

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SUMMIT
UN HEADQUARTERS, NY
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ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
COMMITMENT STATEMENT

Antigua and Barbuda is committed to ensuring the children of this nation receive a world class education that adequately equips them to be meaningful participants in the emerging global digital economy. The Government has spared no effort in investing the requisite resources to expand physical learning spaces, provide relevant, fit-for-purpose schools and educational spaces. Further, thanks to the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the lessons learned from the implementation of hybrid learning, we are even more compelled in our drive to offer students and teachers the best opportunities to bolster their digital competencies, that will benefit them both in and out of the classroom.

A recent recrafting of Antigua and Barbuda's education sector plan is very much in consonance with a re-imagined education system that endeavors to:

1. Invest in climate smart infrastructure for schools (to improve resiliency, maximize the use of renewable energy and make learning spaces more comfortable);
2. Integrate learning and innovative technologies at all levels, starting from pre-K;
3. Incorporate sustainable development into the curricular;
4. Expand the telecommunications infrastructure to allow for affordable high speed internet in homes and in schools;
5. Expand access to quality Early Childhood Education (ECE), and providing material support to vulnerable families and their children (the goal is to provide universal pre-K education) and
6. Strengthen the capacity of teachers and administrators in the early childhood education sector, to ensure that the foundational educational experience of our children prepares them for excellence throughout their academic career.

The Government in remaining true to its promise that no one will be left behind, is seeking to expand and strengthen the educational provision for vulnerable groups, who require specialized interventions: students with disabilities and those with other special developmental needs, students with special/alternate learning needs, students whose first language is not English, high-achieving students and economically disadvantaged students, as well as attending to

the gender-specific educational needs of both boys and girls. We can accomplish this by:

1. Redesigning and retrofitting schools;
2. Increasing the share of professionals providing psycho-social support for example, school counsellors, social workers, child psychologists and occupational therapists;
3. Expanding the range of services and professionals to provide instructional and behavioural support, such as speech therapists, education specialists etc.;
4. Creating pathways to facilitate students who are exceptionally gifted and
5. Catering for the multiple intelligences of students by diversifying the curriculum and facilitating different learning styles.

Further, the strategic development trajectory for Antigua and Barbuda demands that we produce a cadre of professionals proficient in a wide range of occupational fields. Hence, the upgrading or constructing of specialist spaces (including TVET) and curriculum diversification to offer a more comprehensive menu of options to students and adult learners.

To achieve this, we must also expand access to post-secondary, tertiary education and life-long learning by:

1. Supporting and enhancing second chance programmes (with commensurate certification, accreditation and parity/equivalence systems)
2. Supporting the expansion of the University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus;
3. Strengthening partnerships with offshore educational institutions;
4. Enhancing state owned post-secondary learning institutions and
5. Creating and facilitating more scholarship opportunities.

Much of the success anticipated, hinges on the quality of teachers, teaching and instructional leadership in schools. Hence a greater focus on:

1. Improving Teachers' professionalism and Professional Development (PD);
2. Strengthening existing mechanisms for retaining qualified teachers (upward mobility);
3. Developing or enacting a working teacher appraisal system which, in part, helps to identify areas for professional development (PD);
4. Strengthening the Department of Teacher Education;
5. Fostering Communities of Practices and the participation of teachers in action research and
6. Improving and strengthening governance, monitoring, evaluation and other supporting structures in education, such as, a Teaching Service Commission and or Teaching Council.

In an effort to enhance the employability of graduates, there is an opportunity for the deepening and strengthening of partnerships with the private sector and other external agencies. The value of immersive learning / internships is well established, and can prove to be of mutual benefit to all stakeholders. It has the added benefit of allowing for a better alignment of education curriculum and training to labor market needs, and facilitate a more seamless transition from school to work (and as a means of addressing high levels of youth unemployment).

There are also endless opportunities for co-financing and investing in the education of the nation's children. There is much left to be desired in that respect, and Antigua and Barbuda would like to echo the calls for greater public-private partnerships in meeting the investment cost of a revamped education system, that will ultimately redound to the benefit of all.

But for Antigua and Barbuda to realize the ambition envisaged in a reimagined education system, we call for sufficient, equitable and effective financing to address the learning crisis that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and to accelerate progress towards realizing the ambitions enshrined in SDG#4.