



Government *of* Aruba

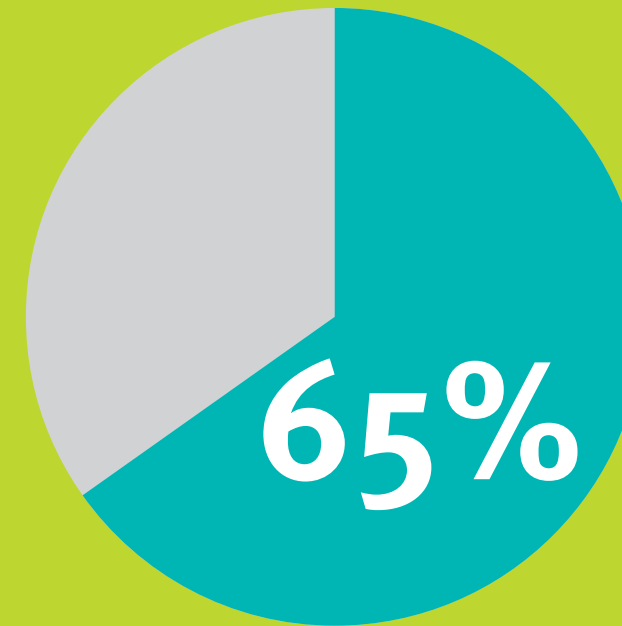
*Ministry of Education,
Family Policy and Lifelong Learning*



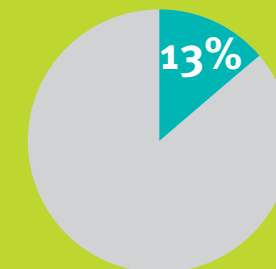
EDUCATION

VISION & POLICY

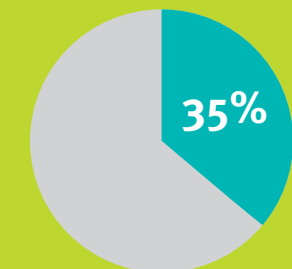
2013 - 2017



POPULATION WITH
A SECONDARY,
VOCATIONAL OR
COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY
DEGREE



POPULATION WITH
COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY DEGREE



POPULATION WITH ONLY
PRIMARY EDUCATION

Source: Census 2010, CBS

STUDENTS ENROLLED IN TERTIARY EDUCATION IN ARUBA



2010 : 2,330



2014 : 2,571

Source: Department of Education, Statistical Yearbook 2010 & 2014

“Success in Education must be measured by the effectiveness with which it produces graduates at every level, as well as the ability for those graduates to apply their knowledge in some meaningful way. It must be a win-win, both for the graduate and for our society, through productive economic and social contribution.”

Minister of Education
[Michelle J. Hooyboer-Winklaar](#)



“ A new vision for Aruba’s Education System focuses on each student’s academic strengths and talents and emotional wellbeing - Recognizing that no two students are exactly the same, we must focus on each student reaching their full potential. ”

A vision
for education

A VISION FOR EDUCATION

ARUBA'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM RECOGNIZES EACH STUDENT'S ACADEMIC STRENGTHS AND TALENTS AND MAXIMIZES THAT POTENTIAL RESULTING IN HIGHER LEARNING, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY. THE EDUCATIONAL MODEL IS DRIVEN THROUGH ENGAGED AND PASSIONATE EDUCATORS, PARENTS AND STUDENTS THAT UNDERSTAND THE ROLE THAT EDUCATION PLAYS IN CREATING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER SOCIETY.

The education field in Aruba has been developing and transitioning for the past 3 to 4 decades, well before Aruba became an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Over that same period of time, there have been many changes to certain areas of the Education System; however, the system itself has stayed much the same and is closely modeled after the Dutch Education System developed in 1960.

If you take a poll today, there will be contradicting views on what should be done with our current education system; varying from small adjustments to complete reform. It would however be difficult to find persons who would opine that reform should not take place. The time for change is upon us; however, at the same time, the way in which our Education system should be changed, who should do the changing, and what the anticipated results of said change will be, continue to be a source of discussion unless a practical action plan is not only created, but continuously evaluated against our set objectives.

Aruba's economic climate has weathered many storms in the recent past. However, it is clear that in order for the citizens of Aruba to benefit from further economic development, we must embrace a solid foundation of education that will carry us into the desired "knowledge-driven Economy."

At a minimum, we must strive to increase the number of citizens obtaining secondary and higher education degrees that coincide with labour market trends. In other words, graduating and obtaining a diploma must ultimately improve that person's chance at living a more purposeful and fulfilling life, which would mean being able to secure a job in which the skills achieved through education can be applied.

Zeitgeist is defined as the *spirit, attitude, or general outlook of a specific time or period*. Arguably we are entering the Zeitgeist of Education. Never before has there been as much emphasis on moving towards a Knowledge-Driven and *sustainable* economy, which clearly requires ample sources of prepared citizens to carry this vision forward. Changes or adaptations to Education are inherently long-term. However, there are many short to mid-term actions that can and must be taken in order to revitalize our education system.

This vision and policy document incorporates past reports, e.g. The National Education Plan, and provides an overview of the current state of affairs and the policy changes and implementation during the 2013-2017 period. These policies, and various projects, will extend well beyond 2017, becoming permanent changes within Education.

(OECD, Education at a Glance, 2013)

“Students need to be engaged, motivated, willing to learn new things and feel they can succeed; without those dispositions, they will be unable to translate their raw potential into high-level skills, no matter how intelligent and gifted they are.”

Aruba's commitment to improving education outcomes, also aligns with the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) #4:

Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

The objectives are clear, however in order to achieve the improvements desired, it is necessary to lay out a concise path that maps out exactly what actions are required to lead us to success in education.

BUILDING A ROADMAP

Throughout the vision statement there are keywords that correspond with objectives that have already been established. For example, *...system recognizes each student's strengths...* indicates that there must be a mechanism to identify student's progress or lack of progress. In other words, we must be able to track and measure each individual students' academic performance over time in order to ensure that their maximum potential is being developed.

Various Student Monitoring Systems have been implemented. However, not all schools are making optimal use of these systems. Systems must be linked to policy in order to serve students that fall on both ends of the spectrum, Struggling as well as Advanced Learners, in addition to having programs that will maximize their full potential.

Our Education System ranks quite well compared to other countries in the region across a number of areas, such as Public Expenditure in Education (19%)*, Primary and Secondary Enrollment Rates (105% and 97%)**, as well as the introduction of compulsory education, Trimerdia and the PRISMA project.

In 2012, UNICEF conducted a Situational Analysis of the state of Aruban children and adolescents (SITAN), the findings of which were published in 2013. The report provides insight into Aruba's progress at fulfilling fundamental children's rights as defined by the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), as well as recommendations on actions to be taken at the state level.

UNICEF's conclusions broadly align with our own observations with regard to the current state of our education system and provide practical recommendations for addressing areas where progress remains to be made.

*,** Department of Education, 2013

(UNICEF, State of the World's Children, 2005)

“The right to education is enshrined in the CRC and opens future possibilities for children to achieve greater independence and confidence while acquiring the knowledge, skill, attitudes and values needed to occupy an equal place in society.”

Some of the areas that require attention include language policy, inclusion of undocumented children, the percentage of dropouts from secondary schools, the percentage of repeaters in primary schools (10%)*, and tertiary education enrollment (39%)*. Further, there are many specific areas that may be cause for concern as data may not be readily available. One example of this issue is the data on secondary and tertiary graduates. These statistics are not necessarily representative since many Arubans indeed enroll in tertiary education abroad and many graduates do not immediately, or ever, return to Aruba. This affects our ability to truly gauge the holistic effectiveness of our Education System with respect to how many Higher Learning graduates it produces.

The recommendations of UNICEF have been incorporated into various Government policies and will be reported on to UNICEF in conjunction with CRC reporting.

In order to further develop insight into the effectiveness of the education system, the Ministry of Education has launched a project, together with the Department of Education and Central Bureau of Statistics, to collect and disseminate key data indicators presented in a “Dashboard” setting. With this project the data collected both at the micro and macro level can

be converted into a tool to measure progress in key areas.

It is clear that with 19% of Government expenditure, representing 4.7% of Aruba's GDP, invested annually to Education, the focus in this period may not necessarily be on allocating more funds but instead re-allocating funds to reflect our priorities.

Engaged and Passionate Educators identify another core component of an effective school environment. A broad conclusion that emerged from an OECD research study conducted from 2002-2004 across 25 countries, was as follows:

“...of those variables that are potentially open to policy influence, factors to do with teachers and teaching are the most important influences on student learning. In particular, the broad consensus is that “teacher quality” is the single most important school variable influencing student achievement”.†

It is therefore of utmost importance to ensure that Government policy addresses this aspect and serves to improve teacher quality at every level by providing concrete tools to improve teacher morale, a key factor in quality

Since entering office in November 2013, the new Minister of Education sought to engage all

stakeholders in exchanging and sharing thoughts on the state of our current Education System. Over the course of the first few months, several meetings were held with the School Boards, staff of the Department of Education, the Education Inspection Department, the Compulsory Education Bureau, the After-School Care Bureau, and other Government-funded agencies.

In addition, the Minister felt it necessary and valuable to visit all 83 schools in Aruba, from primary to post-secondary schools. These visits offered an opportunity to speak to students, teachers, principals, as well as parents, in order to get a first-hand look at the current school climate. The picture that emerged is as complex and diverse as the many nationalities that comprise our current student body. What is clear is that there is a great willingness and openness to improve and even diversify, to some extent, the system that has been in place for many decades.

The UNICEF SITAN report makes reference to the following:

“The educational system is quite inflexible, not very creative or innovative in response to the contemporary Aruban challenges of childhood and adolescence. It is rather authoritarian, teaches by rote and promotes little questioning.”

UNICEF's observations leave little room for interpretation and underscore the urgent need to introduce change to the way in which we teach our children. Given the fact that the current education system is rigidly focused on one specific model, “flexibility” should be seen as the backdrop to successfully introducing innovation and improvement, along with imbedded effective evaluation tools. The introduction of alternative models, as well as the expansion of

the Multi-lingual school system concept will be essential in adapting the current model to reflect a modern reality.

Although throughout the course of the school visits a wide variety of subjects were flagged as relevant and important, the 3 core areas of highest priority were: Infrastructure, Teacher Quality and Student Achievement. Overall, issues ranged from schools in need of renovation, sub-optimal use of computers, students struggling with reading and languages, to teachers in need of retraining and upgrading of skills, as well as boosting of teacher morale.

One effective tool that will provide insight into the quality of education is the existence of educational standards; a framework that outlines what primary school students should know after completing Primary school, known as [Kerndoelen](#) in the Netherlands and the [Common Core Standards](#) in the United States. In 2015, educational standards for Math have been introduced. The introduction of these standards, which will focus in part on Student Achievement, will be essential if we wish to improve our current system, and will be one of the top priorities for the 2013-2017 period.

The following sections provide a more in-depth look at the 3 core areas that will be focused upon, as well as objectives and policies delineated for the 2013-2017 period, and specific measures that will be taken to bring us closer to putting this renewed vision for Education into action.

***, **† Department of Education, 2013

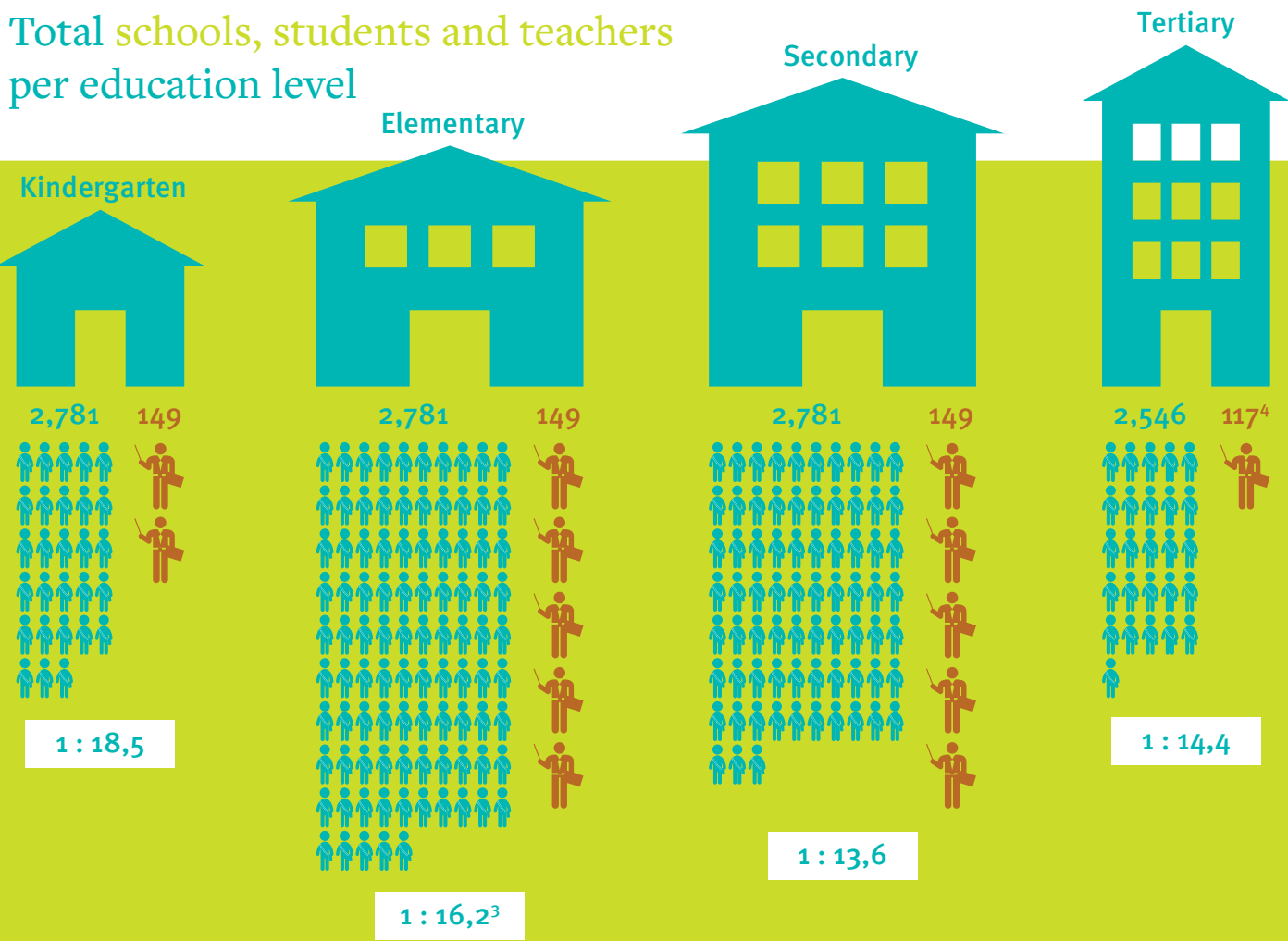
† Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers, OECD 2005

Education in Aruba at a glance

School Year 2013/2014 >

22.228 children and yout in school
81 Public and Publicly funded schools
9 School boards ¹
1399,4 Fulltime Teachers
285,9 Million Afl. allocated to education ²

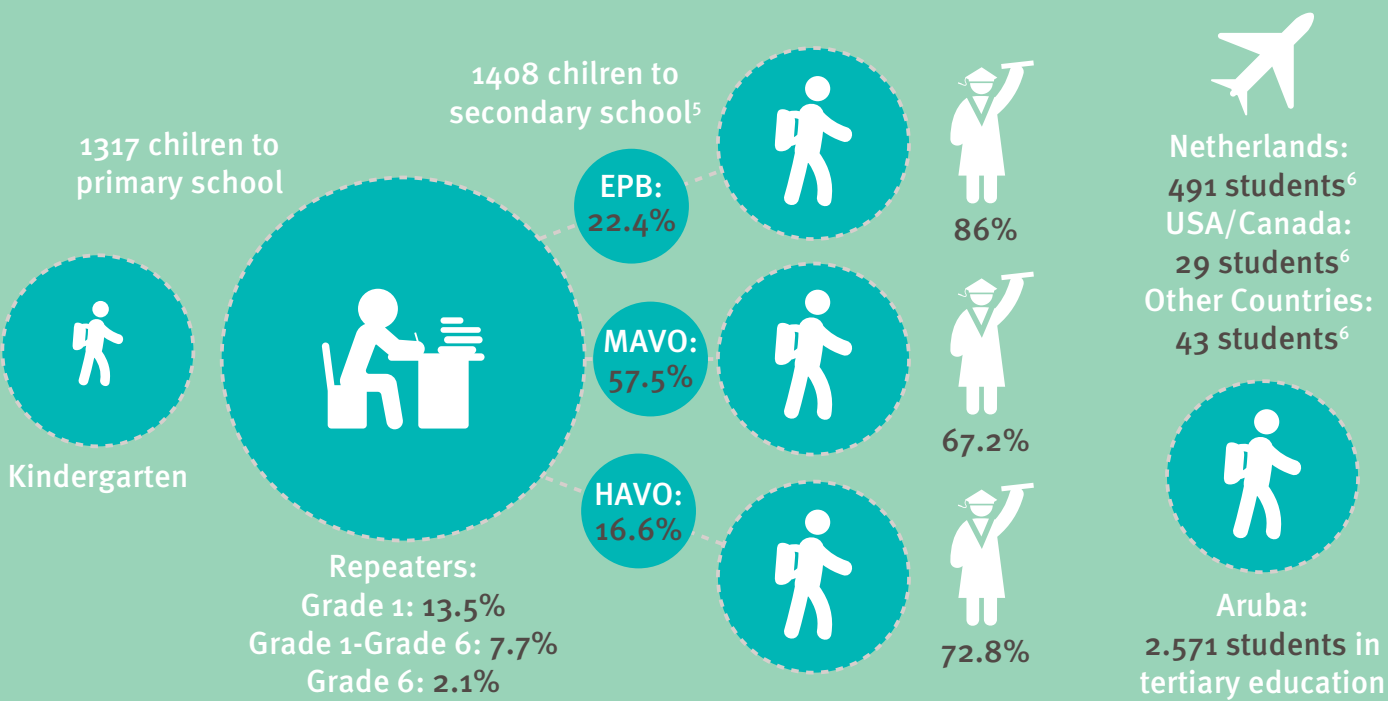
Total schools, students and teachers per education level



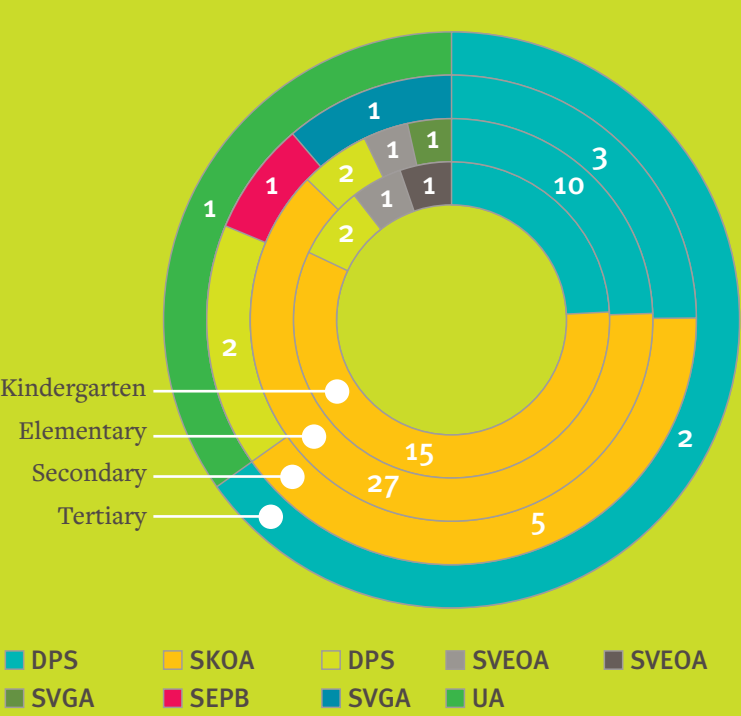
¹ public and subsidized schools, including SVGA and UA, excluding Incorporate Education; ² Source: Annual Report Aruba Government 2014; ³ The pupil teacher ratio in regular elementary schools equaled 17.6. The pupil teacher ratio in elementary schools for special education equaled 6.6; ⁴ Information according the number of full time teachers is only available for EPI. Not for UA and IPA; ⁵ For 1.4% of the pupils it's unknown if they continued in secondary education; ⁶ The number of students who contract an Aruba Loan for the year 2013/2014 and continued studying abroad. ⁷ HAVO and VWO exam results. Source: Management Education, Inspection Education and Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek

Education is the key factor in the constitution of human capital. It's a way to cherish the future development and the prosperity of the individual, the society and humanity. With emphasis on achievement in various fields, like prosperity and economic progress. Focusing on a sustainable and responsible development, satisfying for everyone.

Transition from Kindergarten, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education



Numbers of Schools per School Board and Level of Education



Expenditure Ministry of Education and Family policy

Operating account by Ministry

Ministry of Finance and Government organization	26.8%
Ministry of Education and Family policy (271,5 mln. Afls.)	19.0%
Ministry of Public Health, Elderly care and Sports	14.5%
Ministry of Justice	13.6%
Ministry of Regional Planning, Infrastructure and Integration	10.1%
Ministry of General Affairs, Science, Innovation and Sustainable development	5.8%
Ministry of Social Affairs, Youth and Labor	4.5%
Ministry of Tourism, Transport, Primary Sector and Culture	3.6%
Ministry of Economic Affairs, Communication, Energy and Environment	2.2%



Zeroing in on what matters most

CREATING A PRACTICAL FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

...SUCCESS IN EDUCATION MEANS THAT EACH STUDENT'S ACADEMIC STRENGTHS AND TALENTS AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED AND SERVED, ALLOWING EACH STUDENT TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL...



If you were to visit any number of schools and were to ask what was most important to the administration, teachers and students, you would likely receive a relatively broad list of issues affecting the current learning environment. One of the objectives of the school visits held between December 2013 and June 2014 was to collect first-hand accounts of each school's insight into current obstacles. This provided a helicopter view of the real issues facing our schools today from the people who are on the front line. The National Education Plan (NEP, 2007) provided an excellent backdrop during these visits to bring the previous findings into focus and zero in on the most pressing matters to be addressed to create a vibrant Education System. What emerged from these visits led to the formulation of the following 3 general objectives:

- Improve physical school infrastructure and learning environment
- Increase teacher morale and quality
- Boost student achievement

Undoubtedly, a common challenge was the physical state of the school buildings and school grounds. After 50 or more years, many of the 83 schools on the island have long shown their age, requiring various degrees of repair and maintenance. Bringing 83 schools up to modern infrastructure standards is no small feat, given the costs involved in renovating a great number of schools. **Infrastructure** challenges are not

a new hot topic. As far back as the early 80's, school infrastructure was on the government's agenda and will likely continue to provide challenges for the coming years.

Creating an Education policy that reflects today's financial realities, balanced with the pressing needs of public and private schools, will be a key objective. In addition to the physical condition of schools, the general school environment also poses challenges for school administrators, teachers and students. Factors such as school safety, healthy schools, education materials, testing standards, and curricula are only a few of the issues that are high priority for educators today.

It is clear that the physical environment of a school impacts both students and teachers. The fact remains, however, that degrees of comfort in the physical school environment generally does not have the biggest impact on education outcomes. The physical environment must be safe, and the personal environment must be inspiring. Once the physical environment is safe and healthy, as highlighted earlier, **Teacher Quality** has the greatest influence on student achievement. These two ingredients depend on each other. The physical environment naturally affects teacher morale, which ultimately affects teacher quality.

The main objective in the area of Teacher Quality is creating the necessary conditions to stimulate and re-ignite passion for teaching and learning across all levels. This will be fostered by supporting skill development in teaching effectively as well as inspiring teachers to continue in their own lifelong learning path. Such an undertaking will require strategic investment from all levels involved, both monetary and non-monetary.

Lastly, but certainly one of the most important areas identified during the school visits, as well as in conversations with various stakeholders, relates to factors affecting student outcomes or Student Achievement. Ensuring student success at school must remain the main focus of all stakeholders. What defines student success? As cited in the vision statement, success in education means that each student's academic strengths and talents and emotional wellbeing have been supported and served, allowing each student to reach their full potential.

It is the reason why we build schools, it is the reason why teachers teach, and it is the reason why the Government invests 21% of its annual expenditure in Education.



Education

supporting departments

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR EDUCATION

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR EDUCATION

Without a doubt, reaching our education goals requires significant partnerships, and multiple entities all working in a synchronized manner. If we approach it from the perspective of a Responsibility Assignment Matrix, (RACI matrix) often used in organizations to describe the various roles or deliverables that people have for a completing a project, it is clear to see that roles need to be defined. A RACI matrix describes who is *Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed* across various policies and projects.

The Minister of Education ultimately remains responsible for National Education Policies and directly responsible for public schools. However, even in matters that may not require Government approval, decisions can still affect the Education System as a whole.

It is therefore of paramount importance to foster open communication channels between all stakeholders within and outside the Government.

A number of Government departments are accountable for specific tasks within the Education System. The following provides a brief summary of these departments and the scope of work that is undertaken by each.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Department of Education's main objective is to provide a general gauge of Education in Aruba. In other words, this department has its fingers on the pulse of our education system and is also responsible for signaling what areas of education require development or adaptation. In addition, they oversee the implementation

of Education policy and planning with respect to all stakeholders. The department interacts with both the Education sector (school boards, educators, other government departments) as well as individuals (students, parents, citizens). In addition, they take a lead role in ensuring the effective communication of Education developments to all stakeholders.

There are many units within the department with tasks across a number of specific areas, e.g. Examination office, Student Loan Administration, Facilities. The following provides a general view of the work performed by the Department of Education:

Tasks of The Department of Education

- Development of policy, advisory, research, and data gathering across a number of education areas
- Budget administration for publicly subsidized education organizations
- Evaluation, monitoring and recommending adaptations to the existing policies where necessary
- Overseeing work pertaining to education-related laws
- Communication with and education of stakeholders and the general public on education-related topics

The Department of Education remains a pivotal player in the implementation of various policy and legal changes. The organization itself must become a dynamic, results-oriented and effective organization in order to carry out these tasks.

The organizational changes required to align the work of the Department of Education with the vision for education is currently underway.

EDUCATION INSPECTION (INSPECTORATE)

All schools, or individuals (e.g. home schooling), providing education are required by law to be subject to the supervision of the Inspectorate. All Inspectors perform their duties on behalf of the Minister of Education. The general objective and responsibility of the Inspectorate is to continuously evaluate and monitor the quality of education being given in order to ensure that high standards are maintained and that the development of the educational system continues in a positive direction.

Tasks of the Inspectorate

- Conduct inspections in schools and approved homeschooling programs for education
- Provide quality assurance and public accountability in the education system
- Provide analytical reports and feedback to school leaders and teachers
- Report to the Minister on curriculum provision, teaching, learning
- Signals real or potential risks to education
- Provide advice to the Minister of Education and the Department of Education on both general aspects of education and more specific areas as requested

The Inspectorate plays a vital role in ensuring that our educators are providing quality-based education to our students. Moreover, The Inspectorate's biggest contribution to the overall quality of education is by providing constructive feedback and recommendations to schools so that continuous development can take place.

The most significant changes that will take place in this department over the next years will be the expansion of supervision duties to include Pre-School Care and Education (see page 23). This will entail one additional Inspector tasked with the supervision and monitoring of Pre-School Centers.

In addition, with the introduction of *Kerndoelen*, the school inspections will need to be carried out through the lens of these standards. The Ministry of Education and the Inspectorate will work together to prepare for these upcoming changes.



COMPULSORY EDUCATION BUREAU (BUREAU LEERPlicht)

In 2011 the law addressing compulsory education came into effect. The *Leerplichtverordening* anchors every child's right to an education in the law and underscores the importance of an education for the overall development of children and youth. This law forms the basis of compliance for one essential right prescribed in Article 28 of The Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC);

“States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity they shall... Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.”

Every child between the ages of 4 and 16 must be registered and attend school regularly, regardless of social or economic status, religion, physical or mental capacity, or immigration status. All parents and schools must comply with the articles prescribed in the law. Civil servants working for the Compulsory Education Bureau have been tasked with ensuring compliance with this law, under the authorization of the Minister of Education. However, ensuring every child's right to an education is a shared responsibility of both the public Education System and parents. Parents are responsible for registering in school and ensuring their children attend school. Schools, and ultimately school boards, are responsible for ensuring that attendance is monitored and for ensuring the necessary signaling of unauthorized absences or truancy. There are various forms of truancy: absolute truancy if children are not enrolled in school; periodic truancy occurs when children do not attend school regularly; and incidental truancy relating to absence from

school for a brief period usually related to travel outside of the scheduled school vacation.

The policy regarding compulsory education will be to focus resources on mitigating truancy with special attention on absolute truancy and periodic sustained truancy, including students that are consistently late.

Absolute truancy and sustained periodic truancy has a proven negative effect on child development and this is carried well into adulthood. Given the limitations in resources, this policy seeks to maximize the effect of the law by focusing primarily on these high-risk areas.

Incidental truancy of up to ten days will continue to be administered by the schools internally. Often families need to travel with their children during the school term and guidelines are in place to support schools in making sure that these instances remain within the limits of under the current law.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF ARUBA (BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL BNA)

The role of the National Library of Aruba has always been to initiate, stimulate, coordinate, and guide “library services” across the island, primarily by promoting reading and providing and disseminating information (in any way, shape or form) to and for the benefit of the Aruban community and public in general.

This important role in the community is being reinforced by a wider range of services that it offers to the public such as extended opening hours of the National Library, and opportunities for study and research at the National Library.

The library is a center of information and expertise across a number of areas, as well as remaining a center of culture, literacy, reading and studying. In order for BNA to take on this additional role, and to keep developing and keep growing in this role in the near future, increased infrastructural and organizational investments are very much necessary.

BNA will continue to play an active and prominent role in promoting reading and literacy, by organizing reading and storytelling sessions and events, and by establishing and supporting school libraries, partnering with schools, government agencies, NGO's and community initiatives in the process.

With regard to Lifelong Learning and Adult Education, BNA organizes information sessions, workshops, short courses, conferences, and expositions, working closely with its community partners.

“Every child between the ages of 4 and 16 must be registered and attend school regularly, regardless of social or economic status, religion, physical or mental capacity, or immigration status.”



Infrastructure & Environment

CREATING FAVORABLE CONDITIONS TO INFLUENCE THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



GOALS

Create favorable conditions in and around schools that positively influence the learning environment.

ACTIONS

- **Execute** maintenance, major & minor renovations and upgrading of various school buildings and properties
- **Introduce** School Zoning bundle of laws
- **Roll out** the “Safe School” Manual
- **Supply** all primary schools with Wi-Fi
- **Introduce** a technology-use policy
- **Expand** Healthy School Model

Building Renovations

Renovations will take place for schools based on criteria set out by the Ministry of Education and DOW, taking into account funding and available resources. Priority will be given to schools displaced from their locations, which are without a sustainable or adequate temporary location. Renovations will take into account cost efficiency, longevity and quality, and investment in energy saving resources wherever possible.

The following schools have been identified as requiring various forms of renovation during the 2013-2017 period:

Major Renovations/New Construction

- *Colegio San Antonio*
- *Colegio San Augustin*
- *Arco Iris Kleuter School*
- *Scol Basico Prinses Amalia*
- *Rosa College*
- *Scol Reina Beatrix*
- *Scol Practico pa Ofishi Pariba*
- *Scol Practico pa Ofishi Sta. Cruz*
- *Colegio San Nicolas*
- *EPI Gymzaal*
- *MAVO/HAVO Noord*

New construction of Arco Iris and Prinses Amalia will follow the K-6 design model seen at Kudawecha and Conrado Coronel, whereby these primary schools will serve children from Kindergarten through Grade 6.

Minor Renovations/Upgrades

- *EPI Unit Ciencia & Tecnologia, Unit Economia y Unit Hospitalidad y Turismo*
- *Universidad di Aruba*
- *Biblioteca Nacional Aruba San Nicolas*
- *Graf von Zizendorf Kleuterschool*
- *Mon Plaisir Kleuter en Basisschool*
- *Colegio Felipe B. Tromp*
- *Scol Preparatorio Washington*
- *Cacique Macuarima*
- *Scol Preparatorio Prome Paso*
- *St. Paulus School*

- *Cacique Aterima*
- *St. Michael School*
- *Cayena Kleuterschool*
- *St. Aloysius School*
- *Pius X School*

School Zoning Law

A School Zone refers to the area within a school property and the immediate surrounding area. A School Zoning bundle of laws, regulating what activities can and cannot take place within the zone, will be compiled and introduced. The purpose of these laws is to protect teachers and students from unlawful or undesirable activities in and around schools, while giving the authorities the legal basis to act if unlawful activities are conducted. The School Zoning law will be made visible using government-issued signs and will regulate:

- Speed Limits
- Prohibit unauthorized persons from entering a school property or loitering within the stipulated zone.
- Enable School authorities to contact the police if unlawful activities are suspected.
- Establish sanctions for law infractions.

School Safety

The creation of a learning-friendly environment comes hand in hand with the creation of a safe environment. Both students and teachers must feel safe at school at all times, in all districts, and at all types of schools. Safety is a first and fundamental ingredient for a successful Education System. A number of factors affect a school administrator’s ability to provide a safe area in and around school. It is essential that all stakeholders involved in ensuring the safety at schools are aligned and understand safety policy in its broadest context.

The Department of Education, SKOA, the Aruban Police Force, the Public Prosecutor’s Office, the Community and Criminality Foundation, and the Youth Telephone Line signed a “Safe School” protocol in 2011. With this protocol, the foundation for cooperation was created.

The “Safe School” guide and manual will be implemented in the 2015-2016 academic year. The manual refers to best practices and policy on subjects such as:

- Mitigating potential security risks at school
- Rules and Regulations regarding teacher and student conduct
- Security at schools
- Physical altercations
- Anti-drug practices
- Anti-bullying practices
- Vandalism
- Threats to teachers, students or property

Wi-Fi Connectivity

One of the clearest distinctions between education for this generation and all generations prior is the introduction of technology as part of the learning environment. Although ongoing debate with regard to how much technology should be present in the classroom continues to take place, it is clear that basic technological practices have secured a permanent place at school.

During the Ministry’s school visits, it was evident that technology use has been embraced to varying degrees. The ICT unit at the Department of Education carried out a quick scan on the presence and use of computers in Primary Schools. They concluded that one of the main reasons for non-usage of existing computers is the absence of Wi-Fi connectivity.

(EU Commission on Education, 2007)

“75% of Europe’s Primary School Teachers use computers in the class and are positive about their benefits. For children, a range of knowledge, skills and competencies have been proved to be acquired through the use of ICT, including math, science and reading.”



Together with the national telecommunications company Setar, the Ministry of Education will ensure Wi-Fi connectivity for all primary schools and secondary schools by the 2015-2016 academic year.

Technology Use Policy

Optimal use of technology in schools can provide useful options for how teachers teach, how students learn, and the creation of an overall safe, stimulating and dynamic learning environment. In addition to the obvious benefits to the learning environment, the adoption of ICT policies, starting at the primary level, are necessary in order to align our schools with worldwide development regarding technology use in schools. Various schools have already adopted wireless technology practices in the classroom.

During the 2014-2015 school year, two separate technology education programs were implemented in 3 schools. The first was an iPad-centred 4th grade classroom environment at Colegio Frere Bonifacius. The second was the Samsung Smartschool program at Emma School and Colegio Bon Bini/Scol di Amor. Both of these programs are currently underway and an evaluation process has been set up in order to measure the effectiveness of each by the end of the school year.

The overall objective is to gather data in order to make recommendations for the further development of education technology programs. In the meantime, a more general policy with regard to technology use will be as follows:

- All Primary Schools, grades 1 through 6, must have functioning computers to accommodate an average class size. School boards will be required to identify any schools where computers are absent.
- If no dedicated and secured space for a separate computer room is available, one or more computers must be installed in each classroom.
- A technology curriculum, tied to Kerndoelen, will be introduced by the 2016-2017 academic year.
- Additional digital learning programs and software will be at the discretion of each school board and/or school. Any use shall be secure and safe.
- The Ministry of Education supports the introduction of digital, tablet, or smart classrooms, vis à vis school board funding, community or private-sector partnerships.
- ICT support courses for teachers will be made available throughout the 2015-2016 academic year.

Healthy Schools

A successful learning environment cannot be fully created without considering good nutrition and daily physical activity.

The goal of the Healthy School model is to make schools a healthier place for children to learn and grow, as well as to establish healthy habits that will be carried into children’s everyday lives.

There are a total of 9 areas that cover various elements that make up a Healthy School;

Nutrition, Sport & Exercise, Absence of Alcohol and Drugs, Hygiene and other Physical Health, Social-Emotional Health, Sexuality and Relationships, School Security, and Environment.

Health and Sport Instructors have been incorporated in some elementary schools already. The specialization that trains Health and Sport Instructors at IPA has once again opened enrollment, resulting in a new group of graduates being placed at schools over the next coming years. This will certainly assist in making nutrition, sport and exercise a part of student’s daily lives, both at school and beyond.

There is a “Healthy School” pilot project currently underway in 5 schools, to be completed in 2016. In order to gain ground in this area, a Healthy School manual will be made available to schools that are not part of the pilot program, but that wish to adopt some of the elements.



Student Achievement

BOOSTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Achievement and success are often used synonymously; in other words, achievement equals success. There are probably many examples that could either affirm or refute this statement. However, for the purposes of this policy document, achievements are seen as important milestones on the road to academic success. Academic success can be considered the attainment of the highest possible academic recognition. Nevertheless, this does not mean that every student can achieve the same level of certification. For some, academic success will culminate in a University or College degree, while for others it will be a vocational diploma. Regardless of what the end result is, the goal will be to assist students in completing the highest educational level that they are capable of, as stated in the vision statement:

Aruba's educational system recognizes each student's academic strengths and talents and maximizes that potential, resulting in higher learning, civic engagement and economic contribution to society.

There are a number of factors which influence student achievement and how smoothly one can transition through each educational juncture. A student's movement along the education trajectory is often seen as a linear movement, which is also the way that our Education System functions. Student's transition from one grade to another, based on a set of criteria pre-determined by school boards, school principals and teachers. In practice, however, a student's educational path is not always linear. For example, there are a number of students in the formative primary years that move on to the next level of education based on age and not based on their academic development. From 2009 to 2013, 6.8%^{††} of students between grades 1 and 5 advanced to the next grade for this reason. In grade 5 alone,

12%[#] of students were promoted to the next grade level based solely on their age. This kind of transition to the next grade level has far-reaching consequences for teachers. It poses challenges as it results in a high number of repeaters, and a number of students reaching the upper age limit in the linear system, without the necessary academic skills to move on to the next level; with the combination of their academic level and age, they have nowhere to move on to. In stark contrast, Aruba's high incidence of grade repetition introduces some children at an early age, as early as grade 1, to the harsh reality of having to repeat an entire grade. Sometimes even for 1 or 2 subjects.

These two contrasting phenomenon underscore the need to introduce policy that keeps the general wellbeing of the child in mind at all times, not only for 1 academic year, but the impact decisions have on an entire school trajectory.

Although our education system and classrooms continue in a linear fashion, we must make changes to support the students that need extra tools to facilitate their learning in a linear-style system.. It is not the intention to enter into the long-running debates regarding Procedural vs. Conceptual Learning, Linear vs. non-Linear learning concepts nor other pedagogical discussions. We must recognize first that we already have an Educational System in place and this is what we have to work with. Here it is important simply to highlight and to recognize the fact that no system that intends to serve the whole community is perfect in the sense that it can provide a different system for each individual type of learner. Recognizing that there is not a 'one-size fits all' concept when we refer to learning, what an Educational System can do to serve the whole community,

whatever methodology is used in classrooms, is to provide the tools necessary to facilitate all students to learn within that system. Supporting all types of learners within the linear system is of utmost importance.

One of the primary goals for this period is to identify the reasons some students struggle to attain the academic levels set for each grade and ultimately end up repeating as early as the first and second grade in primary school, and repeating and/or dropping out in secondary school. In addition, policy on early intervention will be introduced, focusing on the services that Multi Disciplinaire Centrum (MDC) and schools themselves can offer struggling learners.

Central to this issue is the historical absence of Kerndoelen in our educational system. It is clear that without academic standards applicable to all schools at the Primary level, it is difficult to communicate academic expectations and to measure outcomes after completion of each grade.

Policies addressing struggling learners should recognize that student failure in essence equals school failure. If students fail to reach the academic standard expected at a certain age, either the standard is not in line with the developmental stage at issue, or the roadblocks faced by the individual learners in trying to reach those standards have not been recognized and addressed adequately. This is a concept that has been reinforced and established through research, supported by the OECD and published in numerous articles.

"The idea that students fail because of their own personal shortcomings (academic or otherwise) is being superseded by the idea of school failure. The cause of - and the responsibility for - students failure is now seen as deficient or inadequate provision of education by schools, and by extension, school systems. More specifically, it is the failure of schools to provide education appropriate to different needs that leads students to fail. In this way school failure is, therefore, also an issue of equity".^{ff}

At the core of this finding is the belief that it is a school's responsibility to provide education for all students, albeit catered to their individual capabilities. Naturally, this does not remove the student or parent's responsibility to ensure that the maximum effort is exerted. However, this does underscore the importance of ensuring that children are offered the developmentally appropriate education, especially with regard to children with special education needs. Unfortunately, even if we only consider the "mainstream" educational system and students of "mainstream" learning abilities, the notion that learning can occur in various ways is not always present in all schools.

The main purpose of the new policies and practices that will be introduced to support the new vision for education in Aruba is to **help** schools and students, and not to **hinder**. Given this perspective, it is clear that the identification and implementation of practical tools to facilitate these changes is essential.

^{††}
[#] Department of Education

^{ff} Faubert, B. (2012), "A Literature Review of School Practices to Overcome School Failure", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 68, OECD Publishing.



The following sections describe the various areas that affect student achievement and also include the policies and practices to be introduced in order to assist students in achieving academic success. The ultimate goal that we must put before us is to tip the scales in favor of the best student outcomes. As such, an abundant amount of energy and resources should be dedicated to making this happen.

GOALS

Introduce policies and practices that address factors affecting student achievement, ensuring wherever possible practices that assist students in succeeding in their individual academic goals.

ACTIONS - GENERAL

- **Reduce** Grade retention to give students more opportunities to achieve higher goals and to meet regional averages
- **Detect and Supply** early intervention for underperforming students
- **Inventory and Agree** with school boards on the supply and optimal use of adequate academic textbooks/materials
- **Promote** reading across all grades
- **Require Use** of the Student Monitoring System (Leerlingenvolgsysteem) across all schools
- **Stimulate** more family involvement in children's education

- **Introduce** Autism Spectrum Disorder toolkit in all schools and provide teacher training on ASD
- **Introduce** Preschool Care and Education

ACTIONS - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

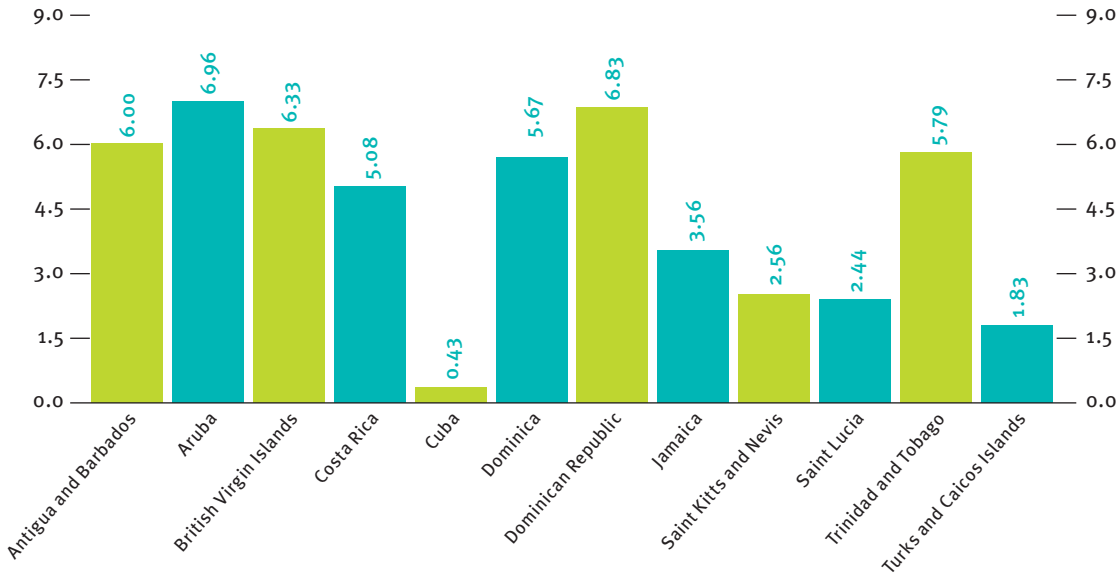
- **Introduce** and adapt curriculum around “Kerndoelen” for all Primary Schools
- **Easier access to** an additional kindergarten year when appropriate
- **Introduce** policy regarding AVI Technical Reading Assessment
- **Roll-out** Language policy for all Primary Schools
- **Additional** focus on Special Education options
- **Expand** After school “Traimerdia”
- **Enforce** existing laws and regulations regarding mandatory education

ACTIONS - SECONDARY & TERTIARY SCHOOLS

- **Introduce** a National Education Transition regulation for admission requirements at the Secondary level, for both traditional and special education
- **Align** HAVO diploma with new requirements stipulated in The Netherlands
- **Reduce** dropout rates
- **Update** SPO curriculum
- **Formalize** MBO education and revamp curriculum where necessary

Percentage of repeaters in primary education, all grades, both sexes (%)

Source: UNESCO, Repeaters in Primary Education, 2010



- **Introduce** after school pilot program for youth
- **Introduce** Summer school at MAVO/HAVO schools
- **Enforce** existing laws and regulations regarding mandatory education and student expulsion
- **Promote and disseminate** information regarding all options for higher education; including local, regional and overseas studies as well as career planning advice and labour market trends
- **Assist** the University of Aruba and the Instituto Pedagogico Aruba (IPA) in further developing and refining academic programs and overall quality.

GENERAL

Reducing Grade Retention

One of the biggest challenges facing our education system is how to handle students that do not achieve the required standards of

academic performance per grade. It is customary in our system, and many other systems around the world, to require a student to repeat a grade when their academic performance has not met certain criteria stipulated by school boards, schools and teachers.

Additionally, the criteria applied often vary from school to school.

It is difficult to find research that wholeheartedly supports the practice of grade retention, with the exception of instances where an extra kindergarten year is offered to children who are not yet ready to transition to the first grade, regardless of their age. Conversely, there is an overwhelming amount of evidence obtained from numerous publicly and privately funded research projects, citing clear negative and long-term effects on students who are required to repeat a grade.

A number of different OECD-supported research concludes:

“...Countries with high rates of grade repetition are also those that show poorer student performance.”

Research has shown that retraining, or transferring a student to another school or academic level will not remedy the shortcomings in their academic development. The belief that having a student repeat a grade will allow them to catch up is simply not supported by research. In fact, findings show that negative effects of grade retention often remain with the student throughout their academic path.

Repeater averages vary worldwide; for example, 44% of all students in Macao-China repeat at least one grade, while in Norway, South Korea and Japan 0% of all students repeat a grade. In The Netherlands, 27% of students repeat, which is higher than the OECD average of 13%.

In Aruba, between 2009 and 2013, an average of 10% of students between grades 1 through 5 repeated a grade. In 2013 alone, 18% of grade 1 students repeated. Aruba is one of the countries with the highest percentage of primary school retentions in the region (see chart 1).

On the other hand, a large majority of children are automatically transitioned from Kindergarten to grade 1, regardless of school readiness. In these cases, a child's age becomes the biggest determinant for advancement to grade 1.

It is clear that the current Grade Retention Policy is not working in anyone's favor and must be adapted to assist us in reaching our education goals. There are currently no uniform pass/fail norms, although this topic has been the subject of meetings and written advice, and

has even progressed as far as a concept law. However no formal legislation has been approved. Discussions will once again be opened with various stakeholders in order to reach consensus regarding National norms, with the goal that national pass/fail legislation applicable to all schools and grades will be put into effect.

The following policy will apply in cases of Kindergarten students:

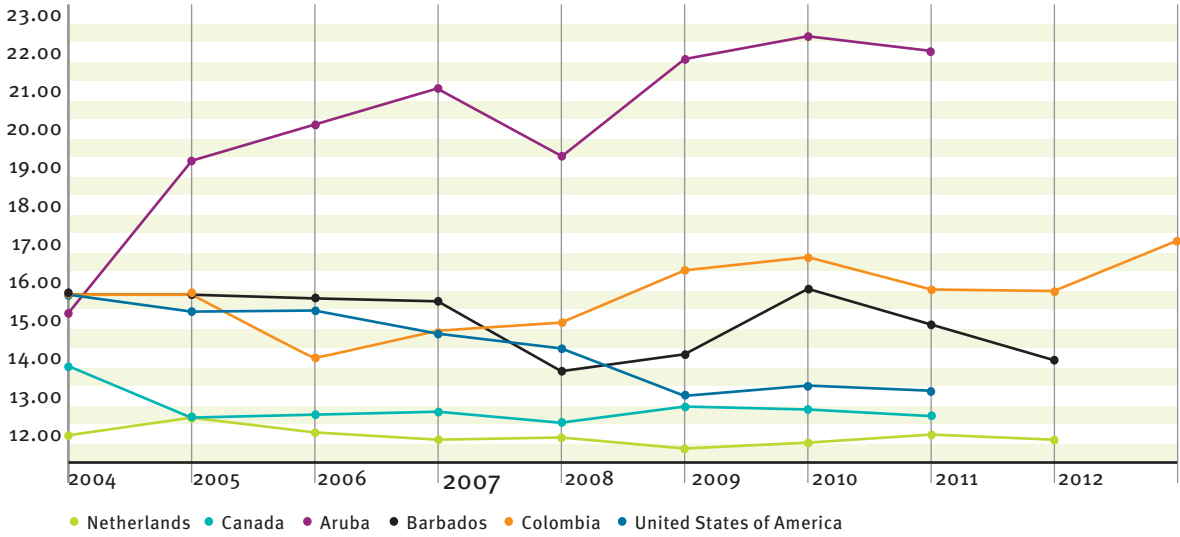
- In the case of students who have not met the grade-1 readiness developmental milestones (academic and social-emotional), and therefore transition to grade 1 is deemed premature, the student may be offered one (1) extra kindergarten year with the approval of both the school principal and parent or guardian. If approval of both parties is given, no evaluation by Multi Disciplinaire Centrum (MDC) is required.
- In the event that either the parent/guardian or school disputes the necessity of an extra kindergarten year, the advice of MDC can be sought by either party to determine readiness of the child to move into Grade 1.

The following policy will apply in cases of students in Primary School, Grades 1 - 6:

- Schools will make every effort to avoid grade repetition/retention among students who have not met the developmental milestones (academic and otherwise) relevant to their grade level.
- Grade retention must be presented as the last option, not the first option, for students that do not meet the minimum standards set forth for each grade.
- Schools will make every effort to identify at-risk retention students as early as possible (K - Grade 2), with special attention on reading performance (an important predictor of grade retention patterns).

Expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure (%)”

source: UNESCO, UIS, 2012



- Any at-risk student will be provided with adequate assistance as early as possible. Assistance can be in the form of extra teacher assistance during or after class, remedial teaching (where available), PRISMA class (where available), parental coaching, or a referral to the school social worker or MDC.
- School boards will be responsible for tracking trends of grade retention in their schools, to identify higher than average grade retention numbers, and to intervene with an Improvement Plan offering guidance, coaching and training for school principals and teachers.
- Each school board will supply grade retention data to the Inspectorate on an annual basis.

There are a number of factors that affect student's academic development. Some of the variables include socio-economic background, family life, school curriculum, available school resources, teacher quality, and the presence of a learning disability.

In their triennial international survey, PISA, OECD once again concluded that displaying the most successful education outcomes share the belief that:

*“Student Achievement is mainly a product of hard work, rather than inherited intelligence, and their teachers have high expectations for every student and realize that ordinary students have extraordinary talents”. ****

FACILITATING SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

According to the National Youth Survey conducted in 2015, 64.9%* of 2100 youth between the ages of 15 and 30 surveyed, indicated that they repeated at least 1 grade during their education path. Source: National Youth Survey, University of Aruba, 2015

The notion that innate intelligence has less influence on successful student outcomes than hard work and positive teacher influence is supported by research around the world. If we wish to improve our education system, and ultimately the impact of our education on our

*** Lesson from PISA outcomes, OECD 2013

“The Ministry of Education is committed to ensuring quality education through the investment of funds in adequate academic materials.”

students, we too must embrace this belief and organize our schools accordingly.

In other words, every effort should be made to identify the causal factors which influence or hinder the development of each child, to reach their potential.. Effective interventions should be implemented as early as possible in order to increase each student’s chances for success.

Multidisciplinary Centre (MDC)

MDC will play a vital role in assisting at-risk students. In order to improve MDC’s output, additional resources, both funding and human capital, will be allocated throughout this period of government.

A comprehensive operational plan will be created to remove existing bottlenecks and backlog with regard to learning disability testing.

In addition, the observation classrooms will be made operational by 2015.

Schools should approach at-risk students as a multi-dimensional issue, to be addressed by the school, the teacher, the parents as well as the student.

Individual lesson plans, remedial teaching, referral to school counselor and social worker involvement are all measures that can be taken at the school level to assist underperforming students prior to MDC referral.

Approaching this subject without mentioning the role that educators and schools play in facilitating success is leaving out half the equation. Student success is as much a result of optimal teaching methods, school organization and leadership, as it is individual contribution.

In the Teacher Quality and Care section, optimizing teaching methods, school leadership training and other areas that contribute to facilitating success for all students are expanded upon.

School Books and Materials

Without the proper academic materials, both teaching and learning is difficult. The current inventory of school textbooks and other academic materials varies widely across school boards and individual schools.

Each school board currently receives subsidies to invest in academic materials for the schools which they are responsible for. It is evident, however, that there are some inconsistencies in the allocation of funds towards books and other materials resulting in a number of schools using copied materials to give lessons.

The Ministry of Education is committed to ensuring quality education through the investment of funds in adequate academic materials. As such, a portion of funds in the EU 10th Education Development Fund (EDF) have been allocated specifically for educational textbooks and materials.

All school boards are requested to provide an inventory of the current textbook and materials present in their schools. A mutually agreed upon investment in materials will be made according to the information provided by school boards by 2015.

Student Monitoring System (Leerlingvolgsysteem)

A number of primary and secondary schools are currently using some form of student monitoring system.

The Ministry of Education strongly encourages all school boards to ensure that their schools are actively using a system to track the development of their students.

There are two areas that can be tracked; academic development and social-emotional development. The ministry recognizes the value in capturing development in both areas. Recently, approval was given for the implementation of a social-emotional student monitoring system that will be introduced in various primary schools.

Through adequate tracking, school administrators are more effective at signaling important trends, to identify at-risk students at an early stage and therefore to intervene to assist students where necessary.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Schools

It is estimated that globally 1 in 68 children have ASD. Many children with ASD are presently in schools, undiagnosed, due to limited diagnostic resources.

It is critical that both special and regular streams of schools are as equipped with information and guidelines to be able to identify such cases and to be able to intervene so that the needs of those children can be addressing.

The Autism Spectrum Disorder toolkit for schools will be distributed to all schools and will provide guidelines and tips for educators with regards to ASD.

Special Needs Education

There are currently 3 special needs education schools and 1 school for developmentally and physically challenged children. The demand for special needs education has shown an upward



trend, with growing complexities in special educational needs of children. Very recently the possibility of introducing an additional form of special education, *Cluster 4*, has been explored. *Cluster 4* schools provide a safe and nurturing environment for children of average or above average intelligence with behavioural or severe psychological disorders.

In April 2014, the Ministry of Education installed an advisory commission to analyze the available data and make recommendations regarding the establishment of a *Cluster 4* school. The commission concluded that, based on the data currently available, there are insufficient grounds to establish a fully-fledged *Cluster 4* school. The commission did however recommend the introduction of some form of *Cluster 4* education and will continue to research the possibilities for the implementation of a pilot for the school year 2015-2016.

In addition, the commission will explore the impact of *Cluster 4* education on current special needs education schools and will provide recommendations regarding the expansion of special needs education.

Improved Family Involvement

Most educators would agree that successful parent or extended family involvement improves

student behavior at school, attendance and punctuality, and positively affects overall student achievement. There is ample research to support this belief; however, many schools have not fully defined what meaningful parental involvement is to them.

Successful parent involvement can be defined as the active, ongoing contribution of a parent or primary caregiver in the education of his or her child. Parental involvement differs from parental participation, in which case parents participate in school-based activities, such as celebrations, fundraisers, or parent organizations.

There are many ways for parents to demonstrate involvement in their child's education, which does not necessarily require the parent or caregiver to be physically present at school or to be actively involved in a parent organization.

Successful parental involvement can also be displayed at home by reading with their children, helping with homework, and discussing what happened at school each day. In fact, research shows that this kind of parental involvement has more positive influence on student achievement than being part of a parent organization.

Schools themselves play an important role in stimulating parental engagement

by communicating with parents regularly, and involving them in the child's learning process.

Schools and teachers are encouraged to actively reach out to parents using different means, e.g. email or other digital communication, phone calls, or simply sending a hand-written note.

Teachers should be specific with regard to how parents can connect with their children about their school experience, discussing what happened at school each day, assisting with homework, helping their child study for a test, or simply reading for 10 to 15 min a night.

Supplying positive feedback to parents for their involvement will also help stimulate further active engagement in the future.

Pre-school Care and Education

Preschool education is the cornerstone of a successful academic future. With the proper regulations in place, preschool education can provide the start needed for healthy development to children under the age of 4. It is therefore necessary that preschool care and education (ECCE) be regulated to ensure minimum quality standards.

Improving the standards of early childhood care and education is absolutely critical in addressing particular challenges facing Aruban children. Studies all over the world have evidenced that investment in early childhood education significantly reduce violence and poverty. The investment made in early childhood education pays back year after year as the children grow into law-abiding adults. However, studies do show that in order for this investment to pay off substantially, early childhood services must have high standards.

Early childhood centers have been growing rapidly in Aruba since the 1970's, as mothers were increasingly employed outside of the home and away from the support of extended family networks. Consequently, there was a rapid expansion of preschool and day care services, which were mainly established by private parties.

The current situation can be described as follows:

- Varying standards of quality and care
- Absence of national standards
- Weak licensing, certification and monitoring systems
- A preponderance of small, undercapitalized operators
- A sector that is predominantly private
- Low levels of training among caregivers

Particular attention needs to be paid to the quality and type of services provided in child care centers in order to safeguard children's rights and to fully develop cognitively, emotionally, socially, and physically from birth to age 4, the age when our children enter kindergarten. The introduction of minimum laws and regulations is crucial. This legislation (the "Landsverordenening Kinderopvang") will be presented to the parliament by 2015.

This legislation includes formal minimum standards for the operation of preschool centers for ECCE. Standards provide specifications for the level, quality, and norms for services provided. They cover issues including the suitability of the physical environment, health and safety, learning resources, the quality of the child-caregiver interaction, record-keeping, and staffing levels. In addition, the regulation establishes procedures for granting approval for the operation of early childhood care and education centers through a licensing system that includes criteria



for the issuing and revocation of licenses. The monitoring of adherence to the licensing criteria, once licenses have been approved, is also included in the legislation.

A framework for a national curriculum for ECCE will be developed to reach a consistent approach and to correspond with the formal education provided in kindergarten. The emphasis will be placed on the child's developmental needs, such as their physical, cognitive, social, emotional, moral as well as spiritual needs. The curriculum will reflect everything that happens in the early childhood setting including the type and quality of the caregiver, the contents of the physical environment, and the kinds of activities that children engage in in order to ensure that children emerge from their preschool setting ready for kindergarten.

Minimum standards and a framework for a national curriculum will contribute to improving the overall development of our children. They embody both the learning aspects and the aspects of care that must be present in a preschool setting. These standards ensure that children attending a preschool are able to achieve their developmental milestones and desired learning outcomes that have been established.

They can be used to provide benchmarks to:

- Improve the quality of learning opportunities for children;
- Improve the quality of adult-child interactions;
- Monitor the progress of children;
- Monitor the involvement of parents and the community by the staff of the early childhood setting;
- Improve the preparation and in-service training of the practitioners;
- Monitor the effectiveness of the program and approach in the early childhood setting;
- Assist efforts to identify needs for individualized approaches to meet children's special educational needs.

Monitoring the implementation and compliance of the regulations will be a responsibility of the Education Inspectorate, where a designated inspector will be appointed.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Minimum Standards (Kerndoelen)

Every child's right to education is enshrined in [The Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC), ratified by Aruba in 1992. In addition to the basic right of access to education, Article 29 of the CRC also refers to each ratifying country's commitment to provide education coinciding with:

- The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
- The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
- The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
- The development of respect for the natural environment.

††† *Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF, article 29*

"...The education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State".†††

The United Nations, and in particular the CRC, clearly state the expectation that minimum standards, and quality of education in general, is a responsibility of the Government.

At present there are no official "minimum standards" present in our education system, and school boards as well as individual schools have introduced varying degrees of standards, generally tied linearly to textbook materials. This results in vast differences in the minimum requirements across primary schools.

The introduction of minimum standards (Kerndoelen) represents not only Aruba's compliance with the CRC, but also a substantial leap towards improving the quality of education across all primary schools. The minimum standards are an expression of what level of personal and academic development we in Aruba consider necessary for our children to be have to develop into responsible citizens, ready to contribute to a better society.

Kerndoelen are core objectives that set the standard for what students know and can do by the end of Primary School. Progress towards acquiring these skills and knowledge will be

monitored with the use of “tussendoelen” during each grade in primary school. Minimum standards will serve to guide schools in ensuring that the students are provided with the curriculum, lessons and support to allow them to acquire the minimum knowledge and ability expected at the end of each grade in primary school.

Kerndoelen will also provide more equality in education, ensuring that all schools adhere to the same goals, regardless of methodology used. Decisions regarding what methodology and materials to use will remain a choice that school boards and school administrators make. In other words, schools will have the freedom to decide how they would like to reach the minimum standards (or surpass them).

With the introduction of minimum standards, transition from primary to secondary school will be smoother and more consistent, thus minimizing the current issues of transition. Most importantly, the student will benefit enormously from the implementation of more rigor and consistency across schools, regardless of the socio-economic factors that could affect the quality of education received.

In order to reap the benefits of quality education, each student must have equal opportunities which are measured in an equal fashion.

Together with the introduction of Kerndoelen, the current curriculum must be adapted and a national testing policy must be created. The changes in curriculum will reflect the objectives set with regard to competencies across various areas. For example, the Math curriculum will reflect the minimum knowledge we consider necessary for our students to have by the 6th grade. Aspects such as math thinking and reasoning, math vocabulary, and even financial

literacy are all aspects of a modern math curriculum that serve to prepare our students for a successful acquirement of math skills, and therefore a successful contribution to our society after school.

The testing policy will reflect the necessary measurements needed to provide an indication of individual and school progress towards achieving the Kerndoelen. Through periodic, national testing, and the use of a student monitoring system, each school will be able to measure their students’ academic progress and the school’s overall progress towards facilitating their students in achieving the minimum skills and knowledge and therefore their compliance with the minimum standards and beyond. This will also provide the ability to identify potential gaps and allow schools to signal when assistance, either at the school or individual student level, is needed.

Kerndoelen will be introduced and implemented in phases beginning with Math Standards as of the 2015-2016 school year.

AVI Reading Assessment and Reading Promotion

Reading assessments are used to evaluate a student’s reading ability. In general, reading assessments measure reading comprehension, syntax recognition, ability to identify words and letters, language recognition, as well as the speed and fluidity of reading.

The AVI Reading Assessment (short for Analyse van Individualiseringsvormen) is a Dutch assessment model based on the theory that technical reading (ability to read text in a fluid and rapid manner) is a prerequisite for reading comprehension.



Although the efficacy and long-term use of the AVI Reading Assessment as a predictor of student outcomes continues to be discussed, placing emphasis on technical reading alone clearly does not provide the basis for the more valuable reading skill: reading comprehension. Without the presence of thorough reading comprehension, and more importantly the stimulation of reading pleasure, a student cannot draw the full benefits from reading.

In the Netherlands, the AVI is undergoing some revisions, with many schools using this evolved version, in conjunction with other reading assessments to draw a broader picture of the student’s overall reading abilities.

What is clear is that, at no time, the AVI model should be used as the sole measure of a student’s reading ability, nor should it be used as a grading tool.

A majority of schools in Aruba have adopted the AVI model; however, the extent to which the assessment is used varies from school to school.

The policy on the use of the AVI Reading Assessment is as follows:

- All schools are encouraged to use reading assessment tools to provide insight into a student’s reading level.

- Assessments should focus on both technical and comprehension abilities.
- No single assessment shall be used as the sole measurement of a student’s performance, nor shall such an assessment be tied to a grade on a report card.

All schools are encouraged to implement reading stimulation strategies to increase both interest and skills in reading. The use of reading corners, being read to aloud by a teacher or a volunteer, the introduction of school libraries, and fun reading games are ways to develop a student’s love of reading.

Language in Schools

One of the biggest assets Aruba has as a nation is our citizen’s ability to speak multiple languages. Our multilingualism is a reflection of our country’s cultural openness and, to many; it is an economic asset that has helped build a world-class tourism industry that continues to thrive.

Even though the benefits of multilingualism are widely recognized locally, there continues to be an ongoing debate regarding the language of instruction in schools. This is understandable given the many years invested in Dutch as the primary language of instruction in all schools. Interestingly, a growing number of schools in

the Netherlands are incorporating the English language as either first or second language of instruction. For example, over 1,400 study programs are currently offered in English at the higher education level, while there are 127 bilingual schools at the Primary and Secondary levels.

With the introduction of 3 multilingual pilot schools in Aruba beginning in 2011, we are now able to gather qualitative and quantitative data to measure the effects of multiple languages in schools.

The guiding principle of the multilingual model, and a children's right that is enshrined in the CRC, is that children have a right to receive education in their native language.

With this in mind, it is essential that we do not adopt a model that does not take into consideration the multicultural and multilingual nature of our population. Although it is true that for the majority the native language is Papiamentu, it is not the mother tongue of all children in Aruba. The multilingual school model must be flexible with regard to the primary language of instruction so that schools can select Papiamentu, English, or Dutch as the primary language of instruction, while introducing other languages, such as Spanish, as secondary languages within Primary schools. School boards and schools must submit their language selection by the 2015-2016 school year, for introduction beginning in 2016.

SECONDARY AND TERTIARY SCHOOLS

Transition Regulation

One of the longest running debates in education centers around the issue of the transition that occurs after the completion of each phase in our

education system e.g. the transition from Grade 6 to Ciclo Basico or the transition from MAVO to HAVO.

A key component of the vision for education is to “maximize potential that results in higher learning.” To provide this, we must ensure that students are afforded the opportunity to transition to the corresponding level where they can reach the highest attainable goals. The key word is “maximize,” which points to a system that draws and builds upon students’ talents and inherently allows them to continue as far as possible.

Given the fact that 60% of our students are streamed into MAVO schools, it is of utmost importance that an academic career does not end for those receiving a MAVO diploma. Rather, further study opportunities should be made available to those who wish to pursue higher educational goals.

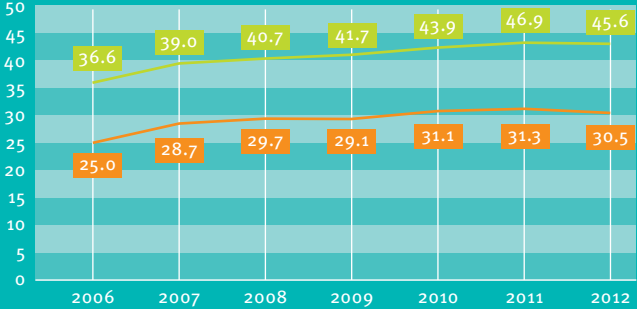
Achieving these objectives will not be possible unless there is a commitment from educators and students from both MAVO and HAVO, EPI and EPB schools to address whatever shortcomings may exist on either end of the spectrum. The recommendations made in the report “Commission AVO” have been sent to all Stakeholders. The implementation of these recommendations will be the main focus from within the Ministry of Education over the next 3 years. The anticipated results will be improved student achievement and a more seamless transition from MAVO to HAVO.

Aside from necessary adaptations and adjustments at MAVO, HAVO, EPI and EPB schools, formal regulation still remains of utmost importance. Not only is a transition regulation important to each MAVO student, it is imperative to us as

GER Tertiary Education

Female
Male

Chart 2. Source: Department of Education



a nation. Currently the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) in tertiary education is 39% (see chart 2). Higher education will be the foundation with which we as a country will continue to develop and grow economically and socially, which underscores the resolve that we must have with regards to this matter.

In July 2015, Transition regulation was introduced for all students transitioning from MAVO to HAVO. At the core of this legislation are national norms that will be applicable for all HAVO schools in Aruba.

Diploma Alignment within the Kingdom

In 2012, the Governments of Aruba and The Netherlands signed a protocol agreement on education, with the purpose of ensuring that education remains a commitment Kingdom wide and to eliminate any real or perceived inequalities regarding diplomas between Kingdom countries. Central to this agreement are aspects regarding exam regulations and course subjects at the HAVO/VWO and MBO levels.

Aruba demonstrated its commitment to safeguard the quality of our education and was the first island within the Kingdom to sign the protocol. The introduction of changes and adaptations to align the exam regulations and course subjects within the Kingdom will be phased in.

Since January 2014, the Ministries of Education of Aruba and The Netherlands have been in deliberations regarding the precise details on the implementation of the protocol, including the timeframe. In addition, a commission (AVO) consisting of various Stakeholders (Ministry of Education, Department of Education, Inspectorate, Examination Office, Avond Havo, Colegio San Nicolas and Colegio Arubano) was installed at the beginning of the year and has been tasked with providing feedback and advice regarding best practices for the anticipated changes.

Final details surrounding the timeframe for implementation, specific changes, and a communication plan are being defined.

The Government of Aruba and the Minister of Education remain committed to ensuring the validity and recognition of Aruba’s secondary education diplomas worldwide. In the pursuit of this, it is equally important to guarantee that the individuality of our education, including our national and cultural identity, be recognized and respected.

Prevent and Reduce Dropouts

Failure to complete secondary education has dire consequences for students and the communities they live in.

The economic impact of dropouts in our country has never been fully and quantitatively measured; however, it is clear that without a secondary school diploma, the economic future of a young adult is bleak.

UNICEF's 2012 report "The Situation of Children and Adolescents in Aruba" addresses this issue:

"There is a high probability that those children who fall outside the education system will be involved in very low-paying or even illegal activities, thus continuing a cycle of poverty and risks related to violence as out-of-school children become easy prey for involvement in drug trafficking, crime and child labour. It is therefore important to generate educational alternatives for those who have dropped out or been expelled".##

UNICEF's recommendations for preventing dropouts focuses on ensuring that schools offer alternative programs for those that cannot continue in the regular stream of education.

In addition, rules and regulations regarding student expulsion will be reinforced by the Ministry of Education and Inspectorate, preventing any unauthorized removal of students from schools.

School expulsion has devastating effects on students who often do not have the will or means to object to a school's removal measures.

On the other hand, there are situations where expulsion from full-time day school is a final and necessary measure. However, these children must not remain outside of our education system permanently. Therefore, it is necessary to provide alternatives targeting this group in order to prevent permanent negative social and judicial side effects.

SITAN report, UNICEF 2013

Enhanced student counseling, and early intervention will assist in preventing students from dropping out. Additionally, MDC's services will be made available to secondary students in 2015, to facilitate the participation of students with learning disabilities throughout primary and secondary school years.

Learn/Work Program (Leerwerktraject)

In 2013 the Minister of Education together with the Minister of Justice launched a reintegration program targeting at-risk youth who have either dropped out of or were removed from school recently and/or may have had a run-in with the justice system. The "Leerwerktraject" works with the Rehabilitation unit of the Justice department, Avond Leergangen Onderwijs, as well as other schools to provide an alternative program for at-risk youth who have not finished their secondary education.

The program is open for youth between the ages of 16 - 25 and offers a hybrid educational program that incorporates vocational studies (LBO) in 3 areas; Service Technician Assistant, Auto Mechanic Assistant and Commercial Technician Assistant. These programs are combined with practical on-the-job training 3 times per week. At the end of the 10-month program a certificate is provided.

The interest in this program continues to grow and is evidence of the need for hybrid educational programs that offer at-risk youth employability skills.

Special Education at the Secondary Level

During the 2014-2015 school year, the Aspirant education program, previously under EPB, was moved to become a Public Secondary Special Education School (DPS). The Aspirant program has been renamed Scol Practico pa Ofishi (SPO).



The location of the program, originally in San Nicolas, has been temporarily moved to Savaneta and a new school will be constructed within the coming 2 years.

In addition to improving the physical environment of the program, it has been determined that program revitalization is immediately needed in order to modernize and update the current curriculum.

The special secondary school education offered by this program is the only one of its kind in Aruba and it is currently the only option for children who cannot make it through the regular stream higher vocational education.

It is therefore imperative that these graduates are granted ample opportunities within the labour market. A special commission on the curriculum revamp will be established and a revised curriculum will be incorporated into the program by the 2016-2017 academic year.

MBO Education

Colegio Educacion Profesional Intermedio (EPI) is the only secondary vocational school on the island that offers specialized programs in a number of different areas. Given our dependency on a tourism-driven economy, EPI's continued existence and future is key to supplying in-demand employees for our tourism, health services, financial and technical sectors.

The merging of 4 separate vocational schools in the early 2000's has as yet not been fully completed. A number of tasks still remain, which has resulted in a school that has not reached its full potential. In order to further develop EPI into a highly effective and productive vocational school, new leadership and organizational changes will be implemented.

A special commission was established in 2014 tasked with exploring identified areas of weakness in order to create a quality higher-level learning institution that specializes in providing students with the vocational education and technical skills needed to meet today's and future labour market demands.

In addition to the needs of the local labour market it is very important to guarantee the alignment of our programs within the Kingdom and to continuously innovate taking into account

the new developments due to globalization and digitalization. These developments have to be reflected in the qualification framework and in the different aspects of the programs that EPI offer. Therefore EPI together with the local and international partners will contextualize and implement a new national qualification framework for vocational education. This new qualification framework will guarantee a better connection with the labour market, between the different levels of vocational education on the island and within the Kingdom.

Colegio EPI currently offers 14 regular vocational programs in different areas and on different levels. There is a demand to expand the number of programs that EPI offers. Before we can expand, however, we have to undertake research to identify the needs and demands of the community and labour market. In this phase it is also very important to evaluate the current programs to make sure they are effective and are catering to the current demand. The new demand for professionals is also determined by the economic developments of the island. The ambition of Aruba to be completely energy independent by implementing sustainable energy solutions and the development of the new shipping and container terminal demands specialized professionals in these fields. One area that has already been identified that requires specialized professionals is the area of transport, shipping and logistics. The Government of Aruba has already signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Scheepvaart en Transport College Rotterdam (STC) for the development of different projects and programs in Aruba for the region. One of the specific projects will be a feasibility study together with EPI for the development of new programs.

After School Youth Program

An effective after school program not only provides parents with a positive activity for their children to attend, but it also has the power to improve classroom behavior, school attendance, academic aspirations, and reduce the likelihood that a student will drop out, which are all much needed and desired outcomes for our youth.

The Government of Aruba, through a joint project between the Prime Minister and Minister of Education, have created a pilot after school program for youth ages 13 - 17.

The pilot commenced in November 2014. At the end of the academic school year, the program was evaluated and adapted in order to be implemented in additional schools.

The program consists of activities such as academic support, mentoring, youth development, arts, and sports and recreation.

Summer School

Various academic research projects conclude that summer school programs are effective in providing at-risk youth with remedial learning experiences that can help students achieve long-term academic goals.

The Ministry of Education encourages the use of summer school programs at the secondary level, to assist transitioning students from one academic year to another, one academic level to the next, or as a remedial tool for overall underperforming students.

Secondary schools (EPB, MAVO, HAVO, VWO) wishing to introduce a summer school program will be assisted by the Ministry of Education with initial set up costs.

Higher Education

There are numerous factors that influence a student's decision to pursue higher education. Among them are personal academic achievement, socio-economic background, family support and encouragement, secondary school support, peer encouragement, and access to financial support.

The positive impact of higher education on society at large is profound and long lasting. A higher education diploma means better jobs, better health and better career opportunities. It also means better lives, future, communities and countries. Across OECD countries, 83% of people with university-level degrees have a job, compared with 55% of those with only a secondary school diploma.^{§§§}

Given these facts, it is paramount that we as a country provide all the means necessary to promote the pursuit of higher education among youth, and adults who may not have had the opportunity to obtain a tertiary degree.

In order to achieve this goal, all stakeholders (government, school boards, schools, principals, teachers, parents, families, and coaches) must make a concerted effort to promote the pursuit of higher education.

The reality is that not everyone is destined to graduate from a university; however, higher education can come in many forms and in various paths. One of the key aspects of assisting students in choosing to continue their studies beyond secondary school is the access to information.

The Department of Education will disseminate information regarding higher education studies, including local, regional, overseas and online options. In addition, the financial costs of these

programs will be made clear to students as early as possible in order to assist them in their decision-making process regarding where they will study and/or specific program of study.

As much information as possible, presented as early as possible, will empower students to make informed decisions when it comes to achieving higher education goals, the benefits of which are more than evident for the individual and society as a whole.

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In order to achieve this goal, all stakeholders (school boards, schools, principals, teachers, parents, families, and coaches) must make a concerted effort to promote the pursuit of higher education.

Funds available through the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Netherlands (OCW) through the "Stimuleringsfonds" will be used for various projects to further stimulate students to continue to pursue higher education, as well as assisting students in making more informed decisions.

In connection with Studiekeuze 123, a Dutch website that provides students with guidance for academic program selections, a Caribbean Data Base will also be created for all Dutch Islands in the Caribbean. The main objective is to improve student guidance with regard to higher education offered in the region on WO, HBO and MBO level. Next to improving available information on the supply side of possibilities within the region,

^{§§§} Lesson from PISA outcomes, OECD 2013



training will be organized for the complete network of Deans in 2015. This to improve the skills and effectiveness of the guidance provided to students during this very important decision-making process.

In addition, in order to improve the transition between secondary education and higher education, and thus the chance of successfully completing higher education, an Academic Competencies Program will be developed by the University of Aruba. This one-year prep-program will be eligible for both students seeking to continue their studies at the UA, as well as abroad.

Local Higher Education Institutes

The University of Aruba, and the Instituto Pedagógico Aruba (IPA), the teacher-training institute, are two local higher education institutes that offer quality education to local and international students. The Ministry of Education wishes to further develop these academic organizations in order to boost enrollment and successful completion of a degree program. This will entail offering flexible program schedules wherever possible in order to reach a broader audience. The vision of the Ministry of Education is to enhance and stimulate the accessibility and the flexibility of the two local Higher Education Institutions and its current programs. With the introduction of part-time programs, work-study

programs, blended or online programs both IPA and UA will reach a broader audience and will achieve higher graduate rates.

Internationalization and student mobility are also key areas that are being strengthened and further developed for Higher Education on the island. Aruba has already adopted the Bachelor-Master structure of Europe (The Bologna declaration, 1999) that facilitates credits and diploma recognition and facilitates teacher and student exchange and mobility. Recently the University of Aruba was granted the Erasmus charter, a very important instrument that makes it possible for Aruban students and scholars to spend up to a year abroad during their studies in the UA, fully financed as Erasmus exchange students, in a higher education institution in the European Union. The introduction of more exchange opportunities will also boost enrollment in local higher education. Students want to travel, and in the past a great majority elected to undertake all of their undergraduate studies abroad, for example in the Netherlands, and not always successfully. The introduction of exchange in the UA offers the experience of studying abroad to students within their degree program at home.

The Ministry of Education together with both local institutions will determine policy on how to optimally benefit and stimulate the different

opportunities for internationalization and mobility. In this process the partners will explore the possibility for the formal implementation of the major-minor structure within Higher Education in Aruba, the development of international minors that can be marketed to attract international students and the development of joint degrees with partner institutions in Europe and the Americas.

The University of Aruba has made major strides in their pursuit of full international academic accreditation for the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Accounting, Finance and Marketing. This development is a significant achievement and will open up more opportunities for the University and its students.

The Ministry of Education will work together with the University of Aruba in support of their strategic plan to further advance the overall academic experience, with the goal of creating a fully accredited, internationally recognized and respected higher education institute.

It is crucial that local Higher Education is strongly aligned with the economic needs, strengths, development and ambitions of Aruba. As mentioned at the beginning of this document, Aruba has pledged a commitment towards a sustainable and knowledge-driven economic future. One important aspect in achieving this vision is the inclusion of education every step of the way. This will ensure the presence of competent professionals in leading us towards this much-desired economic and societal landscape.

The University of Aruba is a very important, if not the most important partner, in the ambition of Aruba to be the best practice for the

world on sustainable development and energy independence. Aruba aspires to be completely energy independent by 2020, by implementing sustainable energy solutions, and wants to develop into a knowledge and logistical hub between Europe and The Americas. The term “The Green Gateway” has been coined to describe the economic activities surrounding this vision.

The Government of Aruba and the University of Aruba plan to position Aruba and the University as the innovative knowledge center on sustainable development by introducing the **Green Faculty**. The University of Aruba together with different regional and international partners will offer various undergraduate and graduate programs, professional development programs, and research and consultancy services for local and international organizations through the Green Faculty. With the introduction of the Green Faculty, the University of Aruba will expand the number of post-secondary programs offered on the island. This will supply a large local need and will also attract regional and international interest.

IPA, the island’s only teacher training institute, will also be given the tools to transform and evolve the institution and its academic programs into a highly functioning and effective School of Education that will produce dynamic and effective educators and other specialized professionals in the educational field.

In order to be successful in this endeavor IPA will secure partnerships locally and internationally to facilitate this transition. In this process IPA together with the educational field will also have to identify specific needs for the development of new degree programs, both at the bachelors and masters level.

The current K-12 teacher's degree program will undergo a complete restructuring. IPA will transform the teacher-training program for Primary educators into a more effective, efficient and innovative program to prepare future teachers for the needs and challenges and opportunities of society, schools and students of today. The restructuring will take into account the recommendations of the last accreditation commission as well as the input from the education field. Elements such as ICT, multiple languages of instruction, and research will have a more prominent role in the renewed curriculum.

One crucial aspect with regards to teacher training is shifting the focus towards creating the necessary conditions that leads to authentic student learning. This means moving away from rote learning, or strict adherence to textbooks and methodology. It involves guiding future teachers towards looking more holistically at students and unlocking potential from all children.

The more we can prepare teachers before they enter the classroom, the better we can affect students outcomes in a positive way. One of the challenges that IPA, and the Education field in general faces, has been a declining interest in the teaching profession as a study choice. Even when the teaching profession is chosen, there are those that may choose the profession for the wrong reasons; wrong motivation, narrow perception of the profession, or underestimate the study/workload. This often results in a high dropout rate. Another challenge altogether.

In order to boost interest and improve the likelihood of successful completion of the program, while maintaining the high standards we desire, a flexible teacher-training program will be created. This will encourage those that

are currently working full-time or part-time to be able to combine their studies with their jobs.

Organizational, legal and financial adaptations will be necessary in order to prepare these two pivotal institutions for the future. Both institutions recognize that in order to achieve sustainable growth and secure their financial viability they will have to become more entrepreneurial. The local Higher Education institutions will transform themselves into innovative centers of knowledge where they will develop and offer a variety of services to the local community and regional/international partners, including research, professional development programs and consultancy. The Ministry of Education will work closely together with both to create academic establishments that will ultimately produce highly competent professionals, organizations and communities.

Academic Competencies Program (ACP)

It is clear that actions must be taken in order to reverse this trend. One such action is the introduction of an initiative by the University of Aruba and the Government of Aruba, along with support from the Ministry of Education of the Netherlands to develop the "Academic Competencies Program" (ACP). The ACP at the University of Aruba will be a complete preparation course consisting of different elements for students that want to study in Higher Education, both locally and abroad. The goal of the program is to prepare and guide students in all areas for a successful transition to Higher Education. By investing in preparing our students more adequately, providing more guidance and orientation the expectation is that the graduation rate of our Aruban students in the Netherlands, and in Higher Education in general, will improve.

Studying Abroad in The Netherlands

Aruba has a long and extensive relationship with the Netherlands when it comes to education, especially in the area of higher education. For centuries a large percentage of our youngest and brightest minds have moved to the Netherlands after graduating from secondary education on the island to pursue Higher Education. Being part of the Kingdom, and possessing the Dutch nationality, our students can apply for financial aid in the Netherlands through the Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs (DUO), of the Dutch Government. Although the Netherlands is still the most popular study destination for our students we have seen different shifts and development throughout the last couple of years. With the introduction of the Euro, and the changes within the study financing structure, studying in the Netherlands has become relatively expensive.

Another development that has been observed over time is the decreasing graduation rates of our Aruban students in the Netherlands. A significant number of Aruban students do not finish the study that they intended to pursue on time or in some cases do not finish at all. This results in students who return to the island with no diploma and/or with a large debt. Information from different reports has concluded that there are different factors that contribute to the low graduate rates, for example the language barrier, challenges in adjusting to the Dutch culture and living far away from home, lack of specific study and academic skills and preparation needed in Higher Education, and not having the right expectations, perceptions and/or motivation for studying in The Netherlands.

Studying Abroad in the Region

In 2014, The Minister of Education signed a state-to-state agreement with the state of South

Carolina, granting Aruban students who have been accepted by publicly funded Universities and Colleges, the possibility of paying in-state tuition rather than international student fees.

The University of South Carolina has a long-standing relationship with Aruba and the University of Aruba, providing our students with a number of valuable benefits not afforded to all international students. The signed agreement paves the way to new opportunities for our students interested in studying at USC. In addition, the possibility of a 2 + 2 joint University of Aruba/USC degree program is currently being explored.

In addition to USC, Coastal Carolina University has also granted in-state tuition fee to Aruban students. A continued effort will be made to confirm additional Universities who recognize Aruba's status as a state partner.

Through the Latin America and Caribbean Center at Florida International University (FIU), Aruba students will also be eligible for an "out of state" tuition waiver". This waiver reduces the tuition fee allowing students receiving this waiver to pay the same "in-state" fee as other Florida students. This program must be applied for once admission has been granted. A limited number of waivers are made available.

An MOU with Florida State University (FSU) Panama Campus will be signed in 2015, also granting Aruban students access to their 2 + 2 program (First 2 years at FSU Panama campus and the last 2 years at the main FSU campus in Tallahassee, Florida), along with in-state tuition.

Additional State-to-State agreements will be pursued, as well as exploring potential preferred tuition fees for Provinces in Canada.

The main objective of this initiative is to provide a broad range of choices at affordable prices to our students wishing to pursue their higher education abroad within the region.

Student Financial Aid

The Minister of Education is the minister responsible for the policy of providing student loans to Aruban students. Student loans are the main form of financial support for most Aruban students. It is important to continue to monitor the policy on a continuous basis to make adjustments where necessary. In 2014, the policy was reviewed and amended and will come into effect academic year 2015-2016.

In order to further stimulate students to continue to seek higher education in Aruba and in the region, the maximum amount available for student loans was increased as per academic year 2015-2016. The increase of the maximum amount available for student loans was also increased for vocational education in Aruba.

In addition to student loans, student grants will be offered to students with an Aruban loan in Curaçao, the University of Aruba and in the region (Latin and North America) for the academic year 2014 – 2015 in collaboration with Stimuleringsfonds. This is to stimulate studying in Aruba and in the region.

Financing of studies both local and abroad is not without its challenges. Students can often face significant financial burdens upon graduating, even worse still for those that fail to graduate. Former students that have faced financial challenges has the attention of the Government of Aruba as well as the Ministry of Education of the Netherlands and DUO. Special repayment arrangements for those that

face high loan burdens, and for those that have difficulty repaying are currently being discussed. The Minister of Education's request for flexible and more affordable repayment arrangements has already been approved by the Netherlands, and details of the special arrangement that will be applicable to our former Aruban students are expected soon. This initiative will have a positive impact on the financial situation of our population of former students that studied in The Netherlands.

Lifelong Learning

In 1973, Donald Schön, an influential professor at MIT, Boston, developed the theory that change is constant in a modern state ('loss of the stable state'). Schön posited that in order to adapt to this constant state of change, there must be a constant state of learning within the society.

Many other scholars and influential thinkers went on to further develop this idea, eventually leading to the notion that the process of learning beyond formal education can be seen as an ongoing activity throughout someone's life, or "Lifelong Learning", fulfilled in numerous ways. Societies that support and promote this could be seen as "Learning Societies", unleashing economic growth potential for both individuals and societies in general. As Joseph Stiglitz, recipient of a Nobel Prize in economics points out in his book about learning societies:

*"Closing knowledge gaps and helping laggards learn are central to growth and development. But creating a learning society is equally crucial if we are to sustain improved living standards in advanced countries."*****

**** Creating a Learning Society: A New Approach to Growth, Development, and Social Progress, Joseph E. Stiglitz and Bruce C. Greenwald, June 2014



A clear connection between lifelong learning and economic development and well being has long been established and this educational philosophy is supported and encouraged by organizations such as OECD and UNESCO.

Extending learning beyond "formal education" based in traditional educational institutions (such as schools and universities) to informal learning centers to support a knowledge economy is the key to unlocking the benefits a Learning Society can reap.

The main objective in this area surrounds creating and stimulating a learning "culture" amongst our citizens. The main message we want people to embrace is; Learning is a continuous process that can lead to social, emotional and economic wellbeing.

In order to achieve this goal, the following programs and initiatives will be taken:

- Expansion and flexibilization of existing academic offerings at current institutions OAA, EPI, IPA, UA (STC, Logistics, Green faculty);
- Renewed and revitalized programs at Enseñansa pa Empleo (EpE). Increased marketing on available courses;
- "Infobank" Click, Call, Face concept for the distribution of information to the general public regarding learning opportunities on the island;
- Promotion of existing and recognized E-learning platforms;
- Literacy programs for adults;
- Recognition of experience/prior learning (EVC);
- CELA (bridge between vocational education and private sector);
- Promotional campaign to create awareness and involvement (culture of learning).



Teacher

Quality & Care

Teachers are the heart and soul of our education system. As previously mentioned, a student's success is influenced by a number of factors, such as their abilities and attitudes, as well as family and community background. However, the single most influential aspect affecting student outcomes, and one that schools have direct control over, is teacher quality. Without a dynamic, motivated, knowledgeable, and competent teaching force, our education system would simply not be effective.

However, the question on what exactly is needed to become a great teacher remains pressing, as no two educators are alike.

Nonetheless, based on a variety of research worldwide, a set number of qualities emerge time and again. According to research conducted in 2005 by OECD, **Teachers Matter**, the teacher characteristics that are difficult to measure, but which are vital to student learning include the ability to:

- **Convey ideas in clear and convincing ways;**
- **Create effective learning environments for different types of students;**
- **Foster productive teacher-student relationships;**
- **Be enthusiastic and creative;**
- **Work effectively with colleagues and parents.**

What emerges from this landmark study are conclusions that can assist us in providing teachers with the necessary tools to be able to become better educators. What is also clear is that the quality of teaching is not determined solely by the "quality" of the teachers - although that is a critical component - but also by the environment in which they work. Able teachers are not necessarily going to reach their potential in settings that do not provide appropriate support or sufficient challenges and rewards.

Professional development, teacher care, and salary restructuring are some of the key areas that will be included in an overall teacher policy aimed at boosting teacher morale, ultimately leading to improved teacher quality.

Professional Development

As with any profession, updating skill-sets is crucial to staying up-to-date and effective. Teaching is no exception. In other words, a teacher must become a student every so often to become a better teacher. Just as our education system must evolve over time, so too must the skills used by our teachers. If we imagine for a moment what a modern and effective teacher would be like, we would most probably imagine some, if not all, of the following:

- A teacher who promotes amongst students, and engages in, collaborative learning; capitalizing on one another's resources and skills e.g. asking one another for information, evaluating one another's ideas, monitoring one another's work;
- Stimulates critical thinking and teaches problem solving skills;
- Provide space for students to construct their own knowledge;
- Places the primary objective on learning vs. testing;
- Have differentiated instruction based on learning styles;
- Have their students interact with others locally and globally;
- Allows for curiosity, errors, individuality and risk-taking;
- Embraces technology and other multi-media tools to enhance the learning experience, however understands that great teaching can be achieved through any medium;
- Has a passion for teaching that goes on beyond the bell.
- Model behavior they would like to see in their students.



Without a doubt, a tall order. However many of the characteristics listed can already be seen in a number of outstanding teachers today. By providing access to Professional Development programs teachers will be better equipped to thrive in today's learning environment.

Although there have always been workshops and other courses available to teachers, from a wide variety of sources, there seemingly remains an obstacle to reaching teachers on a mass level. One of the factors that may assist in encouraging professional development on a broader scale is the coordination of information for teachers. The Department of Education will play a more prominent role in helping to coordinate and distribute information on available course options, electronically and/or printed, to increase awareness and stimulate professional development amongst teachers.

Professional Development, will be focused in 3 areas; General Training, Specific Training and Collaborative Learning.

Collaborative Learning is a relatively newer form of learning in Aruba, and builds on a "bottom up" approach of sharing amongst educators in order to stimulate positive changes in the classroom. Through problem solving, implementation of a buddy system, introduction of reading groups, and the presence of also less formalized support,

teachers can arm themselves with an effective network. Teaching can be a lonely business, a bit like being a single parent of 30 children. Putting in place a buddy system could give support while supporting ongoing learning.

We learn by reflecting on what we have done, how it worked, how we could do it better and communicating about this is essential in personal learning.

Educational Leadership for Collaboration

Collaborative learning in the education field has not only been shown to be a very effective teaching method, but also an excellent way for educators themselves to learn and develop professionally.

It is with this thought that the program Educational Leadership for Collaboration was created. This 9-month program exclusively for leaders and aspiring leaders in the education field is offered through the University of Aruba in conjunction international experts from the Jean Houston Foundation, New York University Graduate School of Public Service, and Western Washington University.



The course curriculum includes 4 themes;

- *Leadership for Collaboration: Navigating towards the Vision of Education;*
- *The psychology of leadership in a complex and dynamic educational environment;*
- *Embodying the new story of leadership for collaboration in theory and practice; and*
- *Sustaining a community of practice to create solutions collaboratively*

In Feb 2015 the first cohort completed the 9-month program, with the second cohort commencing the program in the same month. The program is scheduled to continue until 2018.

International School Leadership Certification

Arming school principals with the tools to be able to drive positive change throughout their schools, address perceived obstacles, and inspire teachers daily will undoubtedly have a transformational effect on teachers and students alike.

It is with this in mind that the Ministry of Education will partner to deliver The Ontario Principals' Council's (OPC) world renowned principals training program through International School Leadership, a subsidiary of OPC, to 60 school principals in 2015 and 2016.

The Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) is a voluntary professional association representing 5,000 practising school leaders in elementary and secondary schools across Ontario, Canada. OPC is built on the belief that exemplary leadership results in outstanding schools and improved student achievement. In other words, guiding and coaching school principals in becoming effective leaders at school has a ripple effect throughout the education system.

Teacher Care

Teaching is one of the most rewarding professions, but it can also be one of the most demanding and stressful. Teacher Care refers to access to support services, coaching, appreciation and recognition events. Teacher Care is needed to help teachers cope with job stress and enliven teaching by promoting awareness, presence, compassion, reflection, and inspiration - the inner resources needed to help students flourish, socially, emotionally, and academically.

If we analyze what exactly is needed to better equip teachers to be able to cope with today's classroom environment and demands, it is clear that providing them with the right tools is critical. A concrete example of a "tool", and one that has already been embraced by many educators, is the Social-Emotional learning and classroom management program: Conscious Discipline.

A program based on current brain research, Conscious Discipline is a program that utilizes everyday events such as the curriculum, addresses the adult's emotional intelligence as well as the child's, and integrates classroom management with social-emotional learning. Conscious Discipline provides the teacher with the correct training to consciously respond to daily conflict, transforming it into an opportunity to teach critical life skills to children.

At the end of 2014, approximately Afl. 500,000 was invested in making Conscious Discipline and other Social-Emotional school programs available to all Primary Schools. The implementation and training is currently underway at various schools. The Ministry of Education will continue to work with schools on measures that will enable teachers to thrive in a classroom setting.

The realities of the teaching profession today require support services for teachers to safeguard overall mental and physical wellbeing. Even with the right tools in place, work-related stress, or even personal issues, can often affect both the effectiveness and impact a teacher can have on students. The channels to be able to seek professional counseling is often intimidating and complicated. As part of teacher care, psychological services for teachers will be made available through MDC beginning in 2015.

Another essential component of the Teacher Care program serves to demonstrate appreciation for teachers, and their commitment to education. Programs to recognize years of service, minor and major achievements, as well as rewards program will be introduced throughout the year.

Teacher Safety

The aspect of teacher safety is a point of discussion for many years worldwide. Creating a classroom environment that is organized and that is characterized by mutual respect is a prerequisite for effective teaching.

Violence directed at teachers is a serious issue that requires resources and prevention strategies driven by Government, School Boards and Schools themselves.

A National Code of Conduct Protocol has been created to inform everyone who forms part of a school environment what behaviour is expected and what action is required to ensure the safety of principals, teachers and students.

Golden Apple Award (Appel di Oro): Excellence in Education

In October 2015, the Ministry of Education will launch the first awards ceremony that recognizes multiple top performers in the field of Education. Special recognition will be awarded within 6 categories and across 4 school systems: Teacher, Principal, Support Staff, School Innovation, Newcomer and Lifetime Achievement Award.

A special commission consisting of various stakeholders will be tasked with selecting the individuals and schools who best represent excellence in education.

Salary Restructuring

The pay teachers receive has a direct effect on the quality of teaching. This is true the whole world over. Not only the compensation package teachers receive, but the growth potential during their professional careers also has the ability to motivate (or de-motivate) teachers.



KPMG was tasked with analyzing the compensation structure currently in place for teachers. In addition, they were asked to come up with recommendations on how this could be restructured in a more effective and motivating way for both incoming, and veteran teachers.

Their recommendations form the basis for the Salary Restructuring project that aims to simplify and adjust teachers compensation model.

An implementation plan will be lead by KPMG, targeting introduction for August 2016.

