

OECS Academic Recovery Programme
Report 5

Concept Note for the
Implementation of the Academic
Recovery Programme

Open Development & Education

April 2021
<https://opendeved.net>

Commissioned by



Organisation of
Eastern Caribbean States



Recommended citation:

Haßler, B., Megha-Bongnkar, G., Regis, C., & Blower, T. (2021). *Concept Note for the Implementation of the Academic Recovery Programme* (OECS Academic Recovery Programme Report No. 5). Open Development & Education. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4780110>. Available from <https://docs.opendeved.net/lib/FMVT2NIB>. Available under [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). Commissioned by the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, Castries, Saint Lucia.

Version 1 | April 2021

Details about this report can be obtained from OpenDevEd Evidence Library at <https://docs.opendeved.net/lib/FMVT2NIB>. Individual references are hyperlinked throughout this report.



This report is available under a Creative Commons Licence (Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Rationale	6
3. Planning and preparation	7
3.1. ARP Management and Implementation Team	7
3.2. Monitoring and Reporting Plan	7
3.3. Prioritising and planning ARP implementation	8
4. Implementation	9
4.1. The importance of TPD	9
4.1.1. Ensure facilitators are aware of the sessions' technological requirements	9
4.1.2. TPD must fit with teaching schedules	10
4.2. The importance of diagnostic testing	10
4.3. School counsellors and SPED teachers	10
4.4. Resource library	11
4.5. Support for parents and caregivers	11
4.6. Community organisations	11
4.7. Partnerships	11
Bibliography	13

Abbreviations and acronyms

AFL	Assessment for Learning
ARP	Academic Recovery Programme
COVID-19	Novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2
EdTech	Educational technology
EDMU	OECS Education Development Management Unit
ELP	Early Learners Programme
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
MoE	Ministry of Education
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
OER	Open educational resources
PD	Professional Development
SPED	Special education and disability
TPD	Teacher professional development

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant disruption to the education systems of the member states of the OECS, exacerbating existing stresses on the education system. This has further widened the education gaps between high-performing and low-performing students, particularly for already disadvantaged learners. Disadvantaged learners include learners of low socio-economic status and those that have special education needs or a disability.

This ARP was designed to help students meet learning outcomes commensurate with Grades 1–3: this includes children outside of these grades who have not yet attained the appropriate academic outcomes. To do this, a multi-pronged approach must be taken, supporting both teachers and learners. As a senior OECS representative suggested that

“[the ARP is] an intervention for the teacher, as much as it is an intervention for the child.”

There are also broader implications for parents, as well as organisations in the wider community. The ARP will be implemented differently across each participating member state. Still, there are common areas that all participating countries need to consider in order to maximise the effectiveness of their interventions.

This concept note and the available implementation guidance documentation (see below) offer overall implementation guidance. However, importantly, the materials also suggest an indicative timeline and budget for implementing each ARP component, highlighting critical tasks and responsibilities.

This concept note is deliberately terse. However, extensive additional materials are available. These include

- Academic Recovery Programmes in the Eastern Caribbean — Literature Review (OECS Academic Recovery Programme Report No. 1), [↑available here](#);
- Academic Recovery Programme: Synthesis of Qualitative Data and High-level Overview (OECS Academic Recovery Programme Report No. 2), [↑available here](#);
- An Academic Recovery Programme for the OECS for the OECS Member States (OECS Academic Recovery Programme Report No. 3), [↑available here](#);
- An Academic Recovery Programme for the OECS for the OECS Member States: Pitch Deck (OECS Academic Recovery Programme Report No. 4), [↑available here](#);

and

- Final Report and Recommendations (OECS Academic Recovery Programme Report No. 6), [↑available here](#).

2. Rationale

The COVID-19 pandemic saw unprecedented school closures across the OECS region. In various territories — and at multiple times — territories in the region undertook a challenging transition to remote and blended teaching to address the significant learning loss experienced by primary level students. The new teaching and learning situation is summarised by Rafer Gordon (OECS), who commented on the effects felt more broadly than simply by individual learners:

“When the pandemic hit, there were many uncertainties [...] about how long it would go on for, the kind of impact that it would have on teachers, on students, on families. [...] The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant disruption to the education systems of OECS countries, exacerbating the effects of existing stresses and widening education gaps between high-performing and low-performing students, particularly for already disadvantaged learners (such as those with disabilities or from low-income families).”

To address the learning loss from unprecedented disruptions in education, the OECS commissioned an ARP. The focus of the ARP is to mitigate against the learning loss, which has occurred primarily as a result of COVID-19 but also intended to address longer-standing issues which have been exacerbated by the pandemic, as well as to build resilience to the occurrence of other natural hazards (such as flooding, hurricanes, and volcanic activity) prevalent in the OECS region.

In particular, the ARP components offer a balanced approach that can address the complexities of learning contexts in OECS member states, as well as the needs of students and their families, teachers and schools as a whole. Attention must be given to adequate implementation and monitoring to ensure effective implementation and execution of the ARP, particularly related to the context of the most vulnerable students and their families in each participating member state.

The ARP consolidates a culture of learning that takes into account country-level needs and priorities, as well as individual learner needs at a classroom level. Nonetheless, recognising that countries and learners in the region may also share some challenges, the ARP proposes several core activities that are likely to be implemented across all member states.

We are mindful of the ongoing crisis in St. Vincent and the Grenadines due to the La Soufrière eruption in April 2021. The island was already affected by tremendous learning loss because of school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, further exacerbated by the volcanic eruption. While the current ARP will address the learning loss that occurred because of COVID-19, these resources also offer approaches applicable in the current humanitarian crisis.

3. Planning and preparation

Some key points should be noted when planning the implementation of the ARP:

- **The ARP needs to be context-specific.** The programme was not designed as a 'one-size-fits-all' intervention. Careful thought needs to be given to the balance of emphasis given to the programme's different components in each member state.
- **The ARP does not target specific grades.** The programme is intended for any primary student who does not have the required skills in literacy and numeracy commensurate to Grades 1-3. This means that evaluating *all* primary students and identifying those most in need of intervention is a vital part of both the planning and the monitoring aspects of the programme.
- **There are no 'selection criteria' for schools.** While recognising that different schools in different areas will have been affected differently by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and other events, the programme is designed to be implemented in all primary schools.

3.1. ARP Management and Implementation Team

ARP implementation management will need strong coordination at all levels, but leadership needs to come at a national level. An ARP Management and Implementation Team of at least two people (likely based within the national Ministry of Education) should be assigned to oversee, monitor, and, where necessary, intervene in the implementation of the ARP's components in each territory.

Although the implementation of the ARP is country-specific, it is also a regional programme taking place across several participating OECS member states, with the potential for several others to join in future. The ARP Management and Implementation Team should meet weekly with coordinators in other participating member states to coordinate efforts and share practice advice across the OECS.

3.2. Monitoring and Reporting Plan

Oversight and communication will be key to the success of ARP implementation, as well as evaluating the effectiveness of its impact. A Monitoring and Reporting Plan should be agreed with the OECS EDMU by each country's ARP Management and Implementation Team. The [Implementation Planning Tool](#) contains indicative activity plans, as well as a suggested results-based monitoring and evaluation framework addressing each activity.

3.3. Prioritising and planning ARP implementation

The [Implementation Planning Tool](#) is a flexible tool that is intended to allow planning of the ARP's components to be tailored to be specific to the context of the member state implementing it.

The [Implementation Planning Tool](#) should be used as follows:

- Each of the programme's seven components is given its own tab within the Tool. Review each of the tabs labelled Component 1 to Component 7 and prioritise the more relevant activities to you. To prioritise the activities, review the indicative timeline for the implementation of each activity and indicate the appropriate months for implementation. Note that crucial recommended activities are highlighted in bold.
- Once the activities to be implemented, have been decided upon, enter them into the blank tab entitled 'Your Gantt chart' by copying and pasting them. Adjust or amend the timelines as necessary by entering or deleting the letter 'x' under each relevant month.
- Identify the specific actions to take, the required staff effort, the necessary resources, and the financial cost of each activity in columns F-I. Some indicative suggestions have been provided, but these should be confirmed in discussion with the relevant stakeholders and ARP Implementation and Management Team in each participating state. There is also a timeline that countries may use to prioritise and execute various components of the ARP.
- Consult the tab entitled 'RBMEF' to view an indicative results-based monitoring and evaluation framework, with suggested outputs and indicators for each activity. These indicators can form the basis of a Monitoring and Reporting Plan, to be agreed with the OECS EDMU.

Please note that the funding allocated for the ARP's implementation by the Global Partnership for Education is due to expire in September 2021. Therefore action in the next five months will be critical to establishing more sustainable patterns for longer-term activity.

4. Implementation

Given the small-scale nature of the ARP trialling so far, several recommendations are made here in order to support the successful scaling of the ARP through the four focus countries and to other countries in the OECS. These recommendations should be considered when reviewing activities in the [Implementation Planning Tool](#).

4.1. The importance of TPD

The ARP was designed with flexibility around the implementation of its components. However, support to teachers in the form of teacher professional development (TPD) sessions should be considered an activity that is central to the programme's success. Implementing TPD is time-intensive and requires both planning and enthusiasm. However, school-based practice-focussed TPD has important benefits:

- TPD can be very effective in improving learning outcomes;
- TPD offers opportunities for peer support.

As much as possible, the TPD should incorporate the range of suggestions below to ensure the success of the ARP.

4.1.1. Ensure facilitators are aware of the sessions' technological requirements

The TPD programme can take place face-to-face (in schools). It can also take place virtually, using the preferred video conferencing software. If the programme takes place virtually, it is important that the appropriate technology provisions are made.

Just like teachers preparing for blended learning for students, facilitators need to be aware of the technological requirements necessary to ensure the smooth and time-efficient flow of the sessions. This is particularly important when sharing external media such as videos and presentations and includes:

- Being aware of the settings for sharing video/audio during calls;
- Remembering to make closed captioning visible for those unable to hear audio; and
- Running through third-party media beforehand to be able to start from identified bookmarks.

Technology can be challenging to use; however, adequate preparation ahead of each session ensures that the maximum time can be dedicated to achieving the outcomes of each session and that participants remain engaged.

4.1.2. TPD must fit with teaching schedules

In some participating states, time is already allocated for regular TPD sessions (such as INSET days or abbreviated schooldays). Implementation of TPD activities should be scheduled to minimise interference with the already difficult task of teaching in the new normal of the blended learning environment. Keeping teachers onside and engaged with the content is important to ensuring the effectiveness of TPD activities.

We note that a central aspect of the TPD component of this programme are weekly sessions. The sessions should not be blocked, e.g., to take place on a single day. Teachers must have time to teach between sessions; therefore, shorter weekly sessions should be organised instead of INSET days.

4.2. The importance of diagnostic testing

Given the immense loss of learning resulting from unprecedented school closures during the Covid 19, it is critical to know where students are in terms of learning outcomes to ensure that academic gaps are addressed. During meetings with teachers and stakeholders from the four OECS territories, it was revealed that some students had not been reached with the blended learning efforts. Also, the current volcanic eruption in St Vincent exacerbated an already fragile situation. As emphasised by the ARP, diagnostic testing will enable teachers to gauge how much students know so that necessary interventions can be put in place to mitigate learning loss.

Critical pre-teaching and reteaching strategies have been suggested in the TPD to equip teachers to tackle unprecedented losses in academic outcomes. Also, sample tests have been included with the [Implementation Planning Tool](#), which will be available for teachers to modify and use should they wish to do so. Importantly, diagnostic tools provide resources and guidance to equip teachers to engage the most affected and most vulnerable students and their families.

4.3. School counsellors and SPED teachers

While the budget for ARP implementation remains limited, the involvement of existing SPED staff and counsellors in TPD and training of teachers and instructors is crucial. Students with disabilities have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, and additional attention should be given to evaluating their needs and providing support to ensure their achievement of key skills.

Counsellors are also key staff in identifying and addressing issues with students' psychosocial wellbeing. Where possible, counsellors should be involved in TPD training, and consideration should be given to the need for longer-term plans for hiring more counselling staff.

4.4. Resource library

Accessing resources online is important. However, knowing how to acquire high-quality OER is critical to equipping teachers in middle-income countries like the OECS. The ARP implementation document guides the processes involved in working with OER material, including content curation and alignment, material development, content sourcing and review, and content inventory.

The key role of this section is to equip teachers to source and create content relevant to their classroom context and needs. In this way, it will save time and provide access to a range of high-quality content. Moreover, students may access OER at times, but teachers are guided to promote safeguarding practices for the well-being of their students.

4.5. Support for parents and caregivers

Supporting parents and caregivers is critical to the success of the ARP implementation. Support requires several approaches to ensure that parents are equipped to assist their children at home effectively. It also includes checking in with parents to ascertain their psychosocial needs. Another critical aspect of this support is finding alternative ways to engage parents who are not offering full support to their child's education. This may involve finding out why they are not engaging.

4.6. Community organisations

Community organisations play critical roles in socialising the young. In addition, many students already receive some form of mentorship from participation in community groups and clubs. The ARP implementation tool provides guidance on recognising and effectively engaging, training, and monitoring collaborative work with community groups. A holistic approach that involves the Ministry of Education, schools and parents is recommended to effectively engage community groups where it is most needed in each school context.

The guide recognises that community groups are equipped with professionals who can assist in equipping students and their families to close academic gaps. In addition, community groups may be an essential resource for reaching parents who do not provide adequate support at home and who may not know how to help their children effectively.

4.7. Partnerships

Strategic partners play vital roles in equipping schools to close learning gaps. The implementation document guides auditing, evaluating and establishing new partners and retaining relevant partnerships. The guide encourages school administrators to

ensure that school goals, values and interest are mutual so that effective partnerships can be formed.

Record keeping frameworks are recommended to allow for monitoring relationships, contributions and arising needs. This effectively enables schools to maintain strategic relationships with private and public sector officials who can contribute tangibly in helping schools close learning gaps.

Bibliography

This bibliography is available digitally in our evidence library at <https://docs.opendeved.net/lib/FMVT2NIB>

Haßler, B., Adam, T., Blower, T., & Megha-Bongnkar, G. (2021b). *Academic Recovery Programmes in the Eastern Caribbean — Literature Review* (OECS Academic Recovery Programme Report No. 1). Open Development & Education. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4780577>. Available from <https://docs.opendeved.net/lib/DZA3GVBD>. Available under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International. ([details](#))

Haßler, B., Blower, T., Megha-Bongnkar, G., & Regis, C. (2021c). *Academic Recovery Programme: Synthesis of Qualitative Data and High-level Overview* (OECS Academic Recovery Programme Report No. 2). Open Development & Education. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4780099>. Available from <https://docs.opendeved.net/lib/XAMQ949U>. Available under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International. ([details](#))

Haßler, B., Megha-Bongnkar, G., Regis, C., & Blower, T. (2021d). *An Academic Recovery Programme for the OECS for the OECS Member States* (OECS Academic Recovery Programme Report No. 3). Open Development & Education. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4780102>. Available from <https://docs.opendeved.net/lib/P2D5IJBC>. Available under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International. ([details](#))

Haßler, B., Megha-Bongnkar, G., Regis, C., & Blower, T. (2021e). *An Academic Recovery Programme for the OECS for the OECS Member States: Pitch Deck* (OECS Academic Recovery Programme Report No. 4). Open Development & Education. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4780107>. Available from <https://docs.opendeved.net/lib/XQCXWE7I>. Available under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International. ([details](#))

Haßler, B., Megha-Bongnkar, G., Regis, C., & Blower, T. (2021fa). *Implementation Planning Tool* (OECS Academic Recovery Programme Implementation Planning Tool No. 1). Open Development & Education. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4779907>. Available from <https://docs.opendeved.net/lib/EM6IJ327>. Available under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International. ([details](#))

Haßler, B., Megha-Bongnkar, G., Regis, C., & Blower, T. (2021g). *Final Report and Recommendations* (OECS Academic Recovery Programme Report No. 6). Open Development & Education. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4603101>. Available from <https://docs.opendeved.net/lib/TD6VRUSA>. Available under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International. ([details](#))