatelle-Fond St. Jean, for example, the river had claimed the road as its bed, depositing large stones and debris along what had been the footpath. Students from Fond St. Jean would have to remain home until this was cleared.

The villagers of Petite Savanne were evacuated due to heavy landslides and widespread flooding. Students were placed in a facility in the Roseau area.

In other instances, schools were used as shelters and would not be ready for resumption of classes until the people housed there had found alternative accommodation. The Berean Christian Academy, located on the banks of the Roseau River was washed

Photo: Senior Officials of the Ministry of Education meet with parents of students of the Collingwood Primary School to discuss a shift system for the school.



away and the Pioneer Preparatory suffered extensive damage from the raging waters from the nearby river.

Other schools heavily impacted by the storm were the Colihaut Primary School, Coulibistrie Primary School, Pichelin Primary School and the Delices Primary School. Coulibistrie Primary had been rendered completely unusable. The river, which runs through the centre of the village, had overflowed its bank diverting through the school building. Everything inside was destroyed.

The Colihaut Primary School, situated near the banks of the Colihaut River, suffered damage to the toilet block and grounds.

The Pichelin Primary School was also hard hit as the adjacent river raged through the building destroying school materials, desks and chairs.

The Delices Primary School though mostly intact, needing only some renovation works to the roof, was completely cut off from the two communities it served- Boetica and Delices. A collapsed bridge at Boetica would limit access into both villages for months.

Ministry of Education Officials had tough decisions to make. How would students of these schools be accommodated? Senior officials held meetings with stakeholders in the communities of Colihaut, Coulibistrie, Salisbury, Dublanc and Pichelin. A team led by Hon. Petter Saint-Jean, the Minister for Education and Human Resource Development, braved the rough passage across the Boetica Gorge to assess the possibility of housing students at the Delices Community Centre.

Parents and guardians were told their children would enter shift systems with neighbouring schools. Students of the Colihaut Primary School would attend school on a shift basis at the Dublanc Primary School, students of Coulibistrie at the Salisbury Primary School and students of the Pichelin Primary School at the Grand Bay Primary School.

Students of the Petite Savanne Primary School would attend school on a shift system with the Newtown Primary School at the former Teachers' Training College in Bath Estate.

Following the storm, the Ministry also ensured that the psycho-social needs of teachers and students affected were attended to. Several debriefing sessions were organized with Consultant Psychiatrist Dr. Griffin Benjamin and his team who met with teachers from the Petite Savanne Primary School among other groups.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Services, Guidance Counsellors attached to the Ministry of Education were also



Photo: Senior Officials of the Ministry of Education address parents of students of the Petite Savanne Primary School



deployed to participate in UNICEF's 'Return to Happiness Programme,' visiting shelters to interact with children housed there.

In the immediate aftermath of the storm, and in the months to follow, the Ministry's efforts were significantly boosted by contributions from members of the corporate community, service clubs, groups and individuals who offered assistance in cash to rebuild and in kind to replace lost supplies.

Photo: Parliamentary Representative for the Petite Savanne Constituency Hon. Kenneth Darroux and Senior Education Officials visit the Bagetelle Primary School



The leadership displayed by Hon. Saint-Jean and his team of senior managers ensured that most schools were up and running by mid-September; that teachers and students were comfortable in new settings; and that the Ministry of Education was continuing work



Photo: Education officials deliver water to affected schools in the North



Photo: Education officials deliver water to affected schools in the North

RENOVATION WORKS AT SCHOOLS IMPACTED BY TS ERIKA

The Government of Dominica injected over \$500,000 into rehabilitation works in schools around the island impacted by the passage of Tropical Storm Erika.

Several schools were negatively impacted by the passage of Tropical Storm Erika, in August 2015, resulting in a late start to school year.

Minister for Education and Human Resource Development, Hon. Petter Saint-Jean made the announcement in June, noting that works would facilitate the re-entry of students within the quickest possible time.

Contracts were signed for rehabilitation works at Colihaut Primary to include: general repairs to the school building, construction of a road leading to the school, the paving of the front yard, the fencing of the entire perimeter of the yard, and repainting of both the interior and exterior of the building.

Construction of a new toilet block and rehabilitation of the pedestrian bridge were also planned.

At the Coulibistrie Primary School, contracts were issued for painting, electrical works, construction of a new kitchenette and fencing.

Saint Jean said that a contract had also been issued for renovation and repair works to the Delices Primary School “at a cost of some \$365,165.25.”

Works at the school included fencing, re-roofing of the entire school building repainting, metal works, and plumbing.

In Aid of Dominica in the Aftermath of T.S. Erika



Parkinson Memorial Secondary School of Barbados, represented by Sharie Thomas Massiah donated several hundred English textbooks and EC\$1085 to the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development



CARICOM Staff Association donates \$8,000 worth of school supplies to the Ministry of Education



DIGICEL donates six water tanks for use in primary schools



Rotary Club of Dominica in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Ottawa donates 15 tablets and other school materials to the Coulibistrie Primary School



Sandals Resorts in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Dominica funds new library for Petite Savanne Primary School



Assistant Chief Education Officer, Dr. Jeffrey Blaize presents donation of USD1278 to the Delices Primary School on behalf of the Caribbean Students Organization of Midwestern State University



Millennium Freight Services of H. H. V. Whitchurch group of companies made a donation of books and pencils to seven primary schools on behalf of its partner company, Logistics International



The Dominica/ Guadeloupe Solidarity Committee in collaboration with the Contact and Research Association for the Caribbean (CORECA) and the Dominican Consulate in Guadeloupe presents 70,000€ to the Ministry of Education for repair work at the Delices Primary School and at the Soufriere Primary School



Barbados Cares raises over \$120,000 for repair works at affected schools



TVET ON THE RISE

Dominican Students To Receive CVQ Qualifications



Photos: Students of the Goodwill Secondary School engage in practicals as part of the CVQ Programme in garment production

Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Dominican secondary schools is on the rise as the Government of Dominica continues to increase its investments in the programme.

Ongoing Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) pilots entered the final year with the first cohort of students registered with CXC for certification in Level 1 CVQs in the areas of Food Preparation, Crop Production and Garment Production at the Dominica Grammar School, North East

MoE in Action

Comprehensive School and Goodwill Secondary School. While the lessons learned have been carefully documented, preparations are being made for the introduction of CVQ courses in Plumbing, Auto Repair, Furniture making, Cosmetology and Electrical installation. This preparation includes upgrading of the facilities and training of the instructors, assessors and verifiers who will administer the programs.

During the past two years, TVET instructors were trained in areas such as Occupational Health and Safety and CBET Methodology. Twenty-four assessors and twelve internal verifiers were trained in July 2015, bringing the number of CVQ quality assurance personnel to 51 assessors, 15 internal verifiers and 8 external verifiers in various occupational areas. Additionally, 16 Master trainers have been trained. A master trainer is an expert in the CVQ certification process who is capable of training instructors, assessors and verifiers.

Also in 2015, a 14-member party comprising TVET teachers, secondary school principals, education officials, and representatives from the Dominica State College and the Dominica TVET Council undertook a 4-day Study Tour of the National Training Authority of Trinidad and Tobago and various secondary and tertiary institutions where the CVQ program is being delivered.

A School Health and Safety manual has been developed and will be launched in the new academic year.

The Dominica TVET Council has also been strengthened in large measure. An amendment to the Education Act of 1997 was drafted to better reflect the current realities of the delivery and administration of TVET in the country. Regulations have also been drafted to guide the implementation of the provisions of the Act. Operational staff were appointed in order to operationalize the work of the TVET Council, and the Council was provided with comfortable office space and a full complement of equipment and office supplies to carry out its work. The Council office has already been busy putting together a work plan for the further advancement of TVET in the country, with the ultimate goal to become a CANTA-approved awarding body capable of awarding National Vocational Qualifications and CVQs to the citizens of Dominica.



Photo: Principal of the Dominica Grammar School Alicia Jean-Jacques examines equipment for CVQ programme in auto-mechanics



Photo: CXC Official conducts audit of CVQ Programme in Food Preparation at the Dominica Grammar School

The Council conducts in-house consultations with institutions offering technical training with a view to aligning their programs with the Regional Standards for the occupational skills that they offer training in. The expectation is that eventually the Council could provide CVQ certification in these areas.

All of these developments mean that Dominica is rapidly developing the capacity to self-sustain its TVET and CVQ agenda to provide a robust, quality-assured, locally-administered CVQ certification program.



Photo: Local and Regional officials attend opening ceremony of TVET Industry Linkages Forum in Dominica. **Photo Credit:** Jordan Jerome

DOMINICA HOSTS TVET CONSULTATION

The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat, hosted a two-day seminar on Technical and Vocational Education and Training in March.

The *TVET - Industry Linkages Forum* was part of efforts to strengthen the region-wide implementation of the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) and to increase Dominica's readiness to implement CVQs. The Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities (CANTA) and the Dominica Technical and Vocational Education and Training Council (DTVETC) also supported the forum.

Private sector representatives as well as other TVET stakeholders focused on the new CARICOM approved TVET strategy and its implications for strengthening the economic competitiveness of the region. The forum also shared the results of the CARICOM Trade and Competitiveness Project (CTPC) and raised issues of national socio-economic importance to guide discussion on the formulation of a national TVET Policy and a national strategic plan for TVET development.

Participants of the forum included educators, providers of TVET training, policy makers and industry practitioners who provided employment for graduates of TVET programmes. The forum generated intense discussion on how stakeholders could collaborate to develop a robust and sustainable system for implementing TVET in Dominica.

NEW NEWTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL OPENS

The newly constructed Newtown Primary School officially opened for classes in January 2016 in time for the 2nd term of the 2015-2016 academic year.

The school, which cost six million dollars, was funded by a grant from the People's Republic of China.

Principal, staff and students, accommodated at the former Teachers Training College at Bath Estate while the school was under construction, expressed relief and immense pleasure upon the opening of the facility. They expressed confidence that the new, modern facilities would boost learning and motivate both teachers and students to excel.

The new school features 14 classrooms, a library, science laboratory, art room, kitchen and sickbay. There is also full Wi-Fi access and a fully equipped computer room as well as personal computers for each teacher.

The school grounds have been upgraded with a hard court and parking lot. The school yard has also been fenced and a new roadway constructed.

The New Newtown Primary School also features an elevator to provide access for physically challenged students.



Photo: Student and teacher of the Newtown Primary School in Computer Room, officially opened in August 2016.

WITH VISION COMES A BRIGHTER FUTURE



Sagikor congratulates (l - r) Sagikor Visionaries Challenge Winner, **Gislain Francois** of St. Martin's Secondary School; 2nd Runners Up **Micah Timothy** and **Kevon Boyd**, two members of the Dominica Grammar School team; and 1st Runner Up **Shelise Bell** of Convent High School.

Sagikor encourages the apt, young minds of today's generation to embrace the use of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (S.T.E.M.). The Sagikor Visionaries Challenge helps students to envision a tomorrow where imagination and technology come together for a brighter, safer and more exciting future.



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CFS in Action

The Ministry of Education continued to promote the Child Friendly School (CFS) Initiative in schools around Dominica in the past year. Sports officers, bus drivers, early childhood practitioners, religious leaders and media practitioners were also exposed to the CFS model during a series of workshops as part of a public outreach campaign.

The Ministry, with the support of UNICEF, aimed to build awareness about the CFS initiative through public education activities, and the changing of attitudes of members of the public about child safety issues such as bullying, corporal punishment and child sexual abuse.

Twenty-two (22) coaches attached to the Sports Division and all secondary schools participated in a workshop on CFS principles, facilitated by former Chief Education Officer Stephenson Hyacinth.

The workshop looked at the interaction of sports officers and students on the fields of play and examined measures to improve student experiences. Participants deliberated on how they could assist in creating child friendly environments for their students.

A workshop for 96 bus drivers, also facilitated by Hyacinth, explored the issues relevant to drivers' and attendants' interaction with students and the responsibilities of bus drivers to create child friendly spaces on their buses and to ensure that students were always safe.

Bus drivers aired their concerns and participated in-group exercises to determine best approaches and practices to guide their interaction with students.

Guidance Counselor in the Ministry of Education Jo-Anne Rolle- Carrette, CFS Focal Point Elma Williams and Education Officer (West) Margaret Jules-Royer facilitated workshops for 145 early childhood practitioners, with presentations from Chief Education Officer Mrs. Melena Fontaine and Asst. Chief Education Officer Dr. Jeffrey Blaize.

The workshops focused on the Guiding Principles and Expectations for Child Friendly Schools at the ECE Level, Quality Education within the early childhood sector, child protection and addressing behaviour issues at the ECE Level.

Pastor Kenroy Burke of Barbados engaged twenty-six (26) Evangelical leaders as well as senior officials of the Ministry of Education on the role of the Church in Child Protection. The workshop focused on issues including Punishment versus Positive Discipline, Corporal Punishment- Seeking viable alternatives, the Church- a safe place for children and working towards a more holistic Christian education.

UNICEF's Lisa Mc-Clean Trotman, Communication for Development Specialist and Patrick Knight, also of UNICEF, facilitated a workshop for media practitioners to raise their awareness of child protection issues, which should guide their reporting of related matters.

Child Fund's Gelina Fontaine and Magistrate Gloria Augustus also made presentations.

The Ministry also provided reinforcement to ongoing CFS initiatives with workshops at the Goodwill Secondary School and the Newtown Primary School.

Plans are in place for continuing interventions at primary and secondary schools and in the community to increase awareness and to strengthen the CFS model to ensure safe learning environments for children.



Bus Drivers participate in CFS training facilitated by former Education Officer Stephenson Hyacinth.



Guidance Counselor Jo-Anne Rolle-Carrette facilitates CFS session for Early Childhood Practitioners



Facilitators of CFS Training for Media Practitioners



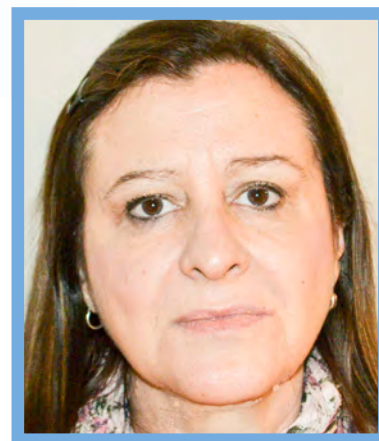
Local Media Practitioners participate in CFS training



Dominica and Argentina Collaborate on Spanish Teaching Programme

By Leonor Corradi

Foreign Languages Team, National Ministry of Education, Argentina



Argentina has a tradition of cooperating with different countries through FO.AR, *Fondo Argentino de Cooperación Sur Sur y Triangular*¹, based in the Foreign Affairs Office, which is in charge of financing and coordinating cooperation activities between Argentina and other developing countries. In July 2012, FO.AR convened the Foreign Languages team in the National Ministry of Education to meet representatives from the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development in Dominica, and organized a project within the framework of international cooperation.

The project, *Teaching Spanish to Primary and Secondary School Teachers* in Dominica, had an overall aim: to improve collaboration and cultural relations between Argentina and Dominica, and a specific objective: to improve the capacities of Dominican teachers in the Spanish language and its pedagogy.

The project was divided into four different stages, each of which had its own aim:

Stage I, Exploration, with the aim of exploring the possibility of cooperation in the area of the teaching of Spanish, taking needs into account.

Stage II, Institutionalization, whose aim was to strengthen the capacities of officials at the Dominican Ministry of Education to formulate policies on Spanish teaching.

Stage III, Preparation, which had the aim of bringing together a work group and prepare a training program in Spanish as a foreign language for Primary and Secondary School teachers.

Stage IV, Training, whose aim was to improve the Spanish pedagogy and competencies of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Dominica, and to organize a tutoring programme with follow up activities.

The training course was based on the following principles, which form the basis of modern language teaching at present:

- **Teaching content through language (CLIL).** Spanish teachers were shown how to approach Spanish texts of different levels of difficulty, and after carrying out different language activities, they reflected on the pedagogical principles underlying the activities. This reflective approach focused on both linguistic and pedagogical matters.
- **Inter-culturality:** language is culture and culture is language. An inter-cultural approach enables students to learn about

¹ Argentine Fund for South South Cooperation and Triangulation

the cultures present in any language, e.g. linguistic habits, ways to organize thought, among other examples. It is also the springboard to help students become aware of how cultures are embedded in their own language. In an inter-cultural approach, all varieties of any language are valued, and discussions can arise on how power and language varieties are related and have great influence on how languages are perceived. An inter-cultural approach to language teaching provides an excellent opportunity to understand the concept of otherness and to de-constructing stereotypes. In this sense, it contributes to the development of human beings, one of the aims of the National Curriculum Framework.

- **Language as a social practice:** languages are integral to human development and cultural identity, and are meant to construct meanings in societies. Grammar and lexis are not the starting point for language learning, but are resources that will help students convey meaning.

The specialists trained both Primary and Secondary School Spanish teachers and tutors in their role and responsibility. They focused on the pedagogy of Spanish through the development of inter-cultural competences and education in values both in Primary and Secondary School scenarios. Linguistic development was secondary to pedagogy. Special programme components were devised to meet all participants' needs.

The results of the programme exceeded the initial expectations and showed much more than was originally planned. The project was the skeleton, and the work of the different actors provided not only the flesh but its heart as well. Spanish is already being taught at twelve Government Primary Schools in Dominica. Teachers are aware of the importance of the mission they have as educators who contribute to children's education through Spanish. The National Curriculum Framework relies on the strength of all joining together as equals to share the vision and actively participate, in total transparency, as positive "we can" members of curriculum teams.

This project provided an opportunity for teachers to become a new team of "we can" members who understand that the closing of the project signalled a new beginning, rather than the end.



Photo: Minister for Education and Human Resource Development Hon. Patter Saint-Jean, programme facilitators and Ministry of Education Officials attends programme's closing ceremony.

Dominica, Martinique Sign New Cooperation Agreement



Minister for Education and Human Resource Development Hon. Petter Saint-Jean signed a renewed Educational Co-operation Agreement between the Academy of Martinique and the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development.

The three-year agreement facilitates the learning of French and English in the two islands.

“Due to geographical and cultural proximity, it is essential that we continue to intensify our cooperation especially in the field of language, exchange programs and teachers’ training,” Catherine Bertho-Laveniron, the Academy of Martinique Rector explained.

She added that the agreement allows for more coordination between the secondary schools of the two islands and would promote further student exchanges.

“This agreement serves to provide a framework that integrates and circles teachers and students who may work on a variety of projects relating to discovering one another and learning between the two islands,” she said.

Minister for Education and Human Resource Development, Hon. Petter Saint Jean noted the agreement would further strengthen cooperation between the two islands.

“You are aware that Martinique has made moves to become part of the OECS. Therefore it is imperative that our Dominican students be exposed to the French language, just as the Martiniquan students are introduced at a very early stage to the English language,” he said.





Library Week Observed Under The Theme '*Libraries Evolving*'

The Dominica Library and Information Service (DLIS) celebrated Library Week under the theme "Libraries Evolving" from May 8-14.

Library Week is intended to observe the important contributions of libraries, librarians and library workers, promote library use, and encourage community participation.

The Roseau Public Library hosted story hours for invited preschools, sessions on financial planning and parenting, Internet safety and information skills training for primary schools. Outreach activities at the Operation Youthquake and the Psychiatric Unit, craft and games, movie days and an exhibition of Dominica's Birds were held.

The Portsmouth Library hosted an open day using the Mobile library on Bay Street, an elocution contest and spelling bee, a presentation on 'A world without black people,' and movie and games days.

The Branch Libraries at Grand Bay and Marigot, hosted sessions on financial skills for students of the Pierre Charles Secondary School and the North East Comprehensive School, Internet safety sessions for students of the Pichelin Primary School as well as a games day, story time and book care for preschoolers.

Lectures on the events of May 1979, an open day, sensitization sessions and interactive tours, and an exhibition of reports portraying roads, bridges & buildings in Dominica featured at the Documentation Centre and the Archives Unit.



Photo: Pre-Testing underway as part of the Early Learners Programme in Dominica.



Toward Improved Literacy & Numeracy Skills

Early Learners Programme Launches in Dominica

The Early Learners Programme (ELP), aimed at improving literacy and numeracy skills among early grade learners of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), is ongoing in Dominica.

The ELP is an initiative of the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The funding is to assist the OECS member states to improve reading among early learners and is consistent with the USAID Education Strategy 2011-2015.

According to the project document, one of the development themes of the OECS Education Sector Strategy (OESS), endorsed by the Council of Ministers of Education in May 2011, related to the need to improve the levels of literacy, numeracy and technology among all learners. Analyses of student performance in various national and regional examinations revealed poor performance in English and Mathematics with a declining trend in the latter and this continues to be an area of major challenge for educators and policy makers in the OECS. Concern about low performances in these two subjects relates to the belief that the ability to read, write and count is critical for academic achievement and success on the job. The ELP therefore seeks to address

low performances in the participating Member States.

The objective of the ELP is to improve the reading achievement levels of all learners at the early primary level (Grade K to Grade 3) in the six (6) independent Member States of the OECS. The ELP will be implemented by the Project Management Team (PMT) within the Education Development Management Unit (EDMU) of the OECS Commission.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, Marcella Powell welcomed the Early Learners Programme.

“We are particularly pleased since the programme’s stated objective of improving reading levels and strengthening education systems of the participating member states are in line with the objectives of the Ministry of Education here in Dominica,” Ms Powell said.

“We remain convinced that reading is the most important skill that children can develop in their formative period as this indicates whether children become proficient writers and communicators, whether they will excel at school, and whether they will achieve resultant successes in their careers and lives,” she added.

Caribbean Examination Council - Online Testing

CXC To Launch Online Multiple Choice Testing In January 2017



By Chandler Hyacinth
CXC Local Registrar

Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) Online Testing is coming soon! Electronic testing (E-testing) will allow learners to take their CXC examinations using a computer or electronic device. This exciting new initiative is part of the vision the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) has outlined in its Vision 2020 document. This is in part a mandate given by governments of the region and is spelled out in its objectives 'to certify a larger more competent, globally, competitive population'. E-testing is a way to reach more learners.

E-testing, an exciting new format of Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) exams will begin in 2016. This will bring our learners in compliance with worldwide test taking practices. The administration of E-testing will propel CXC to observe global quality standards in the delivery of examination services and the use of technology will deliver enhanced learner experiences.

Why online electronic testing?

Thanks to the influence of computers, computer games, school technology programs, an entire generation of students is now more computer literate. The fact that our young people are not intimidated by technology is exciting. Their key boarding skills have increased. Moreover, we have increased the use of technology in our schools and our technological infrastructure has been enhanced.



MoE in Action

Electronic testing will bring regional learners up to speed with worldwide test-taking practices; provide learners with the flexibility to interact with images, video, audio and other resources during their examination.

CXC's electronic testing format will have to adhere to world class security standards especially to guarantee the integrity of test-taking.

CXC piloted this electronic testing platform the week of April 25th – 29th 2016, for students registered in the May-June 2016 Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) and Caribbean Advance Proficiency Examinations (CAPE) examinations. The CSEC subjects tested in Dominica were Principles of Business, Biology, Principles of Accounts, Office Administration, Caribbean History, English A, Mathematics, Information Technology. The CAPE subjects tested were Caribbean Studies, Entrepreneurship, Communication Studies, Tourism Unit, Environmental Science. All the tests were multiple choice exams. This gave our students a chance to practice ahead of their examinations.

To enable, the transition from paper-based to online examinations, some preparatory action must be taken.

Testing centres will require:

- A computer or electronic device for each student taking the online test.
- A reliable internet connection
- A reliable power source supply
- A modern web browser

The benefits of online testing includes:

- Facilitating on-demand testing
- Accessibility on a variety of electronic devices
- More convenient for differently-abled learners
- It supports a green economy through the reduction of paper use
- It enhances test taking integrity through randomized or equivalent exams.
- Saves time and money for marking.



Photos: Students of the Convent High School get a head start with electronic testing. Paper 1 exams were conducted online in June 2016.



Government Investigates Dropout Rates

Gloria Shillingford - Consultant

Former Government Minister Gloria Shillingford is conducting an investigation into dropout rates in Dominica.

"The government of the Commonwealth of Dominica has engaged Mrs. Gloria Shillingford to investigate the causes of dropouts among our students and to make recommendations to the Ministry of Education in dealing with this problem," Education Minister Hon. Petter Saint-Jean announced in March.

Shillingford tells *Education Matters* she is undertaking the study with a view to identify reasons why children are at risk.

"There is a growing concern where children appear to be at risk through poverty, disability, violence, drug and alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancy.

"Parental care is also a major concern. I ask the question, what is the fate of our dropouts? Where are they?" Shillingford said.

In her investigations, Shillingford has held discussions with the Minister for Education, Permanent Secretary, Chief Education Officer and other Senior Education officials. She also engaged in assessment visits to CALLS in Portsmouth, the center for adolescents, attended Parent Teachers Association meetings and participated in workshops and seminars for children at risk.

"After the first quarter of my assignment, I am well on my way to being able to advise the Ministry of Education on some immediate interventions that can be made," Shillingford said.

"We will also be conducting surveys at the home and at the community level. I am seeking the cooperation of all as we ensure that we are all working towards a bright future for all our children," she added.



DEEP AT A GLANCE

The Dominica Education Enhancement Project (DEEP) ended in December 2015. The project aimed to improve quality, efficiency and effectiveness in basic education through enhancing the learning environment at primary and secondary schools, upgrading the institutional framework and improving teacher quality. Education Matters takes a look at the project in brief.

DEEP Overview

- Implementation: July 2010 – Dec 2015
- Cost: US\$4.4m/EC \$11.9m
- Funded by: THE GOVERNMENT OF DOMINICA THROUGH A LOAN AGREEMENT WITH THE CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

DEEP OBJECTIVE

The primary objective: to improve quality, efficiency and effectiveness in basic education through enhancing the learning environment at primary and secondary schools, upgrading the institutional framework and improving teacher quality.

Project Description and Scope

- Improvement of the quality of the learning environment
 - Procurement of tools, furniture and equipment

- Learning material and computer software
- Minor Works
- Consultancy - Sector Maintenance Policy and Plan
- Enhancement of the institutional framework and improved teacher quality
 - Consultancy services for curriculum development and implementation and to provide support for at-risk students (Numeracy, Multi Grade, Early Screening and Diagnosis)
 - Short and long-term training to improve teacher quality
- Support Services
 - Design and supervision services
 - Project Management and Coordination

OTHER GAINS

- 47 teachers trained as CVQ Verifiers and/or Assessors
- 10 teachers and Ministry of Education Officials participated in a CVQ Study Tour in Trinidad and Tobago
- Over 500 teachers trained locally through workshops of various consultancies.



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Photo: Teachers of the Roseau Primary School



How the Roseau Primary School is Improving Achievement Levels

When Greta Robert's took the helm at the Roseau Primary School in 2010, she immediately set out to reverse the trend of under-performance that had plagued the institution for years.

She assessed the school's results in the Grade Six National Assessment and the Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) using these as benchmarks to identify weaknesses and strengths. From the results she noted early on that students were struggling with comprehension which signalled a larger problem with reading. Their numeracy skills were also not at grade level. Roberts convened a team meeting and, together with staff, devised strategies that would begin to address student weaknesses across the board.

She also engaged her team in redefining the school culture, engendering a spirit of collaboration and creating a child friendly learning environment which considered the needs of students, teachers and parents.

Literacy

The school established a reading programme capitalizing on the expertise of teachers who held qualifications in Literacy. The programme runs every Monday and Wednesday, with hour long sessions before lunch.

The programme includes in-house workshops for teachers to improve their capacity to teach reading skills. The initiative received financial support from the National Cooperative Credit Union.

"After we prepared our teachers to effectively teach reading skills, we first pre-tested our children so that we could



Photo: Student activity at the Roseau Primary School

determine their reading levels. They were then placed in appropriate groups for the reading sessions with assigned teachers,” Roberts explained to *Education Matters*.

To improve their writing skills students are required to write a summary of their day during the final hour of school before departing for home.

The Literacy Programme continues under the guidance of Literacy Coordinator Cyrilla Anselm.

Numeracy

To address student under-performance in numeracy, the school decided to also implement a numeracy programme. One feature of this was a duplication of the National Math Power Contest which was adapted to the school level.

“ We held our own Math Power Competitions just to get the little Mathematicians interested and enthused” Roberts quipped, noting that the school received support from Mr. Clement Vital, the coordinator of the Ministry’s national contest.

“We have noticed improvement in the area of numeracy as

well,” she said.

Agriculture

“We noticed that the students loved the garden,” Ms. Roberts told *Education Matters*.

She enlisted the assistance of the Forestry Division and the 4H Club and with the technical expertise received she was able to prepare a garden space with beds for planting crops.

Students are expected to continue the programme in September and have been assured the financial assistance of John Lewis, Proprietor of JAYS Limited.

ICT

Information and Technology Teacher at the Roseau Primary School, Brian Pascal, has been leading the way in schools’ ICT programmes for several years.

The school’s IT room is well equipped and fully functional. Pascal has ensured that ICT is fully incorporated into all aspects of learning.

“We decided that if the students were so much into IT and

Photo: Principal Greta Roberts interacts with students



it was creating such an impact on their learning, then we would incorporate IT into everything we are doing.

“So teachers, together with Mr. Pascal, devise ways to more effectively teach their lessons using ICT,” Roberts said.

Building Success Through Teamwork

Principal Roberts is a former Science teacher and she is not above stepping into the classroom to conduct science lessons when the need arises.

This hands-on, inclusive approach to leadership, she believes, is a key element of her success as a principal.

Every teacher at the school is entitled to what Roberts calls PWP (Planning with Principal), a period during which she converses with them to determine best approaches to lesson delivery and discipline. She assists with lesson planning and ensures that they are well-equipped for delivery of classroom instruction.

“I think it’s a team effort here at the school. We work

collaboratively and consider every aspect of the students’ performances.

“We examine what they are doing and once we notice that there are weaknesses we come together and decide how we can help. So it is never something that I do on my own,” she explains.

Two years ago the school developed the Adopt- a-Child programme which paired each teacher, and the principal, with a student of Grades K and 1, a move specifically intended to improve students’ CBM performance in literacy and numeracy.

“This worked so well,” she said, “because teachers were focusing on their specific child and by the time the next CBM results were released, we had improved significantly. I realized they needed the individual attention.”

At the end of the term, teachers reflect, identify students who are at risk and inform parents of their children’s shortcomings and what can be done at home to address the problem. The school also holds open days when parents have the opportunity to interact with the principal and teachers and discuss their children’s performance.

In June 2016, the targeted interventions seemed to pay off. Heimish Blaize was named the top student of the Grade Six National Assessment, (G6NA).

Roberts is proud of her school’s position at the top of the 2016 G6NA Table but realizes this is just a precursor to even more concerted effort.

Photo: Assembly time at the Roseau Primary School



“We need to do a lot of work and this should motivate us to work harder. So let us not be complacent. First place says there was this one child who gave the school a good name. But, what of the other children? We have to ensure that more of our children excel,” she noted.

In September, she says, the school will implement the Adopt-a-Child programme for students of Grade Six.



Photo: Corrine George conducts lesson for her Grade 6 Class at the Roseau Primary School

Roseau Primary School Teachers Excel

Joycelyn Panthier and Corrine George are celebrating a rewarding year in teaching.

The two grade six teachers at the Roseau Primary School are reveling in success after their student, Heimish Blaize topped the 2016 Grade Six National Assessment, a first for the school in a long time.

Heimish's result reflects an upward trend in the performance of the Roseau Primary School at the Grade Six National Assessment.

While this may have surprised many who observed the school struggling for years to improve its academic standing, the two teachers say it's only the result of consistent effort and hard work.

Joycelyn Panthier has taught at the school for the past 17 years and though she has had several opportunities to move on, she tells *Education Matters* she stuck with the school because she believed in the work she was doing and the potential of her students.

"I have been there through it all. My aim has always been to work to the honour of God. I have always held the school in high esteem," she said.

Corrine George, who started her teaching career at the Trafalgar Primary School ten years ago, has taught at the Roseau Primary School for the past five years.

The two teachers are highly trained. Panthier who teaches Language Arts and Social Studies at Grade 6 is a qualified teacher and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Literacy and Education. George teaches Mathematics and Science and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Education Management.

"We have been exposed to strategies and skills that work in the classroom. So we use very effective strategies that have been tested and proven. I'd say our approach is holistic," Panthier said.

They believe their success is also largely due to the individual attention given to students at the Roseau Primary School.

"It is a culture of caring for every single child," says Miss George.

"I would speak to Heimish. I would tell him you can be in the top five, because you are capable. There are times we saw him slacking off and we would say to him, you can do better than that.



"So we always have that relationship with our students. We speak to them one-on-one. It's like a family," she concludes.

"I remember one day, when he was in grade 5, I went to his home to get him. I told him to ensure he was never absent again," Ms. Panthier said speaking of Heimish.

"We saw his potential. But we would do it with anybody, with all our students. That is the kind of relationship we have with every child," she said.

The teachers note that there must be strong relationships with parents if schools are to be successful.

"Parents know that if they have a problem they can come in to talk to the principal and teachers. They know that regardless of their status we are always there to welcome them. I think that has contributed to the growth of the school in the past few years," George says.

They also credit the effective leadership of Principal,

Greta Roberts who adopts a collaborative approach to school management. There are review sessions to analyse students' performance and to devise intervention measures. Teachers participate in in-house workshops to target problem areas and a literacy coordinator is assigned to address student performance in reading and writing.

Heimish's achievement is testimony to their commitment and dedication to student success but the two teachers do not intend to get complacent.

"We will continue to work hard. We want to improve. We don't want to settle for this one success. We want other students at the school to excel also," Panthier said.

"We understand that every child is not the same. We have already identified our weaknesses and we will put programmes in place, such as the reading programme, which we have already started, to assist our students going forward," George concluded.



PEER MEDIATION: BENEFITS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

By Patsy Letang, Guidance Counsellor
Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development

In 2015 students of the Pierre Charles Secondary School completed training in Peer Mediation and Conflict Resolution, led by Patsy Letang, Guidance Counselor in the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development. She was supported by Peace Corp Volunteer, Rebecca Sweetland. What are the benefits of such training for students in the classroom?

Peer mediation is a process in which specially trained students help other students to resolve conflict. It is also used in youth programmes as a means of equipping youngsters with the skills necessary for resolving conflicts. Peer Mediators:

- help two or more disputing students talk about their reasons for being upset.
- help them talk to each other in a respectful way.
- use listening skills and open-ended questions to help students in conflict understand each other better.
- help create a positive and peaceful environment in their schools.

Peer Mediators have a positive impact on their school in the following ways:

- Create ongoing opportunities to be resources for each other, to get to know each other on a different level, and to experience a sense of belonging.
- Learn new attitudes, values and skills and develop these newly acquired skills and attitudes with each other.
- Model new skills and attitudes to their peers, expanding the scope of the learning community.
- Resolve issues at their school, creating an enhanced sense of responsibility for their school.
- Peer mediators learn leadership and effective communication skills as well as social skills.

The aforementioned dynamics of having peer mediators in the school system helps to increase time on task, a hallmark of the teaching and learning process. Students who are referred to mediation are usually disruptive and unsettled in the classroom. They often misbehave and waste instructional time. Research shows that the attitude of disputants changes positively

and conflicts are resolved most of the time, when students experience the process of peer mediation and the positive influence of their peers.

One of the benefits of such change is an improvement in time spent doing classwork and school work on a whole. More time spent on task extends the possibility of excelling in many aspects of school life. Conflict resolution takes on new meaning. The relationship among students also improves and this augurs well for cooperative learning in and out of the classroom. A new attitude towards self and others is cultivated. Students are empowered to resolve disputes by themselves.

Research has also shown that while self-esteem and overall school climate are raised when peer mediation is introduced, the students who are involved learn skill sets in communication that will be utilized throughout their lives.

Teachers benefit as well in the followings ways:

- Less time is spent on resolving conflicts.
- There are fewer fights and suspensions.
- There is less stress while teaching.
- Teachers become more effective educators, with less pressure to constantly be a disciplinarian and more time for teaching and learning.
- There is increased student success.

It can be said that peer mediation is a necessary tool which can be introduced and used in our education facilities to empower children and young people with life skills that will enable them to effectively relate and resolve conflicts peacefully. By extension, peer mediation increases the gains that can be achieved in a teaching and learning environment. The society in general will also be a beneficiary of any peer mediation initiative.

Rethinking Gender Differences In Students' Performance: Creating Gender Sensitive Classrooms (Part 1)



By Jeffrey Blaize (PhD)
Assistant Chief Education Officer

Discourse on issues of equity represents one of the most urgent issues facing modern classrooms. Within the Caribbean context we have successfully addressed issues of access at the primary and secondary levels. However, equity within education provision remains an area of concern. Two of the most common areas where equity issues surface within our classrooms are those of gender sensitive instruction and provision for students with special needs. For the purpose of this paper, the former will be the area of focus.

Human socialization has established stereotypical roles for males and females from birth. Such roles are reinforced throughout a child's upbringing. Consequently, adult expectations for students vary based on gender. In many instances these expectations are reinforced within the classroom in sub-conscious ways by many teachers.

If we are to address issues of equity and singularly those of gender insensitivity in education delivery in a substantive way, we must focus on four primary areas which profoundly influence students' learning. These include; *the Curriculum and text material, teachers' classroom practice, and related perception of teachers on gender sensitivity and staffing, including the availability of adequate role models.*

The school curriculum and related curricular artefacts maintain the responsibility for ensuring equity within the classroom. The guidelines for delivery within the curriculum must ensure that opportunities for profound learning are available for both girls and boys

alike. Provision must be made within the curriculum for addressing areas of boys learning and practical suggestions should be provided to teachers on strategies and activities which cater to the needs and interests of both boys and girls. Careful selection of text material contributes significantly to equity in provision. Text material must be selected based on their ability to address the needs of girls and boys. Notwithstanding, teachers should not depend solely on authors to ensure gender sensitivity in school text material. Where possible, teachers should supplement text material and even adapt text, so that activities also address the interest and learning styles of boys as well as girls.

In addition to gender sensitive curriculum, classroom practice must take into consideration students learning styles, interests and needs. Consequently, all learning activities should maintain the interest of boys as well as girls. Establishing student friendly classrooms mean that our classrooms must not be only '*girls friendly*' but they must be '*boys friendly*' as well.

Teacher-student relationship remains at the core of gender sensitive education provision. If teachers are aware of the needs of all their students then a conscious effort will be made to reach them in meaningful ways. This means that the learning of boys should not be left to chance. A deliberate effort must be made to ensure boys are able to identify with, not only the learning resources but also with the activities with which teachers engage students on a daily basis. Similarly behaviour management approaches which

often vary based on gender within the classroom must reflect gender equity.

Within education literature, there has been considerable deliberation on the importance of role models in classrooms. Although in many cases students are more concerned with the characteristics of individual teachers rather than their sex, role modelling is essential for all students since children aspire to be as their role models. Within our context, the call for male role models within the classroom is based on the fact that there exists a greater proportion of single parent families headed by female parents than by males. Consequently, it is only natural that a greater proportion of father figures are available for boys at schools. Teacher recruitment must therefore be targeted to ensure that adequate role models are available for both sexes.

Parents also have a significant role to play in the achievement of boys at school. Male parents, particularly, must adopt a supportive role for their children. As mentioned above, role modelling is

essential for the motivation of boys. Support for the school through attendance at PTA meetings and the provision of adequate supervision and counsel will assist enormously in steering boys to perform at desired levels.

In considering issues of equity, we must ensure that no particular group of students is disadvantaged within the classroom. This does not mean that policies and activities should be designed to benefit only males, but rather since most females are usually reached within the average classroom by default, conscious efforts must be made to reach males, particularly those at risk of unsuccessful. Disparities in students' performance along gender lines suggest that we *can* and *must* do better as an education system to reach our boys. The issue of gender sensitivity within the classroom must be addressed in a conscious way. Put simply, teaching is not enough! We must *connect* with our boys in ways which consider their likes, interests, needs and aspirations. Only then will we observe significant improvements in their performance.

FROM THE KNOWN TO THE UNKNOWN

THE USE OF FRENCH CREOLE IN A TYPICAL FRENCH CLASS

By Charlene White-Christian
Modern Languages Coordinator

The National Cultural Council, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, has for the past three years hosted the Creole Spelling Bee Competition in an effort to promote the teaching and learning of the Creole language in Dominican schools and to preserve it for future generations. Education Matters looks at how the Creole Language can be incorporated into French Language classes to make learning easier.

Photo: Teacher at Roseau Primary School using Creole knowledge during her French lesson.



This article is a simple reflection on a certain number of general hypotheses governing the process where the French Creole language can be used in a French classroom as a medium to language acquisition.

The Creole Languages of the world, and there are many – are languages born as a result of colonisation, plantation life and slavery, where all the demographics of the population was transported. One classic historical error that continues to open much debate is the attaching and/or comparing of the French Creole language to that of a broken French dialect or 'patois'. The Creole language is not a patois since it carries all the characteristics of an accepted language and must always be treated as just another language. The French Creole Language spoken in Dominica and other Francophone countries has a lexical base from the French language but also carries with it an almost equal word base from African languages.

The situation of the acquisition of a foreign language, and in this situation French, allows for the diversion and the use of the Creole language to facilitate easy learning and understanding in situations where the foreign language presents difficulties to the learner.



The maternal language is that which we have been surrounded with from birth. It is also the language which is known without having really formally learnt it. A young Dominican in a creole environment's first words many times are – *ba, mama, nana, dada, pipi, dodo* – for example. All these are Creole words which many times people do not recognise as such. Because the linguistic bath in which every Dominican child is raised is that of his parents, for the young learner, the Creole Language will become a first language that must be spoken; assimilated and understood. Whether consciously or not, every Dominican child is a Creole speaker and as such, the learning of French, one of the mother languages of the French-based Creole language, should be a facilitator to the learning of French by using all the necessary linguistic tools available. Nevertheless, the learning of this language should be rather easy for the new learner. It is rather clear that both the French language and the French Creole Language have many similar linguistic properties. Therefore it is up to the French Language teacher to accommodate the easy learning of French for the student. The teacher has the duty to modify the existing structures in the L1 – the First language of the student- to easily allow him to master the L2 – the second language being learnt.

The acquisition of French as a foreign language in Dominica supports the possibility and major influences of the French Creole Language. In the learning of the L2, the Dominican Primary and Secondary school student comes face to face with various difficulties. Every student is capable of forming intermediary languages to facilitate the learning of the second language. This intermediary step involves the use of Creole to facilitate the unknown structures in the French Language and it becomes very difficult for the student to move away from this switch. It is therefore advised that the teacher, who serves as a facilitator to the language acquisition, facilitates the student by not automatically penalising him and indicating that Creole structures used to replace French ones are wrong, but he is expected to assist the student from the known to the unknown.

There are three main areas that the teacher must aim to concentrate on in the French classroom and they are:

1. Cultural Appreciation and Inter-Cultural Skills
2. Attitudes and Values
3. Development of Linguistic Resources and Skills for Modern Language Proficiency

In a typical French classroom, especially in a heavily Creole spoken area, a teacher will have at least 80% of his students competent in the speaking and/or understanding of the French-based Creole. Research shows that using the Creole Language to facilitate the learning of these students surprisingly assists with the learning of the Foreign Language. A teacher is therefore encouraged to use the Creole language as often as possible to facilitate language learning.

Here are a few topics that could accommodate the use of Creole vocabulary to facilitate easy classroom learning of French as a foreign language. The use of the Creole Language to facilitate learning should concentrate on identifying meanings and oral recognition.

The face/Le visage

Français	Kwéyòl
La Tête	Tèt
Le Front	Fon
Le Nez	Nen
Les Lèvres	Lèv
La Bouche	Bouch
Le Menton	Manton
Les yeux	zyé
Les sourcils	sousi
Les oreilles	zòwèy
Les dents	dan
Les lèvres	lèv

“One classic historical error that continues to open much debate is the attaching and/or comparing of the French Creole language to that of a broken French dialect or ‘patois’. The Creole language is not a patois since it carries all the characteristics of an accepted language and must always be treated as just another language.”

The body/Le corps

Français	Kwéyòl
Le Pied	Pyé
La main	Lanmen
Le Doigt	Dwèt
La Jambe	Janm
Le Bras	Bwa
Les cheveux	chivé
La poitrine	lèstomak
Le ventre	Vant/lèstomak
Les épaules	Zépòl
Le coude	Kout bwa

Numbers/Les chiffres

Français	Kwéyòl
Un	Yonn
Deux	Dé
Trois	Twa
Quatre	Kat
Cinq	Senk
Sis	Sis
Sept	Set
Huit	Wit
Neuf	Nef
dix	Dis
Onze	Wonz
Douze	Douz
Treize	Twèz
Quatorze	Katoz
Quinze	Kenz
Seize	Sèz
dix-sept	Disèt
dix-huit	Dizwit
dix-neuf	Diznèf
vingt	Ven

The family/La famille

Français	Kwéyòl
Une sœur	Yon sésé
Un frère	Yon fwe
Une mère	manman
Un père	Papa
Un cousin	Kouzin
Une tante	Matant
Un oncle	mounòk

Teachers are also encouraged to compare and contrast the two languages when teaching various aspects of the language. This technique allows students to understand the similarities between the two but it also it allows the learner to realize that the two languages are distinctive.

Using the known to accomplish the unknown is an excellent way of teaching French to young Creole speakers. Teachers must move away from the myth that Creole is bad French and that it hinders the student's learning of the foreign language. The young high school student or any first time learner perceives that the pronunciations of the both languages have many similarities and as such an easy escape would be to use the Creole known to replace the French being taught. Students must be made to understand during the learning process that though in pronunciation, both languages have great similarities; in the written form they are totally different. Skillful use of comparative learning distinguishing between the two languages should be allowed to guide the language learning process of the foreign language student.

Aiming Higher: Access, Quality and Value at Dominica State College

By Schuyler K Esprit, PhD
Director, Institutional Research and Academic Instruction
Dominica State College



Graduating from high school is usually exhilarating for those who have made it through the five years and the grueling study routines to prepare for CSEC examinations. But it can also be a bit daunting as graduating 5th Formers will admit that what's on their mind, primarily, is the uncertainty of what comes next.

The big words, college and university, begin to preoccupy their thoughts and that anxiety is met by parents' own worries about how they will best be able to support their students' desires for academic and professional success. Twenty years ago, this anxiety among high school students and parents was amplified; opportunities to attend tertiary institutions in Dominica were so limited that only about 300 students could be accommodated at Clifton Dupigny Community College.

Since 2002, however, the Government of Dominica has ensured that as many students who wanted to go to college or university would have a fair chance. In creating the Dominica State College (DSC) as we now know it, the Government also ensured that the country was moving in the right direction to align its higher education models with international standards that made academic and professional advancement for graduates much easier.

As a new institution facing growth and expansion, challenges are expected, and Dominica State College has certainly gone

through its growing pains in administrative and academic performance. Still, the College can now boast to be the premier tertiary institution with the most qualified lecturers at that level in the nation and with the best overall value for money. Despite significant resource deficits, as with many other industries in our developing country, DSC continues to produce world-class students and attract scholars and teachers trained at the top institutions around the world.

"In creating the Dominica State College (DSC) as we now know it, the Government also ensured that the country was moving in the right direction to align its higher education models with international standards that made academic and professional advancement for graduates much easier."

However, even after almost fifteen years of training quality students and creating equal access, it is still difficult to dispel some of the myths that the average Dominican has held about college or about the institution itself. Some people assume that because it's affordable to all, especially with the Government's financial aid program, that it is "cheap" in quality. Yet the Master's and doctoral degrees of the instructors there tell a very different story. The commitment of each lecturer to student development, even at times when resources are limited receives high praise from graduating students who come, even late, to value the attention and nurturing they receive at the College.

One of the challenges of running a national institution in a developing country is lack of knowledge and understanding about what a higher education system is and does. For so long in our country, people were forced to leave the island to access

quality higher education, either competing for scholarships or taking on massive amounts of student debt in order to achieve this goal. Ideally (maybe even idealistically), the attainment of these degrees and advanced qualifications was designed to actually contribute to national development. For many years, the bond system worked to ensure that students who benefited from scholarships would have to return home to work in order to give back to the country. Despite best efforts, this massive drive toward foreign higher education simply increased brain drain exponentially and made it even harder, for example, to staff a state-of-the-art tertiary institution with the best and brightest scholars in the various disciplines.

Dominica State College has provided a clear alternative to that. With the rate of tuition, fees, and incidental costs averaging \$1500 a year and a financial aid program for our low-income students, the college is able to match courses upon transfer for students at their university of choice, which translates into a major 2-year savings compared to going abroad for a full 4-year degree.

The quality of teaching, savings on tuition and the understanding of educational and professional culture by lecturers who know and understand where our students will transfer next makes the DSC community uniquely qualified to prepare our students for a local workforce or transition to international universities. I am the same Dr. Esprit at DSC that I was at University of Maryland or Trinity Washington University (where tuition per course is in the thousands of US dollars). And I have an even greater, more personal investment in the students I teach now than I ever have before. I will say proudly that the commitment of our educators to student development is excellent. Our lecturers are devoted to our students and their learning.

I am a strong proponent of the idea that creating greater access for all students to have an equal chance at attending college is a moral imperative that the Government has

nobly fulfilled by creating Dominica State College as an entity with a structure distinctly different from the previous A-Level centered 6th form college model. The Government of Dominica was right and just to create access for as many students who want it. But students, parents and the general public must help the College enhance its offering and excel, making its graduates even brighter and more competitive.

Every citizen has to believe that the students are worth it and our country is worth it, in order to create and increase value from within rather than constantly investing our hard earned dollars in foreign institutions that continue to grow in part because of exorbitant international student rates.

Further, we cannot want to live in a modernized society and act like education and intellect are only luxury showpieces of that modernity. Education and intellectual development are the very foundation on which this modern, developed society must be built. So policy catchphrases like “capacity building,” “globally competitive” and “sustainable development” are absolutely empty if we don’t fundamentally buy into the idea that Dominica is a great place to live and work and we are worth it.

Dr. Donald Peters, DSC President, often reminds us at work that the university is the second oldest institution in the history of the world, second only to the Church. This is important to provide context to Dominican parents and educators: in university years, Dominica State College is still in the fetus stages, so we should be significantly proud of ourselves and for the support of the Government for pushing for a structure that incorporates us into this global tradition.

The present is clear and the future even clearer: Dominica State College is already the institution of choice for most students. In the years ahead, it will move beyond quality and excellence as the institution of highest regard in our land.



SMSS WINS SAGICOR VISIONARIES CHALLENGE FOR THE THIRD TIME

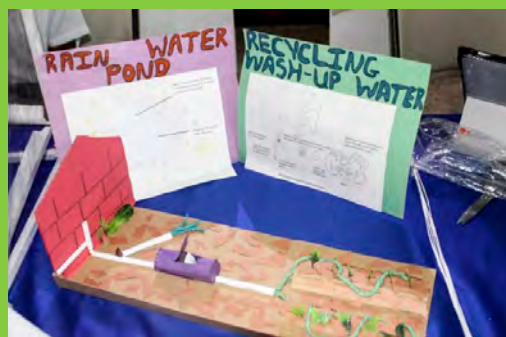


Gislain Francois

Sagicor Visionaries Challenge Winner

The St. Martin Secondary School, for the third consecutive year, emerged the Sagicor Visionaries Challenge Winner in May.

Gislain Francois of the St. Martin Secondary School, coached by Science Teacher Vanessa Seraphine, won with a project dubbed Mosquito Buster, a mosquito repellent made from natural ingredients.



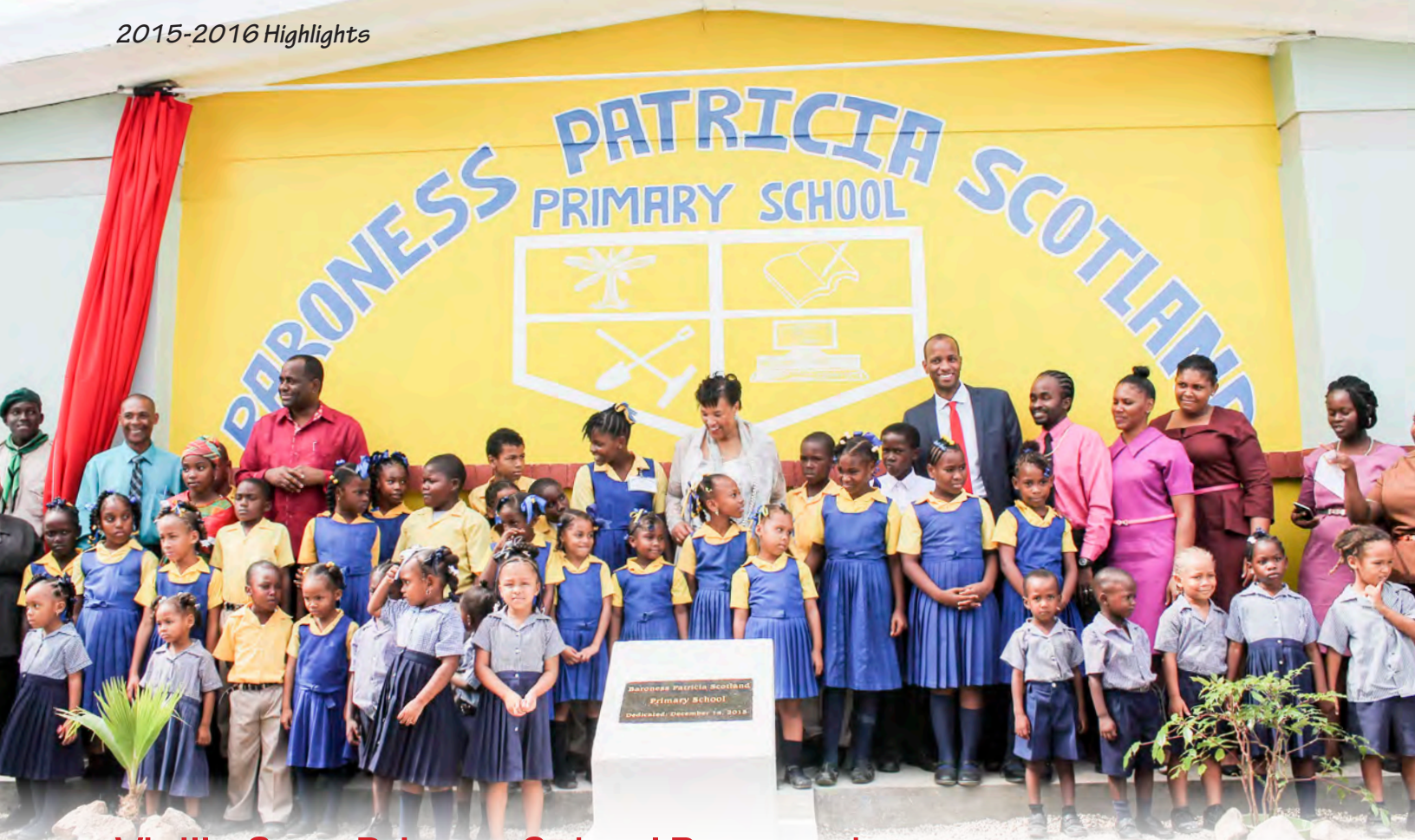
Her prize included a Caribbean Science Foundation computerized mobile science and technology system, six approved science kits for her school, and an all-expense paid trip to Florida where she will visit the Kennedy Space Centre among other science and technology venues.

Francois also won awards for Best Innovation, Best Presentation, Best Plan and Project Design and the best use of STEM.

The Convent High School emerged second with the project Vegetable Garden, the Dominica Grammar School was third with 'Math Helper 101,' and the Dominica State College placed fourth with 'Water Magnet.'

Other special prizes were awarded to the Goodwill Secondary School for the most relevant to sustainable Caribbean community with 'Solar A.C. Unit and to the Dominica Grammar School for Best community and School involvement for Math Helper 101.

The Sagicor Visionaries Challenge was conceptualized by SAGICOR and the Caribbean Science Foundation, in partnership with the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) and seeks to promote the study of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, (STEM) among secondary schools students in the region.



Vieille Case Primary School Renamed **BARONES PATRICIA SCOTLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The Vieille Case Primary School was officially renamed the Barones Patricia Scotland Primary School in December.

Barones Patricia Scotland, born of Dominican parentage, was elected Secretary General by Commonwealth Heads in Malta in November 2015. She has since assumed office.

The school was renamed in a ceremony full of fanfare as Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit and other senior government officials, education officials, village leaders, principal, teachers, parents, students and villagers gathered to honour Barones Scotland.

Acting Minister for Education and Human Resource Development Kelter Darroux said Barones Scotland's achievement was a reminder for students that with perseverance, discipline and the right attitude to work, they too could become successful Dominican citizens, able to make important contributions to the development of their country.

"We want you to aspire to such greatness, we want you to believe that you too, a young Dominican from Vieille Case, can one day rise to head an important international organization that positions you to make positive, meaningful changes to your world," he said.

Barones Scotland said she wanted "the future for our children to be a bright one so they can be all that they can be. I hope that everyone in this school will not think of what I want to be, and who do I want to be, but, they will ask themselves a different question of what do I want to do."

Prime Minister, Roosevelt Skerit said the election of Barones Scotland to the post of Commonwealth Secretary General was worthy of national acknowledgement and commendation.

"One hundred years from now the records will show that Barones Scotland was recognized in the land of her birth by compatriots who were truly impressed and inspired by her scholastic and professional achievements," the Prime Minister said.

Math Power

The Lighthouse Christian Academy, Portsmouth Secondary School and the St. Mary's Academy were triumphant in the 2016 National Math Power Contest.

The Finals of the Contest took place at the Arawak House of Culture in Roseau on Wednesday, April 20.

The contest, organized by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development in collaboration with the National Bank of Dominica, seeks to stimulate interest and help students to improve their performance in mathematics.

The contest consists of two rounds- mental math or speed round and the problem solving round.

The Lighthouse Christian Academy emerged winner of the primary schools category of the finals of the Math Power Contest and won eight hundred dollars. The students of the St John's Primary School placed second and won five hundred dollars.

The W.S Stevens Primary School, the St. Luke's Primary School, Soufriere Primary School, and the St. Martin's Primary School were the other participating schools.

In the lower secondary category, the Portsmouth Secondary School emerged winners and won one thousand dollars and a trophy. The St. Mary's Academy, Convent High School, St. John's Academy and the Dominica Grammar School also competed in that category.

In the upper secondary level, the St. Mary's Academy won the competition and were also awarded one thousand dollars and a trophy. The Convent High School, Portsmouth Secondary School, Orion Academy and the St. John's Academy were the other competitors.

Let's Talk Parenting

The Ministry of Education, earlier this year, launched the 'Let's Talk Parenting' Programme at the Goodwill Primary School.

The programme, spearheaded by Health and Family Life Coordinator Rena Jno-Charles aimed to decrease bullying in school and promote child safety by engaging parents on methods of discipline, parental rights, rights of the child and conflict resolution.

"Parents need to have a better understanding of what their children are learning and doing at school. Likewise school should encourage partnership with parents to increase understanding of parent-child issues.

"Let's talk parenting will provide information and education to strengthen parenting skills of parents as well as provide support to parents where needed," Jno-Charles told Education Matters.

A parent support group was expected to be established upon completion of the programme.

The HFLE coordinator plans to implement the programme in other schools.



Photo: Senior Education Officials attend launch of Parenting Programme

GRAND FOND PRIMARY SCHOOL WINS MADEMOISELLE FRANCOPHONE 2016



Jeanelle Phillip of the Grand Fond Primary School is the 2016 Mademoiselle Francophone.

She won the title in March at the Mademoiselle Francophone Pageant, an activity of the Ministry of Education, which forms part of Francophone Month.

Phillip, who represented Ghana, copped four awards; Best French Oral Presentation, Best Talent, Best French Fashion Wear, and Best Francophone Wear.

Leilanie Leslie of the Massacre Primary School, who represented Togo emerged first runner up, Simone Moses of the Morne Jaune Primary School, who represented Monaco, was second runner up. Malicia Francis of the San Sauveur Primary School, who represented Mozambique, was named Miss French Personality, while Adessah Hodge of the Wotten Waven Primary School who represented Djibouti, was awarded Miss Francophone Spirit.

The other competitor was Jadian Eustache of the Castle Bruce Primary School who represented Suisse.

PAIX BOUCHE PRIMARY SCHOOL WINS KWEYOL SPELLING BEE TITLE

The Paix Bouche Primary School won the Kweyol Spelling Bee title for the fifth consecutive year in May.

Solika Dupigny amassed total of sixty-two (62) points on her way to capturing the title.

The competition was organized by the Division of Culture, National Cultural Council and the Komite pou ETID Kweyol (KEK), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development.

In second place was Edicia Sanford of the Salybia Primary School with sixty(60) points while Wyatt Wallace of the Bense Primary School placed third with fifty-six (56) points.

Other participants were Brentwood Etienne of the Goodwill Primary School; Kurtis Alcendor from the Grand Bay Primary School; Claire Prince of the Grand Fond Primary School; Ailiah Esprit from the Campbell Primary School; Belqui Civil of the Newtown Primary School; Beatrice Cius of the Keleb Laurent Primary School and Joscia Wallace of the Wesley Primary School.

Roseau Primary School Tops G6NA

A student of the Roseau Primary School, Heimish Blaize, topped the 2016 Grade Six National Assessment.

The other top performers were Jada-Madison Joseph of the St. John's Primary School, Megan Vidal of the St. Martin's Primary School, Nechante LeBlanc of the St. John's Primary School and Naome Samuel-Williams of the Ebenezer SDA.

A total of 1080 students wrote the examinations-534 female and 546 males.

The Government of Dominica awarded scholarships to all students who obtained four grade As, or three As and one B, or three As and one C, or two As and two Bs. Bursaries were awarded to those students who obtained the equivalent of four Bs or better but did not qualify for the award of scholarship.

On this basis 94 students were awarded scholarships and 100 were awarded bursaries.

The amount allocated to scholars and bursaries for textbooks and stationery is \$500.00 and \$300.00 respectively.



DOMINICA IMPROVES PERFORMANCE AT 2016 CSEC EXAMS

50 students obtained six grades ones or more at the 2016 Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) Exams. Dominica registered an 81.7% pass rate compared to 77.3 % in 2015.

Below are photos of the three (3) students topping the preliminary list of top performers.

1. Inoela Vital, Convent High School, 12 Ones
2. Kareen S George, Convent High School, 11 Ones, 1 Two
3. Joanice Kernella George, Pierre Charles Secondary School, 10 ones, 3 Twos



Tete Morne Primary School Wins Literacy Prize



Tete Morne Primary School was awarded the 2015-2016 Hands Across the Sea Literacy Award for Dominica. The prize is U.S. \$1,000 in brand new books or literacy support materials of the school's choice.

Hands Across the Sea has provided the Tete Morne Primary School with brand new, targeted books every year since 2012. Over the last two years, U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer Elena MacDonald worked with the school to create a new library - the room was painted, cleaned, shelving installed, old books culled and new books sorted, colour-coded, and shelved. The library was officially opened in May 2015.

Hands Across the Sea's Co-Founder and Executive Director Harriet Linskey said, "There is no doubt that improved literacy skills open the door to a better life, and the principal and her staff are demonstrating a strong commitment to promoting reading and writing by making their library an important part of the school."

Hands Across the Sea, founded in 2007, has served 12,280 children at 87 Dominica primary and secondary schools and reading programs since 2008, sending a total of 51,430 new and near-new books.

Hands Across the Sea is dedicated to raising the literacy levels of Eastern Caribbean children on the islands of Antigua, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Grenada. Since founding the organization in 2007, Hands Across the Sea has shipped over 209,300 books to the region through its Caribbean Literacy and School Support (CLASS) program.



New Library For Roosevelt Douglas Primary School

The Roosevelt Douglas Primary School now has a new library thanks to Hands Across the Sea with contributions from Ross University, Macario Advantage and other donors.

The library officially opening in May following the efforts of teachers, parents and students led by local Hands Across the Sea representative Celia Sorhaindo.



Photo: Principal of the Roosevelt Douglas Primary School, Teddy Wallace, cuts ribbon to open new library.



Photo: Senior Associate Dean at Ross University, Dr. Stanley White, cuts ribbon while Principal Martha Austrie looks on.

ROSS UNIVERSITY FUNDS NEW KITCHEN FOR SAVANNE PAILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Savanne Paille Primary School in May, opened a new kitchen and dining area, funded by the Ross University School of Medicine.

Ross University provided sixty-eight thousand, five hundred and eighty-nine dollars (\$68, 589) for the construction and a further two thousand, eight hundred and eighty-five (\$ 2, 885) for electrification of the facility.

The school's Parent Teachers Association (PTA), led by Janet Victor, spearheaded the project.

Dr. Stanley White, Senior Associate Dean at Ross University, said the construction of the new kitchen and dining area was the latest example of the special partnership the University has had with Dominica over the past 38 years.

"We have developed over those years an active outreach programme and have a proud record of donations to a wide variety of organizations across the island including schools, dance, theatre and other cultural and community groups, just to name a few.

"We attach great importance to being an active and responsible corporate citizen. And as an academic community, we always endeavour to do well by doing good in the community," he stated.

Minister for Education and Human Resource Development, Hon. Petter Saint-Jean, commended the spirit of community and cooperation displayed by the school's PTA members and staff.

"This speaks to the community involvement that is necessary if we are to improve our schools and create safe and conducive learning environments for our children," Saint Jean noted.

"I commend Ross University and Devry for responding to the call from the school in quick time. Thank you very much for partnering with us, the Ministry and the Government, to ensure that the future of our children, of Savanne Paille, is taken care of," he added.

Parliamentary Representative for the Cottage Constituency, Hon. Reginald Austrie also addressed the opening ceremony. He encouraged the school to make use of the facility to promote healthy lifestyles among students.

The project also received support from Portsmouth based businesses M&R Trading and Rudolph Thomas Enterprises.

HEIMISH BLAIZE

NUMBER 1 IN 2016 G6NA

Heimish Blaize is your typical 12 - year old student. He spends time alternately playing, doing homework, studying and watching television. In June Heimish was named the top performer in the 2016 Grade Six National Assessment-no ordinary achievement.

Heimish lives with his mother, Evalina Warrington, a homemaker, and two other siblings in the community of Bath Estate. He is not much into sport so he spends his time “watching what kids usually watch on TV,” reading or studying. He does his homework and studies religiously between the hours of 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. every day.

“Saturday is my free day when I can do anything I want,” he is quick to point out. It is his Sabbath and therefore a no-study day.

“But study time is priority and I spent a lot of time preparing for the exams,” he adds.

He tells *Education Matters* his mother is his most ardent supporter. Though she has recently been ill, she spent countless hours before the Grade Six National Assessment, helping him to study, motivating him to apply the extra effort that was needed to take him to number one.

Heimish also credits his teachers and principal at the Roseau Primary School for his success. He speaks highly of his two teachers Corrine George and Joycelyn Panthier who, he says, displayed a high level of commitment during preparation for the exam. He acknowledges a school culture, engendered by Principal Greta Roberts, that is caring, supportive and inclusive.

He is honoured that he has brought pride to his school. Aware that the Roseau Primary School has struggled academically in past years, he feels his success can help turn the tide.

“I know that a lot of people will now have higher regard for my school. It will also motivate the children who are in grade 5 to do as well as I did when their turn comes,” he said.

Heimish will now move on to the St. Mary's Academy where he hopes to continue his academic success, preparing for a career in business management.

Photo: Heimish Blaize, top performer- Grade Six National Assessment 2016.



VANESSA SERAPHINE-WINNING AT SCIENCE

St. Martin Secondary School Teacher Wins SAGICOR Visionaries Challenge Three Years Running

Every summer for the past three years Vanessa Seraphine has spent a week in Florida - a vacation - all expenses paid, compliments SAGICOR.

After a hard year in the classroom a free vacation is every teacher's dream. Miss. Seraphine, a science teacher at the St. Martin's Secondary School for the past 10 years, works extra hard for the freedom to kick back and relax at the end of the school year.

This year the St. Martin Secondary School represented by Gislain Francios and coached by Ms. Seraphine won the SAGICOR Visionaries Challenge for the third straight year since its launch in 2013. The Visionaries Challenge encourages secondary school students to develop effective, innovative and sustainable solutions to the challenges facing them. Miss. Seraphine has been at the side of each winning competitor, receiving the opportunity to accompany her charge to Florida for a getaway that includes visits to the University of Florida and the Kennedy Space Center.

What's her secret to success? She tells Education Matters she is consistently focused on giving her students the best learning experiences in the classroom that allow them to explore Science in fun, enlightening ways.

She makes extensive use of information technology, preparing for her classes with PowerPoint presentations, video shorts and other media based presentations. That approach to teaching allows her to employ engaging and creative ideas to motivate her students to develop an interest in the study of science.

As head of the Science Department at the St. Martin's Secondary

School, Seraphine sets the pace for the teaching of science ensuring that those under her supervision are always prepared for classes and that students are on course with syllabi and ready for both internal and external exams.

When preparing for the SAGICOR Visionaries Challenge, Seraphine is relentless in the pursuit of excellence.

"We begin reading and researching at least two months in advance. We do extensive research. We always look at the criteria and we ensure that we follow everything step by step. We leave out nothing.

"We also look at the judging criteria to ensure that we cover all the points and we try as much as possible to gain the maximum number of points," she explains.

She says this conscientious approach to the competition is also displayed daily in her classrooms. She admits there is much work to be done to reach higher levels of achievement at her school but says she remains committed to quality teaching and learning.

Her students describe her as effective. She is enthusiastic about teaching and so they are inspired by her adherence to high standards and motivated by her confidence in them.

"She is kind and caring. She is very organized and just a really good teacher. And she believes in us," 2016 Sagicor Visionaries Winner Gislain Francois told *Education Matters*.

With such accolades it would be no surprise if Miss Seraphine continues to win a free vacation every year.

CASTLE BRUCE SECONDARY SCHOOL EXCELS IN SPORTS

The Castle Bruce Secondary School has had a stellar year in sports.

Led by sports teachers Stanton Seraphin and Delroy Watt the CBSS tasted victory several times during the 2015-2016 school year.

- National Under 15 Football Champions - November 2015
- National Girls Volleyball Champion - March 2016
- Girls Secondary Schools Beach Volleyball Champions - April 2016
- Boys Secondary Schools Beach Volleyball Champions - April 2016
- First Domestic National Under 15 Cricket Champions - April 2016



CBSS - National Under 15 Football Champions- November 2015



CBSS - National Girls Volleyball Champions - March 2016



CBSS - First Domestic National Under 15 Cricket Champions - April 2016



CBSS - Boys Secondary Schools Beach Volleyball Champions - April 2016



CBSS - Girls Secondary Schools Beach Volleyball Champions - April 2016



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Top row (L to R): Customers winning at our Kiddy Cricket Pop Up Pitch; Winners of Scotiabank's Back to School scholarships.

Middle row (L to R): Scotiabankers lend a hand to the post-Erika clean up efforts; Country Manager Paula Harts hands over a donation to the Dominica Red Cross.

Bottom row (L to R): Scotiabank employees distributing relief supplies after the passage of Tropical Storm Erika; Several schools and groups benefited from a donation of Scotiabank Kiddy Cricket kits.



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