

Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

Education Reform Unit

**Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Unit Project
(ECERP)**

Curriculum Harmonization

CURRICULUM FOR

GRADE III (AGE 8 – 9)

GRADE IV (AGE 9 – 10)

DRAFT – FOR PILOTING, DISCUSSION & FEEDBACK

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The OERU hopes that principals and teachers will continue to play their roles in making the outcomes come to life in classrooms throughout the OECS. The commitment and effort will surely contribute to the enhancement of knowledge, skills and the development of positive attitudes towards language in our children.

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Learning outcomes for the Language Arts - Grades K - VI

Preamble

Suggestions for overall goals of the Language Arts curriculum were generated and learner profiles were delineated at the OECS /OERU *Subregional Curriculum and Remediation Planning Workshop* which was held in Antigua from November 25 - 30, 1998. These suggestions were subsequently incorporated in the published report on the workshop, pages 43 - 44 and 47 - 49. The statements have been incorporated into the *Introduction* to the learning outcomes for English, the language which is used for academic or school purposes in the OECS. While a general comment has been made with respect to the need for “taking the native language of the learner into account,” the curriculum does not address the issue of language policy as this is a determination to be made by individual states based on the particular sociolinguistic situations that exist within their boundaries. Nevertheless, the curriculum is flexible and can be tailored to accommodate the development of multiliteracy and the use of ESL methods where these may be required. The curriculum is intended for implementation in the following contexts.

1. *Where the native language of the child differs from the language used for instruction and communication in the school* - the suggested activities and recommendations for approaches to be used by the teacher will promote healthy attitudes towards language in general. Specifically, the recommendations for acceptance of the child’s home language, for the ways in which a nurturing and non-threatening environment in which the child is motivated to use language in different contexts can be fostered will promote overall development of the child’s capabilities. In addition to the guidelines for instruction in a monolingual English environment, the curriculum makes some suggestions for approaches that may be used with non-native speakers of English so as to help the Creole or dialect speaker make the transition to school life and to become a fully functioning bilingual - bi-literate person. Instructions regarding the ways in which this might be achieved are fully delineated in the Teachers’ Guide, the manual that accompanies this document.
2. *Where a situation requires the implementation of second language / second dialect approaches* - the activities set out in the curriculum document can be appropriately tailored and used to meet these specific needs.
3. *Where individual states may opt for an educational language policy that includes the use of a heritage language in some form* - the principles underlying the activities and tasks - applied within the context of heritage language instruction and English language as mother tongue instruction - can be articulated to create a rich and interesting language learning experience for the students. Again, the Teachers’ Guide provides some guidelines by which this can be accomplished. The curriculum emphasizes a rich literature based

programme that will encourage learners to read and develop critical thinking skills. Such a literature-based programme can be used to develop multiliteracy.

The curriculum includes all the learning outcomes that were generated by individual states for each level as well as additional outcomes, teaching activities and suggested strategies that were omitted in original submissions. One of the agreed-upon tasks was the inclusion of suggestions for learner activities and for teaching all the domains in each grade level. However, these were constructed for the relevant grades in cases where they were omitted from the original documents.

The document contains the following sections:

- an introduction which outlines (a) the general aims of the curriculum (b) profiles of a competent language learner and effective teacher of language arts (c) characteristics of the learning environment for the language arts and (d) goals of the curriculum
- the learning outcomes for each of the relevant domains (listening/speaking, reading, writing, grammar, spelling and mechanics) for each grade level. The outcomes are set out in schematic form for each grade level, with the *general Domains and categories* set out in the leftmost column; the specific learning outcomes which reflect the *knowledge, skills and attitudes* students are expected to develop in the second column; a sample of suggested activities, teaching and learning strategies in the third column and some suggested resources in the fourth and last column
- general suggestions for orienting non-native speakers of English to school life and to help them function in the classroom. Guidelines for an approach to facilitate these learners are presented in the Teachers' Guide, the companion manual to this document
- general guidelines for evaluation and assessment are presented at the end of sections for combined grade levels (K – II; Grades III and IV; Grades V and VI). More specific and detailed suggestions with samples of assessment forms that may be used are given in the Teachers' Guide
- a summary consisting of sequenced outcomes for each domain for all grades is presented for ease of reference in the Teachers' Guide
- a glossary of terms used in each document is included as an attachment to each and a full glossary of all the terms used in the learning outcomes as well as in the Teachers' Guide is included as an appendix to the Guide.

The Teachers' Guide includes notes on concepts introduced in the curriculum, explanations and additional suggestions for teaching activities and strategies as well as a list of resource texts for teachers and a list of selected literature titles for children. The Guide is intended as a resource for teachers as they prepare to implement the learning outcomes.

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June, 2003

Introduction

The language arts curriculum is predicated on the assumption that teachers will implement a balanced and integrated programme. It is a learner-centered curriculum in which the suggested teaching activities are designed for full active learner participation, discovery, problem solving and the fostering of ownership of the concepts to be learned. In a learner-centered classroom students work in collaborative groups on a variety of tasks and projects; they work on their own, in small and whole class groups and they interact with the teacher and other students to consolidate and extend learning and to achieve ownership of concepts. The teacher facilitates learning and the total development of learners through preparation of appropriate tasks / activities; by helping students to learn how to learn; by helping them to use appropriate strategies for achieving mastery in the domains and, more important, by helping students to experience the holistic nature of learning through appropriate cross curricular content links and by showing the relationship of what is learned in school to everyday life experiences.

Hansen (1987)¹ suggested five principles for the integration of the domains of the language arts, namely, (i) time, (ii) choice, (iii) response, (iv) structure, and (v) community. These principles are promoted and actively fostered in a programme designed to empower the learner to become strategic readers, effective and creative writers, good language users, independent thinkers and problem solvers. Hansen's principles, paraphrased in the following points, promote the understanding that:

- (i) *“all learners need time to think”, to read, write, talk about and share their thoughts about the concepts to which they are introduced. They need to practise new strategies and skills and to take risks in order to extend their learning and capabilities in all domains of language arts. In order to facilitate this, timetables need to be so structured that learners have sufficiently large blocks of time in which to read, write, discuss their work and share their ideas with their teachers and peers and also to respond to their own work and the work of others in the class. Teachers must also organise sessions for reading aloud to students, for conferencing in which they can respond to students' reading and writing individually as well as in small and large groups, and to help students set new targets and goals for learning*
- (ii) *learners perform best when they are given the opportunity to have some input into the selection of books (e.g. supplementary literature for in-class discussion) for reading and topics for writing. The teacher guides the students to make good choices for reading and writing. Giving learners the opportunity to make some choices motivates them to learn and teaches them to think and make decisions. Also, by making a good selection of books available in reading centres within the class as well as in the school library, teachers can broaden their students' reading interests and help them make good choices for reading*

¹ Hansen, J. (1987) When Writers Read. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann. Also reproduced in Making Meaning, a workshop series by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development in association with the International Reading Association (1992).

- (iii) *learners make better progress when they receive feedback on what they are learning on a regular basis. When teachers and their classmates respond to their learning in the classroom, learners get the opportunity to think through problems they encounter, to respond directly (orally and in writing) to the feedback they receive and to reformulate their ideas. Responses given in pair (student-student interaction sessions), individual conferences (teacher – student), small group sessions (student groups / teacher and small group), and whole class sessions facilitate the exchange of ideas and the identification of learning problems by the teacher. Through one-on-one and small group interactions, teachers can teach specific strategies that help students to become independent learners. Evaluation and assessment should be built in as an on-going part of the programme and not solely as a one-time test-taking activity at the end of a term or year*
- (iv) *an ordered and structured classroom in which goals are made clear to students can facilitate the overall goals of helping students to become keen and expert readers, proficient writers and critical thinkers. Collaboration and support among staff and good interaction between staff and students enable teachers to discover the routines that are suitable and that work best in their classrooms and in the school. Well ordered and structured classrooms provide opportunities on a daily basis for discussion, reading aloud and silently, writing in the language arts and the other content areas. Indeed, since language is the tool through which we learn new content, the other content areas (subjects) can be accessed as sources for materials which form the basis for these activities, thus allowing learners to see the relevance of learning to their lives and to benefit from a holistic approach*
- (v) *both the classroom and the school make up the community in which students find support for their learning. Such supportive communities are gradually developed when mutual trust is engendered between teachers and students; when teachers “prize” their students and relate to them in an empathic manner. In such a community, learners are encouraged and become confident in taking risks in order to advance their learning. They are willing to learn new strategies, experiment with new approaches to problem solving and to “celebrate” and be further motivated by “their learning successes”. Such a community develops when teachers and students see themselves as jointly engaging in learning, when teachers view themselves primarily as facilitators of learning and when principals provide instructional leadership for their staff.*

(Adapted from *Making Meaning*, Workshop 1A. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. pp.31-32)

Profile of a competent and proficient language learner

A competent and proficient learner is one who, at the end of primary schooling

- ▶ feels confident in using Standard English and the other language varieties in his / her repertoire for a variety of purposes and in appropriate situations and contexts
- ▶ can listen with understanding and can communicate effectively both orally and in writing, can read independently, critically, and with enthusiasm
- ▶ can select and use the language code and register appropriate for a given situation
- ▶ can express himself / herself in speech and in writing in a clear, logical and precise manner
- ▶ can use language to think critically and to solve problems within the language arts and other content areas
- ▶ can use language creatively
- ▶ is fully prepared to meet the challenges of language learning at the next stage of schooling.

Profile of an effective teacher of language arts

An effective teacher of the language arts is

- resourceful
- innovative
- supportive of students
- nurturing
- empathic
- creative
- personable and approachable
- one who has a love of language, is enthusiastic about teaching it and can engender healthy attitudes towards language and a love for language learning in all students
- one who has a good command of the language and can provide good models of the language in the classroom
- aware of the demands of the language arts curriculum and the curricula of other content areas and is innovative in using varied content and approaches to promote the goals of learning
- flexible and willing to allow learners to make choices for reading and writing and who will also guide learners to make good choices
- one who uses a variety of strategies and tailors teaching to meet the needs of individual learners
- one who can teach learners to use a variety of strategies (metacognitive and other) to solve problems they encounter in their learning
- one who uses a holistic approach to teaching

- one who encourages active participation among learners in the classroom and uses different interaction patterns to promote participation among learners and to maximize opportunities for learners to practise the skills they have learned
- one who uses varying and appropriate forms of assessment to evaluate students' learning and who uses information gained from evaluation and assessment to guide further instruction
- one who knows how to use the language of learners as a launching pad for further learning
- authoritative, that is, one who is willing to negotiate with learners, involve them in decision making, one who engages in joint consultation in setting instructional goals to promote learning and behavioural goals for maintaining good discipline in class
- one who sees himself / herself as a facilitator of learning and as a participant in the learning process
- one who is willing to see parents and members of the community as partners in promoting students' learning and who can engage in discussion with these partners for the good of learners
- a good manager who uses varied interaction patterns and adjusts classroom arrangements to accommodate varied learning activities in which students become engaged
- a good listener, who is open to new ideas and who tries new approaches where these are known to be interesting, effective and appropriate
- able to take into consideration individual differences that exist among learners and can construct tasks that are appropriate to the needs of individuals
- one who networks with colleagues and the wider teaching community for support, guidance and the sharing of ideas
- one who keeps abreast of recent trends in language teaching
- one who models the behaviours that he / she advocates.

Characteristics of the learning environment for the language arts

The learning environment should be a non-threatening one in which the learner feels safe, confident and free to participate fully and without inhibition in the learning process. It should reflect the teaching of language as an active process and should make available a variety of materials and resources for the learners. The learning environment engenders trust and respect among students as readers, writers, listeners and speakers and it promotes tolerance for individual differences. It should be an environment in which children are fully supported in their learning and are encouraged to be creative and innovative.

Goals of the curriculum

The language arts curriculum will

1. provide a balanced programme in which adequate attention is paid to all the domains of the language arts
2. promote language as a tool for critical thinking and teach students how to
 - i. access and process information and
 - ii. communicate ideas effectively
3. develop proficiency in Standard English while embracing / accepting and taking into account the child's first language and its usefulness in helping the child to learn
4. cater to the needs and interests of individual learners
5. foster in the learner a positive attitude towards language in general and language learning in particular
6. help learners to become literate in the languages available to them
7. help the learner to become confident in the use of English, the language of the school
8. enhance the learner's confidence, sense of identity and self-esteem through the use of language
9. promote the use of technological aids where these are available (and appropriate) for purposes of enhancing learning.

In order to cater to the needs of children who may be at risk, the curriculum will also:

10. develop and implement a variety of strategies which will respond and lend support to the individual needs of learners
11. promote the creation of a learning environment that encourages learners to participate fully, thereby enabling the development of their abilities through meaningful practice
12. allow for the use of varied forms of continuous evaluation and assessment so as to enable teachers to identify learning difficulties, evaluate progress and guide further instruction
13. provide for early diagnosis of reading difficulties, in particular, and develop and implement appropriate intervention strategies that will address learning difficulties as soon as they have been diagnosed.

The type of curricula that are best suited to the development of proficiency and to the realization of the goals stated in this document are those that integrate the four strands

(domains) of the language arts, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Such curricula provide opportunities for:

- i. using learner centered approaches
- ii. responding to individual learner needs
- iii. catering to varying learning styles
- iv. implementing varied forms of evaluation and assessment
- v. exposing students to such technological aids and advances that utilize learner-aided approaches to learning (particularly with reading and writing)
- vi. incorporating a wide range of materials and providing the appropriate scaffolding that will promote independent learning
- vii. integrating across the curriculum.