

OECS Education Reform Unit (OERU)

Curriculum Development and Student Remediation

The document, *Foundation for the future: OECS Education Reform Strategy* (Miller et al 1991) provides the background for the curriculum and student remediation projects being implemented by the OECS member countries working together as a unit and facilitated by the OERU Curriculum Specialist. The OECS Education Reform Unit (OERU) has the overall responsibility for harmonizing curricula in the core subject areas across the OECS.

The harmonization process requires teachers and other educators to work together cooperatively to coordinate curriculum development and remedial education activities in the OECS.

Activities Completed

So far, the following activities have been done by the OECS Education Reform Unit (OERU):

- the collection and examination of samples of language arts, mathematics, social studies and science curricula for primary and in some cases, lower secondary schools in OECS countries;
- development of a directory of OECS curriculum officers, teachers and teacher educators who participate in the development and implementation of curriculum;
- organizing of a mission comprising Caribbean and Canadian curriculum experts that visited all OECS countries, except Montserrat. The experts held discussions with curriculum officers, teachers, parents, and employers on ways to make the school curriculum more meaningful to students. They have prepared a report on:

the types of mathematics and language curricula that are in use in the various countries, and

the various teaching techniques that teachers use, and the

problems faced by teachers and students in the various classrooms visited.

The team of experts also recommended activities that would promote the harmonization of curricula, paying due regard to the good work being done by some countries individually. Some of the suggested activities could be done by countries themselves, while there was the need to conduct others at the sub-regional level. The activities which are outlined below have been approved for sub-regional implementation.

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Activities to be Done in School Year 1998-1999

The OERU realizes that individual countries have done considerable work in developing curriculum. These achievements will be taken into account in the harmonization process. During the school year commencing September 1998 the OERU will undertake the following coordinating activities.

1. Organizing and conducting a five-day sub-regional workshop bringing together curriculum development officers, language arts and mathematics subject officers, and officers responsible for special and remedial education in the OECS member countries.

The objectives of the workshop are to:

- discuss the philosophy underlying individual countries thrust in developing curriculum;
 - examine the structure and
 - emphases of existing primary mathematics and language arts curricula;
 - select curricular objectives and outcomes common to existing language arts and mathematics curricula, and to formulate new objectives in a cooperative way;
 - integrate language arts and Mathematics curricula for remedial education into the normal school curriculum, wherever possible;
 - equip participants with a level of Internet training so that they may be able to communicate among themselves across the sub-region.
2. Coordinating follow-up activity from the sub-regional workshop. Each country will refine objectives and develop teacher/learner resource materials for specific units of the mathematics and language arts curriculum. The success of this section of the harmonization process depends on
 - the willingness and availability of curriculum and subject officers to arrange working groups within their countries;
 - the availability of teachers and teacher educators through release time etc. to

- professional support from the OERU Curriculum Specialist and the subject consultants.

The OERU will facilitate the exchange of materials, and if necessary, personnel across countries to provide assistance where necessary. The electronic networking initiative organized by the OERU will be used to facilitate the exchange process.

3. The third main activity will be the development of common achievement standards in mathematics and language arts for each grade level in the primary school. The work of the various national working groups will be the basis for the development of these standards.

The intention is to provide every primary school with a document suggesting common standards in these two main curricular areas.

4. The fourth major activity will be the holding of a sub-regional workshop to acquaint teachers and special education personnel with methods that may be used to identify students who seem to have learning problems.

The emphasis will be on early identification of these problems. The workshop will build on work already in progress in some OECS countries. One underlying theme of this activity is the need to provide an effective early childhood education programme.

5. The final main activity for the 1998 - 1999 school year is the production of pamphlets for parents. These pamphlets will
 - assist parents to help their children to develop reading and writing skills;
 - provide hints that will help parents to make reading and writing attractive and enjoyable to their children;
 - attempt to encourage parents to become a significant adult in their children's educational process.

Prepared by Henry Hinds

Curriculum Specialist, OERU

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