Data Collection Report: OECS Declaration on Education Statement

ACADEMIC RECOVERY PROGRAMME Phase II

February 2022

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About this document

Recommended
citation.Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (2022). Data Collection
Report: OECS Declaration on Education Statement (Academic Recovery
Programme Phase II No. 7). Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.
https://doi.org/10.53832/opendeved.0262. Available from
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The Academic Recovery Programme Phase II was supported by Open Development & Education, <u>https://opendeved.net</u>.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ARP	Academic Recovery Programme		
СРЕА	Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment		
EDMU	Education Development Management Unit		
HFLE	Health and Family Life		
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States		
SVG	St. Vincent and the Grenadines		
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training		

1. Overview

In November 2021, as part of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Academic Recovery Programme (ARP) Phase 2, Open Development & Education collected data through interviews, focus groups, and a survey to inform the development of the OECS Declaration on Education Statement. A draft of the statement was presented at the 2021 Education Series meeting, held on 23 and 24 November 2021. Participants were invited to discuss the draft, make suggestions for revisions, and / or highlight omissions. In January 2022, a second round of data collection activities was initiated to give stakeholders another chance to contribute to a revision of the declaration statement. This report presents a summary of the findings of the data collection activities undertaken in 2021 and 2022. A summary of data collected from the OECS Digital Instruction Content survey is also included in the appendices.

Based on the data collection activities, the following recommendations are made to better inform the development of future projects, in addition to those outlined in the OECS Declaration on Education Statement:

- Extended timelines for data collection and to explore the use of incentives for participation
- Harmonisation of education policy as a catalyst to digital transformation
- Curriculum and assessment reform based on OECS data and research
- Enhanced stakeholder participation, accountability, and collaboration across sectors.

2. Methodology

Data collection took place over two cycles in November 2021 and January 2022. During these cycles, stakeholder engagement included the following activities:

- Interviews / focus group sessions
- Google Forms surveys

Due to ongoing Covid-19-related restrictions, interview and focus group sessions were facilitated virtually over Zoom. These sessions were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. A Google Forms survey was also developed in English and French so that a wider sample of participants could be engaged given the short timeline available for data collection activities in both cycles. In the second round of data collection, email and audio responses to interview questions were also accepted, once again as a result of the compressed timeline for data collection activities. Table 1, below, describes a summary of the data collection activities and stakeholder participation.

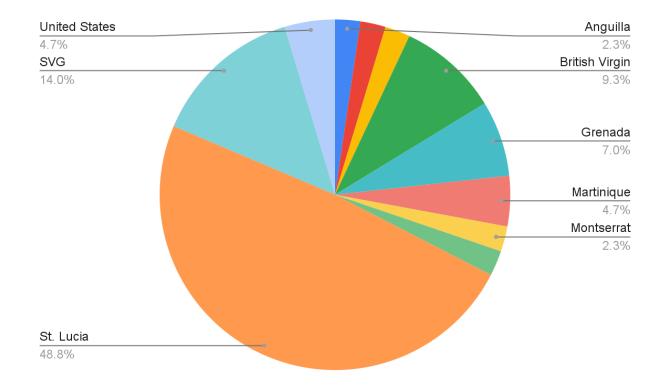
Declaration on Education Statement 2021–2022 Data Collection			
Interview bookings	57	Slots opened from Nov 1–16, 2021 and Jan 24–28, 2022.	
Completed interviews / focus group sessions	43	These sessions included two student focus groups with primary and secondary school students from St. Vincent and St. Lucia in 2021 and two student focus group sessions in 2022 with 5 secondary school students from Grenada and Antigua in each session.	
Google Forms survey responses	61	A summary of participant distribution across Member States and stakeholders is included in Section 2.2	
Email responses*	5	We received responses from the British Virgin Islands, Dominica and St. Vincent & the Grenadines (SVG).	
Audio responses*		No audio responses were submitted.	

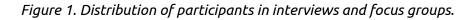
Table 1. A summary of 2021–2022 data collection activities.

*Email and audio responses were only solicited in the second round of data collection.

2.1. Interviews and focus groups

Prospective interview and focus group participants were invited to book 45-minute slots from 1–16 November 2021. These slots were open to all education stakeholders in Member States, and the staff at the Education Development Management Unit (EDMU) facilitated the recruitment of participants. At the end of this data collection period, thirty-eight interviews and two student focus group sessions (one at a primary school from St. Lucia and one at a secondary school from St. Vincent and the Grenadines) were conducted. The interview protocols used for different groups of participants in these sessions can be found in Appendix A. In January 2022, at the start of the second data collection cycle, a set of participant guidelines were developed for a new round of data collection activities. These guidelines are also included in Appendix B. Figure 1, below, shows the distribution of participants across Member States. Development partners from Barbados and the United States are also included here.





2.2. Google Forms Survey

Along with the interview and focus group sessions, a survey was also developed to allow participation of a wider base of stakeholders. Initially, the planned data collection was to take place using a phased approach. In Week 1 (1–5 November) of the survey's release, the questions would reflect the interview protocol and feature multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Once a threshold of 50 responses was reached during Week 1, the survey was to be revised to include quantitative, more multiple-choice style questions. The survey was released in Week 1 and shared widely, but unfortunately, due to a low response rate, the survey was not revised to include more quantitative questions. The survey remained open in the run-up to the Education Series meetings on 23 and 24 November, and by the final day of the conference, 60 responses were received. Figure 2, below, shows the distribution of participants in the survey by Member State. No responses from Martinique or Guadeloupe were recorded.

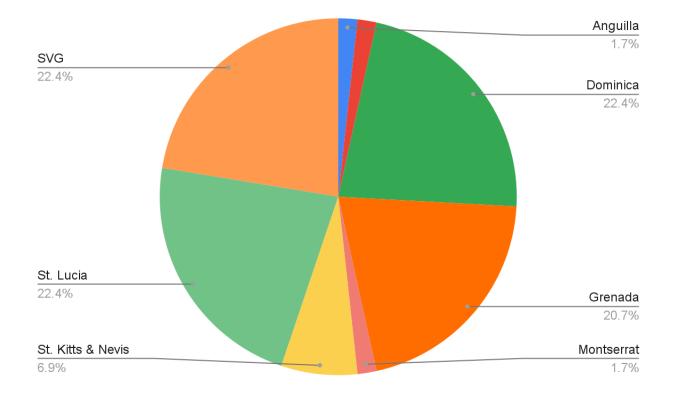


Figure 2. Member state participation in survey.

Figure 3, below, shows the distribution of survey participants' stakeholder roles. The majority of participants were teachers, followed by ministry officials. This may suggest that different types of engagement activities could be considered for parents, teacher educators, school administrators, and students. Further discussions with local ministry officials may be needed to guide future engagements with these groups. It is also possible that a longer data collection period may have helped increase the engagement of these stakeholder groups.

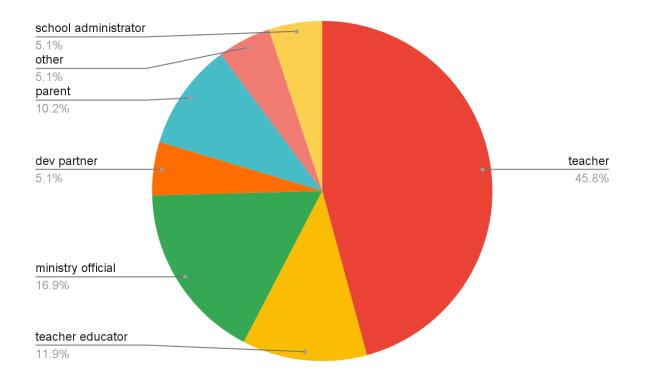


Figure 3. Distribution of education stakeholder roles across survey participants.

2.3. Data analysis

The data were coded thematically. The frequency of codes throughout interview notes, transcripts, and survey responses was also recorded. From these codes, themes for the draft OECS Declaration Statement on Education were developed. A full discussion of the findings that informed the statement is included in Section 3. Twenty-six articles for the statement were outlined under the initial themes, and these are outlined in Table 2, below.

Table 2. Themes for draft OECS Declaration Statement on Education.

Table 2. Themes for draft OECS Declaration Statement on Education.				
Theme 1: The OECS vision for education				
Articl	e 1. OECS Education			
1.1.	The purpose of education in the OECS			
1.2.	Core values: empowerment through self-knowledge and commitment to regional kinship			
1.3.	A much-needed redefinition, not refinement, of the purpose of an OECS education			
Articl	e 2. Enhancing resilience			
2.1.	Environmental vulnerability			
2.2.	Mitigate risks, plan for crises, and build in flexibility			
2.3	Economic vulnerability			
Articl	Article 3. Quality and equity			
3.1.	Every person has an inalienable right to a basic and secondary education			
3.2.	Eliminating discrimination			
3.3.	Quality education at all levels, with particular focus on early childhood			
Them	e 2: Harmonisation of education policy			
Articl	e 4. Digital transformation			
4.1.	The harmonisation of education policy			
4.2.	Hybrid learning beyond the pandemic			
4.3.	Emphasis on improving technological infrastructure			
Article 5. Data-driven curriculum and assessment reform				
5.1.	A data-driven curriculum that reflects the purpose of an OECS education			
5.2.	. Teacher training and support			
5.3.	Assessment			

Article 6. Expanded learning pathways

- 6.1. Differentiated learning
- 6.2. Sports, the creative and performing arts

Theme 3: Partnerships and collaboration

Article 7. Strengthening stakeholder participation and accountability

- 7.1. Parental involvement
- 7.2. Student involvement national and regional student councils
- 7.3. Accountability and leadership

Article 8. Intersectoral support for the most vulnerable

- 8.1. Improving social safety nets
- 8.2. Improving psychosocial support
- 8.3. Learners with Special Educational Needs
- 8.4. Learners in conflict with the law

Article 9. Expansion of public- and private-sector relationships

- 9.1. Public–private partnerships
- 9.2. Career guidance, mentorship, and apprenticeship programmes

3. Findings

3.1. The future of education in the OECS

Some participants indicated that any discussion of the future of education in the OECS must first be preceded by the development of a vision statement about the type of OECS citizen required for the future. Such a vision statement would outline what the education system hoped to achieve and the type of citizen it would mould. Curriculum and assessment reforms that are data-driven and evidence-based and that expand notions about what it means to be an educated OECS citizen were also highlighted as characteristics of a future education system. A need for more learning pathways that open artistic, technical and vocational, as well as, academic opportunities for all students was identified as one way to implement this. Notwithstanding these reform-based characteristics, many participants expressed support for high achievement standards and the importance of discipline for achievement that currently shape the education systems in Member States.

3.2. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on education

Many participants described the Covid-19 pandemic as having a significant impact on education. Some of the most important lessons learnt about education during the Covid-19 pandemic include the following.

- The need to improve infrastructure to enable digital learning,
- Increased awareness about the importance of communicating more effectively with parents and guardians to support student learning,
- The need for coherent planning and effective communication between education ministries and stakeholders.

The majority of participants identified infrastructure challenges as having the most impact on the quality of education provided during the pandemic. This was followed by the availability of suitable curricular resources and the level of preparation of teachers for online learning. This may suggest that while it is important to develop content and train teachers for a possible future hybrid education system, without significant improvements in the level of connectivity and availability of devices in member states, the quality of education students receive may not improve. Participants also suggested that more intersectoral collaboration is needed to cater for the needs of the most vulnerable learners and their families. Low academic achievement among boys and the negative impact of social pressure on their educational trajectory was also discussed by participants.

3.3. Student experience and recommendations

Student participants in focus group interviews described their remote learning experience as rewarding, but particularly challenging. Many highlighted the mental health issues prompted by isolation. Students reported feelings of isolation, which negatively impacted their mental health and levels of motivation. To describe their experience, one student commented:

" I also learned that being isolated from my friends took a toll on me. It makes me not want to do anything. So, I wish I had more motivation and support from others such as friends and family, as well as teachers, but it wasn't easy." (Kate, Interview, Jan 2022).

Other students made similar comments:

"... It took it takes a really big toll on your mental health. Like it just makes you go into a place where you're just not motivated to do anything at all." (Paul, Interview, Jan 2022).

The mental health challenges associated with remote learning necessitates a multi-sectoral approach, which is described in Article 8 of the Declaration of Education. Generally, students reported that they would have benefited from words of encouragement from their teachers. In addition, teachers should observe instances where students are facing burnout and other forms of mental exhaustion and, where necessary, refer them to appropriate support.

3.3.1. Student recommendations for online learning

Students also recommended more engaging virtual learning experiences which integrate a variety of features such as breakout rooms and virtual whiteboards. Elsewhere, comments were made regarding the use of tools and applications that promote authentic engagement. One student recommended:

"virtual learning that is engaging and uses different features of online platforms such as breakout rooms and the virtual whiteboard; class recordings that students can review to study or prepare for exams." (Sallma, Interview, Jan 2022)

3.3.2. Student recommendations for teacher professionalism

A number of students reported a desire for a more positive attitude among some teachers to inspire more confidence in teacher–student interaction and instruction. One student summarised the sentiment shared by several others by highlighting that:

"... there's very small pockets of teachers that do not operate on a level of excellence that I'm pleased with, which may not be widespread. However, once

you're not on the par in terms of level of preparedness, level of competence is one teacher too many. And lastly I think that's some teachers use ineffective teaching techniques. So I think that they leave out the fact that every child is different and learns differently at different paces so they don't take time to plan their lessons. They just rush process and forget about all those things. Which is something that I'm not used to. I wish that we could work on that. Thank you." (Kayreen, Interview, Jan 2022).

Students' comments suggest that systems should be put in place to foster teacher accountability to enable a more favourable classroom environment. Students appear keenly aware of teacher professionalism and levels of preparedness.

3.3.3. Student recommendations for parental support

Students also provided insight into parental support and involvement, which they recommend should be less pressuring and more encouraging. Parents should provide greater motivation from simple words of affirmation to other forms of support, particularly when performance on an assessment is lower than expected. In addition, they should put less pressure on their children for good grades, but hold them to high expectations. The support is especially important in remote learning situations, which students often find isolating. The support could also be in the form of creating a conducive environment for learning. Thus, distractions should be minimised and students should be assisted in creating a schedule to allow for completion of chores at an appropriate time, which does not clash with their school responsibilities. In other words, there should be a better balance between home and school and school activities when students are at home.

3.4. Overall recommendations

Following the data collection, suggested ideas were developed into recommendations. The recommendations point to issues of time, digital transformation, curriculum and assessment reform, and stakeholder engagement:

- Extended timelines for data collection and exploration of the use of incentives for participation.
- Harmonisation of education policy as a catalyst to digital transformation.
- Curriculum and assessment reform based on OECS data and research.
- Enhanced stakeholder participation, accountability, and collaboration across sectors.

Appendix A

Interview protocols

Primary School Student

A. Introduction: Explanation of rationale; Opening questions about professional affiliation and Member State of residence.

Questions:

- What are three things about school that you like and why?
 1b. (What are 3 things you dislike about school and why?)
- 2. Do you prefer online school or face-to-face school, and why? [follow up about why they dislike online learning or face-to-face]
- 3. How can we (teachers, parents, school principals, government) help students learn better?
- 4. What is one thing you are not learning in school that you would like to learn about?
- 5. Who should be responsible for making schools better in your country?

6. How can children help to make schools better? [follow up with: How can parents/teachers help to make schools better?]

7. What would you like to tell the governments of the Caribbean about making education better? **C. Clarification questions, if needed. Thanks. Closing.**

Secondary / Tertiary Level Student interview protocol

Questions:

- 1. What are three things about school that you like now and why?
 - 1b. (What are 3 things you dislike about school and why?)
- 2. What were three things you learnt about education during the pandemic?

2a. What is the one thing that would have really helped you with learning at home during the pandemic?

- 3. What are three things schools should have to help students learn better in the future?
- 4. What is one thing you are not learning in school that you would like to learn?
- 5. Who should be responsible for improving schools in your country?

6. How can students help to make schools better? [follow up with: How can parents/teachers help to make schools better?]

7. What would you like to be included in the declaration of education?

C. Clarification questions, if needed. Thanks. Closing.

Interview protocol (other participants)

A. Introduction: Ethics overview; Explanation of rationale; Opening questions about professional affiliation and Member State of residence.

B. Questions:

1. What are three positive and unique characteristics about our education systems that need to remain?

1a. How is it, that despite the many challenges we face in OECS education, that the region continues to produce several very high-functioning, proficient citizens who excel in their fields? How can we ensure that a much larger percentage of the population falls into that category?

1b. What are the enablers that we need to protect, strengthen or establish to achieve that result?

2. How can we refine the education product to position the OECS as a leader in the world economically, socially, culturally etc. and not as a follower or mere consumer of the world's products?

3. What were three of the most important lessons about education/learning from the pandemic? [*Prompt: that you learned? For education systems? Specific lessons about curriculum and assessment?*]

3a. What is the one thing that would have really helped you (or your government) but that you didn't have? [*Prompt: Specific support to school? Organisations? Parents? Resources?*]

4. The pandemic revealed or further highlighted vulnerabilities in education systems. To improve student learning, a transformative, adaptive, education system might be needed. Can you name three characteristics of such an improved education system? [*Prompt: Why those three?*]

5. What specific actions are needed (and by which stakeholders) to achieve such a system? Why those actions? [*Prompt: Why those actions*?]

6. How can these education actors be empowered to become change agents who make these actions a reality? [Prompt: How do we realistically achieve this? What are the concrete steps?]

7. What is one thing that the DoEd must address in your opinion?

C. Clarification questions, if needed. Thanks. Closing.

Appendix B

Survey on education in the OECS

1. Please select the most appropriate description. I am a.... [Multiple choice - Mark only one]

student

student	teacher
ministry official	parent
regional examination	partner

teacher educator development partner _other: _____

2. I am from... [Multiple choice - Mark only one]

3. State up to three important lessons about education/learning from the pandemic. [Short answer text]

4. State up to three things that would have really helped you (or your government) but that you didn't have? [Short answer text]

5. To improve student learning, a transformative, adaptive, education system might be needed. What could be three characteristics of such an improved education system? Why those three? [Long answer text]

6. To turn aspirations for education into concrete actions, actors must be empowered. As a student/teacher/parent/educator/ministry official/external partner, one thing that would empower me is: _____ [Short answer text]

7. What specific actions are needed (and by which stakeholders) to achieve a transformative and resilient system? Why those actions? [Long answer text]

8. What was 1. the most and 2. the least helpful feature of the educational response to the pandemic in your member state? [Short answer text]

9. In your opinion, what has been the quality of education students have been receiving during the pandemic? [Likert scale - Mark only one.]

2 3 4 5 1 Poor Excellent

10. Which of the following has most impacted the guality of education for learning during the pandemic? [Multiple choice - Mark only one]

____Infrastructure challenges, e.g. related to connectivity & devices

Curricular challenges e.g. unsuitable curriculum and assessment, lack of online learning resources

Pedagogical challenges e.g. low teacher preparation for online teaching

Other challenges e.g. Lack of parental support Other:

11. What are three barriers to adequately preparing students for the future of work and leadership roles? How can these barriers be overcome? [Long answer text]

Appendix C

2022 OECS Declaration on Education: Participant Guidelines

The OECS is inviting participants in Member States to make their voices heard on the current state of education and to help chart a new way forward informed by lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic. Through interviews or surveys, participants will help to revise the draft OECS Declaration on Education Statement. Open Development & Education, a UK-based firm, will be facilitating this exercise on behalf of the OECS Commission. Recorded responses from participants will be analysed and used to revise the current draft declaration statement, and a final version will be shared with the OECS. Individual participants will not be identified with the transcripts generated from recordings, and participants will remain anonymous. Recordings will be kept only for the duration of this work with OECS. They will be stored on a secure drive with only research staff having access. If there are any questions or concerns, please reach out to callista@opendeved.net and sarah-lee@opendeved.net. Participants are free to withdraw at any point during the data collection process.

What information does the OECS need to know?

Interview questions for students in English: Primary students Secondary students Interview questions for other participants (e.g., teachers, school administrators, private sector representatives): English French

How can I participate?

- Live interview and focus group (students*) sessions
 Participants may book a 45-minute slot at the following link: [CALENDLY LINK] for
 25–28 January 2022. We kindly ask that participants sign up for slots by
 Thursday, 27 January 27 2022. The booking system will close on Thursday, 27
 January 2022 at 12 Noon (Atlantic Standard / Eastern Caribbean Time).
- Written responses to interview questions via email / Google Forms
 Participants can email written responses to the interview questions to
 callista@opendeved.net and sarah-lee@opendeved.net with the subject line
 [Declaration on Education Statement consultations 2022 response]. Alternatively,
 written responses can be provided using Google Forms [English French]
- 3. Audio responses sent via email or WhatsApp

Participants can choose to send a voice note of their responses to interview questions via email or WhatsApp. We kindly ask that participants state their name, professional affiliation (student/teacher/private sector) and Member State of origin, at the beginning of the recording before responding to the questions. [E.g., I am Mr. John Smith from St. Lucia. I own a small business./I am Miss Jane Smith. I am a teacher from Grenada. /I am Kyle Smith. I am a student from Antigua.] Voice notes can be sent via email to callista@opendeved.net and

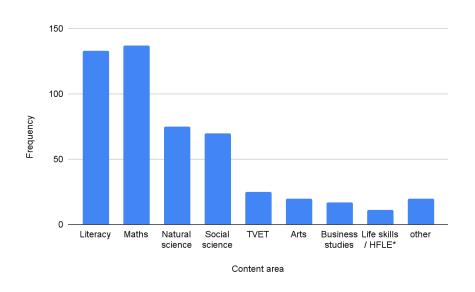
sarah-lee@opendeved.net or via WhatsApp to 1-784-494-7571. The deadline to submit written and audio responses is Tuesday, 1 February 2022.

*Documentation of parental/guardian consent is required for students to participate in these consultations. Please print and complete the form available at the link below for each student. Students who are under 18 years of age, must have a parent or guardian sign where appropriate. Students over the age of 18 years may sign the forms and have an adult (parent/teacher etc.) sign as the witness. Please email completed forms to callista@opendeved.net and sarah-lee@opendeved.net with the subject line [OECS CONSULTATION CONSENT FORM]. Student consent forms: 1. Live interviews/ audio recording responses 2. Written/Google Forms responses

Appendix D

Digital Instructional Content Survey

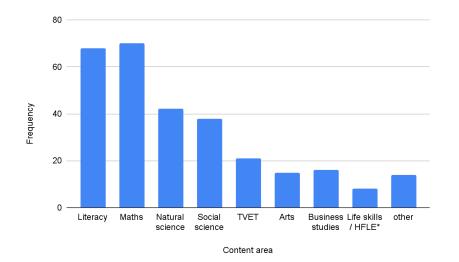
The findings from this survey suggest that literacy and language and mathematics content remain priority areas for all grade levels. Content for natural and social sciences was also a prominent choice for survey participants. Figure 4 and Figure 5, below, highlight these results, while Table 3 and Table 4 outline the specific topics within these broad subject areas, identified as needing more digital instructional content.





*HFLE = Health and Family Life Education

Figure 5. Content areas where digital content is most needed for Grade 4 and above.*



*HFLE = Health and Family Life Education

Grade	Language and Literacy	Mathematics	Social Science	Natural Science
4	Writing skills, CPEA writing portfolio development, punctuation, phonemic awareness	Number concepts, operations, geometry, measurement, decimals and place value	Caribbean culture and history, government, citizenship, and judicial systems, Earth's Resources;	Energy, structure and function, information processing, agriculture, botany, quarrying, animal husbandry, fishing, agriculture, health
5	Creole, writing skills, CPEA book reports, decoding and oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, making inferences, parts of speech	Operations, fractions, decimals, percentages, ratio and proportion, factors and multiples, calculating volume and area, measurement; consumer arithmetic; graphing	Caribbean identity	
6	Reading fluency, comprehension skills, oral presentations, listening skills, phonics, writing skills, grammar and punctuation, business education	Geometry; fractions; Creating 3D models to represent a particular concept or idea, graphing, consumer arithmetic, probability, word problems	Caribbean culture and history, Caribbean industries, tourism, national heroes, government,	Volcanic island formation, Caribbean landforms, forces, chemical reactions, turbidity, sink / float, surface tension

Table 3. Suggested content areas for more digital content by primary grade level.

Table 4. Suggested conten	t areas for more digital	content by secondary grade level .
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Grade	Language and Literacy	Mathematics	Other
7	Phonics, phonological awareness, building vocabulary, reading fluency and reading comprehension, writing skills.	Currency and unit conversion, measurement.	 Digital skills: Keyboarding skills; navigating Google Classroom, creating and editing documents for sharing or submission, data management for creation of reports, TVET-related skills. Modern languages: E-learning in the modern languages classroom, Spanish vocabulary, reading comprehension, grammar. Natural and integrated science: Managing the environment, map work Health and Family Life Education: Self and interpersonal relationships, sexuality and sexual health, eating and fitness. Physical education; religious education; Arts. TVET for persons with special educational needs
8	Spelling and vocabulary, reading comprehension, text genres, differentiating between Creole and Standard English, oral presentations		Modern languages: Spanish Vocabulary, Comprehension, verbs Home Economics; Computer programming; Sport skills; Economic development; Social norms; Statistics.
9		Consumer arithmetic,	Natural and integrated science: Mixtures and separations,

		operations, fractions, decimals and percentages. Relations, functions, graphs, geometry, trigonometry, vectors and matrices.	 the Periodic Table, periodicity, atomic structure, bonding, molecules, acids, waves and optics, electricity and magnetism, cells, digestion, respiration, growth and reproduction, genes and inheritance, variation and selection. Digital skills: navigating the internet, research skills. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
10	English punctuation verb	Geometry, linear	 Social studies and business studies: Government, inflation, exchange rates, environmental protection Modern languages: French grammar, listening, reading, and writing skills, content on Franco-Caribbean culture. Natural and integrated science: Energy, forces, hydroponics, tissue culture Food Science and Technology, and nutrition and health. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Research methods, goal setting, resilience.
	usage comprehension	programming, laws of	Electricity: Connecting a circuit;
	skills; activities across	indices, graphing, completing	Construction: Block laying; carpentry and joinery;
	content areas,	the square, matrices.	Understanding tools used in construction;
11	Reading comprehension	Understanding scales,	Digital skills: Working knowledge of a variety of
	and fluency, writing skills	drawing angles, fractions,	applications to edit documents, create spreadsheets and
	for different genres of	place value, factorisation,	databases, programming

text.	linear programming, circle theory, quadratic graphs, trigonometry, functions and relations, statistics, series and sequences, simultaneous equations, vectors and matrices	 Business studies: Logistics and supply chains, business technology, business types, accounting, office administration and electronic document preparation and management Social studies: Regional integration, communication, consumerism. Tourism, sustainable development special education, Caribbean culture and history, regional institutions, tourism Natural and integrated science: Environmental conservation, describing relief on topographic maps, 2D and 3D landforms using contour lines, sustainable agriculture, kidneys, circulation, genetic, photosynthesis, skeleton TVET: Garment construction Modern languages: More digital content is needed to promote speaking and reading skills (mi familia, mi escuela, mi vida diaria, Al restaurante, haciendo las compras). Research skills
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