

**A Sense of Self Worth
Action Research in the Jamaica All Age School Project**

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PART TWO

CASE STUDIES: RESEARCH IN ACTION

ACTION RESEARCH AT WORK-GURNEY'S MOUNT ALL AGE SCHOOL

The Action Research Project that was selected was an appropriate and powerful problem for boys who were not achieving, since boys like "action". It is particularly suited for grades four to six (4-6). At Gurney's Mount All Age School the enrolment comprises of eighty percent (80%) boys. This is a challenge indeed. Action Research is an excellent challenge for the teacher who likes challenges. Sometimes it is not what we try to "put in" that matters but what we are able to "get out". Many of our students who are underachievers are battered and bruised emotionally from parental neglect and verbal/physical abuse. They are hurting and bleeding inside. They are starved for love, acceptance and belonging. They need to begin to discover themselves, what they are worth and what they can do. Some have no intrinsic motivation to perform, achieve and excel yet they have the potential. It is these that Action Research has come to rescue.

This special group of students chosen for an Action Research Programme can be a group of students who:

- i. Are not achieving overall
- ii. Will not do/produce any work
- iii. Are not attending school regularly
- iv. Have very low self esteem
- v. Never complete any written assignment
- vi. Are not liked in class
- vii. Show no interest in work
- viii. Think and talk negatively
- ix. Are disruptive, aggressive, abusive or annoying to others.

Action Research requires

- a. Careful planning and preparation
- b. Quality time
- c. The ability to use all the available resources-human, natural, material including electronic devices
- d. Patience and tolerance
- e. Background knowledge of each student's circumstance
- f. Resilience

When all is ready for 'action' its like taking a trip for which you are equipped.

Starting from the known to the unknown the implementing of the programme begins with a combination of interest and known potentials then the entire learning process moves on.

Discovering, collecting, painting, composing, drawing, performing, entertaining, measuring, recording, researching and experimenting. The number of things being done in a limited time frame can be amazing. In all of this the teacher is learning:

1. With his/her students
2. About his /her students
3. From his/her students

Faced with a class of grade four pupils who were performing below grade four (4) level, the teacher made an investigation into the problem. Among the many causes were:

1. Low self esteem
2. Inadequate supervision in the home
3. Poor economic circumstances resulting in a lack of resources at home
4. Frequent absences from school
5. Disruptive behaviour in class
6. Relationship problem at home etc.

On completion of the field study a problem statement was formulated.

An investigation into whether selected strategies targeting student's interest in music; craft and sports will enhance literacy and numeracy among a group of pupils at Gurney's Mount All Age.

The next task was to formulate a programme of intervention that included skills training, physical development (sports), and academic

intellectual development and language arts.

The implementation process was challenging. It was a great delight to see those pupils come alive. The teacher and students pursued an intense programme of work, touching most of the curriculum. The students were so motivated; they seem to ignore the bell When time for dismissal.

Students would come to school with the enthusiasm and eagerly asked, "Is it time to go to our class teacher?" We read stories then each person would be assigned roles and characters, they did role-play. The students also drew what they remembered of the story.

The class read the words of popular songs then sang and danced to them. The teacher and students sang. Each student made-up song and danced to them. The teacher and students spelt the words and put rhythm to them.

As they achieved their confidence grew and their shyness vanished. Their parents became more supportive and investigated their progress routinely.

Many of the prohibitive problems identified early in the process were addressed. The intent is to extend the programme to include boys and girls from grades four to six (4-6)

Angelia Jarrett, Grade 4 teacher

ACTION RESEARCH FOR IMPROVED SCHOOL PERFORMANCE: TRANQUILITY ALL AGE & INFANT SCHOOL.

Good School performance at Tranquility All-age & Infant started falling off in the late 1980's (Community Time Line, 2000) and reached the stage where it became an embarrassment to all stakeholders involved in the education process at the school.

Student migration and indiscipline (among other negative features) became the order of the day. Even today good discipline- especially in the absence of the class teacher- cannot be said with any great degree of confidence to exist at Tranquility. Perhaps one of the reasons why this is so is because the children believe that their performance only affects the teacher/school rather than themselves. Here is where Action Research comes in: for having looked deeply into the problem we came to the conclusion that in order to reverse this trend, more independent (self-directed) learners needed to be created.

Creating more self-directed learners (Grades3-9) would reduce indiscipline as students would focus more on learning and other areas of self-development rather than finding the time to be disruptive. Fostering more independent learners would also address and, perhaps, even eliminate altogether three other significant problems that the school was experiencing: underperformance of the boys, wanton disregard and abuse of school property and low levels of comprehension skills among the school population.

Our problem to be overcome then, was that poor school performance persists at Tranquility All-age & Infant School because of a lack of sufficient self-directed (independent) learners.

Problem Statement

'An investigation into whether the implementation of a structured Homework Programme as well as the use of Activity corners in classrooms will create independent learners and thus assist in expediting curriculum delivery and reduce indiscipline among a group of Grade 3-8 students at the Tranquility All Age in Portland.'

Having identified what we (teachers/principal) believed to be the major problem holding back the school, and consulting with the students and parents to be involved in the Action Research experiment, to have them sufficiently disturbed about the problem and also to get their suggestions on the way forward, we met to devise strategies to tackle the problem.

Proposed Strategies

Three major strategies were selected and agreed on: a Structured Home Work programme, simple Projects and Activity Corners. These strategies would be used in the teaching of at least four areas of the curriculum; with Mathematics, Language Arts, Science and Social Studies. And the Action Research programme would attempt to investigate whether the proposed strategies would create self-directed learners, reduce indiscipline and help to expedite curriculum delivery.

Research Questions

More specifically:

- 1) Would the Activity Corner help to keep children on task?
- 2) Would the Home Work programme bring parents/guardians in more active participation with their children's learning?
- 3) Could the experiment be made to incorporate cooperative learning and integrated teaching/learning strategies?
- 4) Would the selected strategies create independent learners and reduce indiscipline?

Implementation

After many postponements Action Research, officially, became a reality at Tranquility during the first week of November 2002. The programme started with great expectation on the part of the teachers and a positive attitude on the part of the students; as both sets of stakeholders were determined to turn around the status quo of poor school performance and indiscipline. Each teacher had a checklist to monitor and evaluate the project in his/her class. This checklist has become a handy tool when we meet for reflection. The checklist stipulates (among other things):

- That each student should have a home work book and portfolio,
- That parents indicate in the homework book that the student spent some time attempting/doing the homework,
- That there are activity corners in each class to support the project,
- That each teacher documents the progress being made by his/her class (project diary),
- The lesson planning must take into account the project
- And that the project must be monitored/supervised by the territorial Education Officer and Principal.

Lesson Learnt

One lesson learnt so far is that the project seems to focus exclusively on the **academics** and that the children have interest in other areas especially in co-curricular activities and gardening. A challenge though is to get most of the parents to supervise the homework part of the project.

Indications so far are that this programme will restore the school to one of high achievement and good discipline: The noise level in the school is much reduced (suggesting that the activity corners are providing additional activities to keep students focused longer on tasks). Students are more willing to research answers to questions now rather than just ignoring questions that they found challenging. They are approaching everyone that they believe can help them with their assignment. Even the Cook has reported that Grade 9 students approached her, seeking information. A very heartening development is that many students are arriving earlier at school and are sitting inside to compare notes on their homework instead of playing outside and getting sweaty before school.

Problems/Challenges

A few problems are still to be overcome; including getting the parents to uphold their end of the arrangement and integrating the curriculum areas with co-curricular activities and gardening. The confidence is there that we will succeed at Grades3-9 so the experiment can be extended to Grades1 & 2.

ACTION RESEARCH MT. PROVIDENCE ALL AGE SCHOOL

It has been observed for many years that there is an ongoing problem of fathers of the children of the Mount Providence All Age School showing no interest to be involved any at all in their children's educational development. As a result of this problem, principal and teachers see themselves as researchers in trying to find a suitable solution to this problem. Fathers, it is noted that, have voiced their opinion that the welfare of the children is the sole responsibility of the mothers.

In addition, some also state that teachers prefer having dialogue with the mothers, as mothers are better listeners. Fathers also do not consider attending Parents and Teachers (PTA) a priority. The researchers (principal/Teachers) had a keen interest in the problem hoping that on completion of the research it would:

1. Help teachers and principal to better understand the nature of the problem and point to the strategies that could be used to improve the situation.
2. Make fathers be more aware of the importance of education and the necessity to be more involved in the development of their children so that their children can get the most from the school.
3. Point to the need to maintain ongoing contact with teachers through school visits and class PTA.

A problem statement, was formulated which is:

“An investigation into whether the implementation of a Fathers’ Club will enhance fathers’ involvement in their children’s educational development.”

The proposed strategies listed below were put in place.

1. Literacy classes- it was discovered that fathers were not fluent readers, that literacy classes held at the school would assist fathers in becoming better readers and to have better command of the English Language.
2. Fathers’ Club-There was the formation of the Fathers’ Club. Meetings were of different format each time such as concert, games evening and guidance and counseling sessions done by the principal and a resource person.
3. Computer classes-Fathers became a part of the computer classes. Much enthusiasm was shown here.
4. Community skill Training Centre-Fathers were involved in the community skill training programme with the intention of acquiring a skill and to impart skills learnt to other fathers in the community.

The implementation process was a challenging experience as well as an exciting and rewarding one. A meeting was called with the intention of forming the fathers club. Officers were elected such as president, Vice-president etc.

The proposed strategies already listed were used in the implementation process. Some fathers did not see any relevance in having a Fathers’ Club. Others felt that they were too busy being breadwinners to ever consider

coming to meetings. Some expected some form of remuneration and in learning otherwise their interest vanished.

Today, however the Mt. Providence All Age School can say that the Action Research has yielded satisfactory results. There is improvement in the attendance pattern of fathers at PTA meetings. They participate in discussions during the meetings as well. In addition, a few have come to reprimand their children who happen to be rude to the teachers. There is a particular father on more than one Occasion happen to visit his daughter at school and found that her teacher was not in the class at the moment. He used this opportunity to read or tell the class a story until the teacher arrived. The students enjoyed having him around. Fathers have also helped in the fencing of the schoolyard and constructing the skills training center.

The Fathers’ Club started out with six members. Today there are ten members. The school is cognizant of the fact that there are fathers who do not consider that their involvement in their children’s education is a priority; but with the ongoing strategies it is hoped that this view will change.

The school is hoping too to increase the number of activities that the fathers can be involved, so that they will perceive themselves as having something to offer the school. It is also an optimistic view that fathers will always see their children’s education as an integral part of their children’s life, which takes place at the school.

ACTION RESEARCH AT WORK –NIGHTINGALE GROVE ALL AGE SCHOOL

The Action Research Project, which was selected, is an appropriate and powerful propeller for boys and girls who are underachievers. In the grade 7 now grade 8 class the boys outnumbered the girls. Many of our children are physically abused they are starving for the love of their parents who sometimes continue to neglect them. These students most of the time have great potentials and just need someone to give them a push in the right direction. It is these children that Action Research has come to rescue.

This special group of students chosen for an action research can be a group of students who:

1. Are not attending school regularly.
2. Will not do/produce work
3. Have very low self esteem, sloppy in every thing that they do
4. Will not stay in class
5. Think and talk negatively.

Action Research requires:

- a. Patience and tolerance
- b. Careful planning and preparation
- c. Empathy
- d. Quality time.

Beginning from the known to the unknown, we implemented a combination of interests then the learning process begins.

Discovering, designing, drawing, performing, and writing.

In all of this the teacher is learning:

1. From his/her students
2. About his/her students
3. With his/ her students

Faced with a class of grade 7 boys and girls, these are the same students that did the grades six Achievement Test and failed. They were performing below grade one level. I made an investigation into the problem.

Among the many causes were

1. Peer pressures
2. Low self esteem
3. Poor economic conditions at home
4. Lack of love and motivation from parents
5. Frequent absences from school.

On completion of the field study a problem statement was formulated. **“An investigation into whether selected strategies targeting students’ interest in drama and sports will enhance literacy among a group of grade seven boys and girls at Nightingale Grove All Age School.”**

The next task was to formulate a programme of intervention, which included physical development

(sports), academic development and language arts.

The implementation process was a challenging and rewarding experience. These students work hard to achieve the goals set by them. We touched on most areas of the curriculum and this help to motivate them a lot. The boys excelled in cricket and football, even the girls got excited. Whenever the boys were playing they were included on the teams with the boys. The students enjoyed reading and hearing about some of the ‘World’s Great in Sports’. The students were able to talk about the different rules in cricket and football. When the West Indies team is playing cricket they even want to watch the television during break time.

They also dramatized; this was taped in front of a live audience. It stimulated excitement when it was played back to them. Hearing their names mentioned, gave them a sense of pride. They drew and coloured on their files. These students became one proud team, that their parents have shown more love and motivation towards them. Punctuality and attendance increased. These students were promoted to grade eight.

Mrs. Riley, Grade 7-9 teacher at Nightingale Grove All Age

ACTION RESEARCH-WALTHAM ALL AGE

An Action Research Project was selected to remedy the problem of irregular attendance and late coming among a group of students from a community. The project selected was appropriate for students from a low income and poor socio-economic environment. It is particular suitable for deep rural schools where parents and guardians are unemployed, have large families and find it difficult to feed and educate their children. Just picture the old woman that lived in the shoe! She had many children and there is one more on the way. Think of a grade one child, coming to school at 8:00 a.m., crying and telling his teacher, when asked, that his tummy is hurting him. His older brother reported that none of the four of them had breakfast before leaving home. That is the case at Waltham All Age School. Students who attend school on Monday and Tuesday will not be seen until two weeks. Hence, what these children do not get at home they look to the school to provide for them. Sometimes teachers need to look deeper than the surface for the causes of the problem. Students are expected to perform well, but how can they retain what we teach when their minds are occupied with the problem of hunger? It can be likened to pouring water on a sieve. Hunger can cause a child to do certain unacceptable actions. These children are always seeking attention. They cannot wait till lunch time when the bell goes. They are hungry! At times it is not what we give to a child that matters but when it is given. The fact that these children are at school, is a proof that they wish to achieve their goals. We can use Action Research to assist them in achieving their goals.

Action Research can be used to assist students who are:

- Abused
- Are malnourished
- Cannot cope with basic school work
- Are disruptive
- Cheats
- Do not attend school regularly
- Underachieve
- Display low morale
- Are intrusive
- Do not participate in school life- neither school work nor play.

In order to carry out an Action Research, one needs to.

1. Identify and analyze the problem
2. Research on the problem selected
3. Make detailed plans and preparation
4. Utilize all available resources- human and non -human
5. Plan contingencies
6. Be tolerant and patient
7. Be subtle, diplomatic and meticulous.

With all these qualities present, it is time to launch in to action. In implementing the first Action Research , one does not know what lies ahead , but is prepared for each obstacle.

In the implementation process, we take into consideration what is known of the problem and go on to the unknown. During this process, we discover, deduce, analyze, design, reflect, share, prepare, interpret, interview, cook, bake, experiment, research, measure, calculate and observe. All these and more were done in a very short space of time. During this time, a great deal of direct and indirect learning was taking place.

- The teacher was learning more about the students. The environment from which they come. The community members and their perceptions.
- The parents were learning more about the schools, the teachers, their communities and their children.
- The students were learning more about the facts of life., acceptable and unacceptable norms/behavior, values and attitudes.

Faced with this problem of poor attendance and late coming, an investigation was made. These were some of the causes found:

1. Poverty in homes
2. Lack of basic amenities
3. Inadequate living space
4. Low self esteem
5. Lack of interest in education
6. Physical and verbal abuse at home

7. Single parenting where the mother is usually the sole breadwinner
8. Crowded homes-scarcity of food
9. Child labour

From this study I was able to formulate a problem statement

“ An investigation into whether the implementation of a breakfast programme will enhance attendance among a group of students at Waltham All Age School.”

A programme of intervention was formulated. This included home visits, providing students with nutritious breakfast, interviewing community members, video shows and playing tapes in the mornings and giving incentives.

There were many challenges in implementing the programme but the end product was most rewarding. It was a pleasure to see those targeted students eating heartily in the mornings, then taking part in the days’ activities. They were asking and answering questions. Their faces were bright and happy. The sad dejected looks of concern were wiped away. When a student said, “Thank You, Miss,” one could feel it coming from the heart. Students came to ask if they could help with the preparations, knowing that they would get special privileges. They got to school so early that the teachers found it difficult to keep up with them.

As they attended, so did their class work improved. Teachers had to make special preparations to accommodate these students. They no longer felt a sense of inferiority. They now know the taste of success. They were now measuring up with their peers.

The parents were showing more interest in their children’s work. And those who were doubtful of the programme, had to admit that it was a success. It is our intention to build a training center to assist the parents in food preparation and needlecraft, in order that they can help themselves.

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GOLVIA MCDONALD, PRINCIPAL.
ACTION RESEARCH _ A MEANS
OF FINDING SOLUTIONS

ACTION RESEARCH-MT. HANNAH ALL AGE SCHOOL

Upon being introduced to Action Research Project as means of identifying the causes of the problem and a way of resolving them, We were moved to implement this device to solve problem at our school. We especially targeted the area of underachieving in numeracy.

Hence, the problem statement was arrived at:

“An Investigation into whether the implementation of a mathematics program (practical approach- games, mathematics competition, mathematics club) will enhance numeracy among a group of students at Mt. Hannah All Age.”

The steps outlined were applied to resolve the problem.

We discovered that some of the causes were due to a feeling of inadequacy and lack of self worth because of not being able to keep up with the work and being unfavourable compared to sibling and peers.

Most of the students have extent ability but such problem of short attention span, learning problems, lack of interest shown by parents, unfavourable housing conditions, under nourishment and hereditary factors.

For these reasons the group studied exhibited behavioral problems such as:

1. Inattentiveness
2. Not completing given work
3. Taking unduly long time to complete work
4. Truancy
5. Difference in active participation of lesson
6. Disrupts class
7. Failure to do homework
8. Cheat in doing work
9. Provokes other students

To overcome such inadequacies the action research strategies were employed to make a careful analysis of the group and an effective policy was developed and implemented.

1. The implementations of integrated letter enable students and teachers to recognize the application of mathematics in all subject areas.
2. Project work afforded opportunity for greater participation.
3. Regular test and quizzes.
4. Sensitizing parents to monitor homework.

5. Staff development sessions.
6. More individual attention.
7. Rewarding success and improvement.

By utilizing these measures improvements were evident in students interest level and performance and rapport between students and teachers. The students self confidence and attitude to work also improved.

The attendance, level of training improved and disruption dropped.

The students who were targeted benefited greatly. The teaching method employed by teachers helped them to be more effective. Parents also displayed greater interest in school and students.

This has encouraged us to employ this method in other areas and on a wider scale.

The project on a whole was invaluable on helping to achieve the goals of the project, as one of the stated goals was to lift the level of numeracy progressively over the life of the project, this has been accomplished in part. It is our intent to apply this method throughout and beyond the duration of the project.

Vaughn Malcolm, Principal.

ACTION RESEARCH-BYBROOK PRIMARY

Fifty percent of grade four students at Bybrook Primary were reading below grade level. This set of students entered grade 1 below the required standard. This can be borne out by looking at the grade I inventory test when pupils entered the school.

This group of pupils is from homes where:

1. Their parents were unable to read
2. Parents place little emphasis on education
3. Attendance pattern is poor.

A screening of three of these pupils was done by Mico Care Centre June 2001. All three were found to be functioning at the intellectual impaired/ deficient range of intellectual ability. One was reading two grades below expectation and two were reading five grade levels below expectation. Recommendation was made by the center for all different type of expert intervention. Parents do not have the means by which these recommendations could be pursued.

Hence the problem statement was developed.

“An investigation into whether the ‘Phonics Factory Kit’ along with ‘Jamal Literature’ will enhance literacy among a group of grade 4 Students at Bybrook Primary.”

The class teacher, the literacy coordinator and the principal tried three approaches to help these pupils to improve their reading standards.

1. The use of the Phonics Factory Kit in reading lessons.
2. Pupils were asked to attend the adult literacy classes.

3. Visits to the homes of pupils to get their parents motivated to see the importance of education to their children’s development as well as themselves.

The aim of the research was to ascertain the following:

1. Will the use of the Phonics Factory Kit aid in the improvement of students’ literacy level?
2. Can pupils’ attendance at the literacy classes help pupils attain an improved literacy standard?
3. What would be the pupils’ reaction to the adult literacy Literature?

Action Strategies

Pupils were introduced to the Phonics Factory Kit. They listened, said and did exercises in workbook under teacher’s guidance. They also developed their own songs and poems about themselves and this led them to take more interest in classes.

Classes were held two times daily and during general reading time and one in the afternoon at two thirty to three o’ clock.

Pupils also visited and participated in the adult literacy classes, Monday to Wednesday at 7pm to 9pm. These classes came about as part of the action plan on community development.

Implementation

It was a difficult task to get the parents of these students to see the need to attend literacy classes since they believed that they are now too old to learn anything. Some parents registered but cease attending

classes after being present a few times. Four of the parents attend until they were able to sign their names.

On a whole the adult literacy class failed and at present only some of the grade four boys and two adults are in attendance.

The literacy coordinator and the principal along with the class teacher implemented the strategies using the phonics Factory Kit. The pupils would listen, say and do exercises in workbook under guidance. They were also encouraged to write songs and poems, which were displayed for other pupils to see. This strategy helped to improve the pupils self image. When their work were displayed they felt good about themselves and this led to them wanting to take more active part in classes. The homes of the pupils were also visited and parents encouraged to send their children to school regularly. Pupils who had financial problems were provided with free lunches.

The Success Of the Plan

Pupils started to attend school regularly. There were improvements in the general attitude of these pupils who became more disciplined and less aggressive to the other students. All pupils can now sign their names, write a short letter, read a little better, although not fluently and show marked improvements in calculations. Definitely there are improvements and these strategies will continue to lift these pupils to a higher level.

I.V GUTZMORE, PRINCIPAL

ACTION RESEARCH AT WORK-CLAPHAM ALL AGE

From a personal perspective an Action Research Project is viewed as an effective tool, which seeks to unearth and give insight into a particular situation.

The Action Research Project, which was implemented at Clapham All Age School, is an effective and reliable tool that can be used at an educational level within our educational institutions. Moreover, the action research is ideal for students who resent books because of their incapability to read and lack of reading materials in their homes.

This reflects among a group of grade Three students at Clapham All Age School. Having borne this in mind, the strategies are being employed to address the problem. At the same time the students are treated with dignity and their self worth is considered. Literacy skills include reading and reading is a visual language. Reading by the ear differs from reading by the eye in some cases among many students from impoverish homes where the language differs from that of the book. Against this background the teacher is keen at having three effective stages and strategies in word attack skills employ at various grades level especially Grades one to four.

The Action Research seeks to involve students fully in their own learning. It also integrates subjects across the curriculum. If students are to acquire literacy skills and to function effectively in their academic and social life they must be made to understand that reading is the essence of reading, be it symbol or graphic. High achievement in literacy can only be realized through quality 'in put' through 'out put'. No student should be written off as 'dunce.' Instead, experiences should be created and opportunities given to students so that their true potential can be realized. Strategies in use serve to motivate and arose interest in students wanting to learn, most importantly to read. In interacting

with the group of grade three students it was discovered that most of them are being exposed to books at school and their language needs to be improved.

Having faced with the challenge to instruct a group of grade three students whose ability to recognize letters and words was limited; I decided to use three stages in word attack skills to aid students' literacy inadequacies.

These are:

1. Alphabetic
2. Orthographic
3. Logographic

From the observation made, the findings revealed that the following causes contributed to their literacy inadequacies:

1. Poor attendances
2. Inattentiveness
3. Physical impediment
4. Lack of motivation
5. Parents' attitude towards education
6. Environmental background

At the end of the investigations a problem statement was formulated:

“Will the Alphabetic, Orthographic, Logographic approach techniques improve pupils' ability to recognize letters and words along with discussion and pictures?”



“Not all knowledge lies within the covers of books.”

M. Miller

Followed was a planned programme, which entailed appropriate materials and teaching strategies, which are designed to help satisfy and remedy inadequacies. The main focus was placed on listening, speaking, reading and writing.

It was proven that the implementation process was a challenging, encouraging and rewarding

experience. It was amazing to see hear the set of students spelling words correctly by recognizable sounds and identifying words on materials in classroom. Peer interaction was paramount as it fostered effective learning in their group. Students added words to personal word list and asked if they could use words in sentences on their own. Here metacognition strategy was at work as students took their own learning into their hands. They self correct,, self question and retract. The students were motivated. They utilized their break to do work and share ideas with each other.

Picture, which depicts their experiences, served as motivating factors to get students to speak and write. Surprisingly, most students wrote about the picture they liked best, they checked word chart for words they needed in writing. The sentences students wrote were in coherent manner and they formed a paragraph. Students gave their paragraph a title.

Unfortunately, the time was too short to achieve more. These students were taken from their regular class two days per week for an hour each day. It was a challenge for me to supervise the class to which I was assigned while facilitating the group of Grade Three students.

The problem highlighted is one of the school's major concerns. And is also an element of the School Development Plan. The school is relentless in using the most effective resources at its disposal to eliminate illiteracy among its population. The major problems identified were addressed. It is the intent to employ the strategies used in all grades.

Miriam Miller, Senior Teacher.
Investigator

“Children should not be made to believe that all knowledge lies within the covers of books.”

ACTION RESEARCH AT WORK- FRUITFUL VALE ALL AGE

Fruitful Vale All Age is one of many rural schools that is affected by poor attendance. With an enrollment of 332 students the average attendance is 220, which only represent 67% of the enrollment. This falls very short of the Ministry Of Education's level of 95 % attendance level among primary schools in Jamaica. This situation stimulated some level of interest as it was discovered that this has been a prevailing trend over the years. It is of interest to note that often times the absentees can be seen walking about in the community with nothing special to do.

A Problem statement was therefore formulated:

"An investigation into whether Parental awareness and Need Satisfaction will improve students attendance at the Fruitful Vale All Age School in rural Jamaica."

The researcher was forced to ponder on a few questions:

1. Will providing lunches for irregular attending students encourage attendance of students?
2. Will directly communication with parents encourage them to send their children out to school?
3. Will there be significant levels of improvement in attendance after the implementation of a remedial programme?
4. To what extent will attendance improve?

The teachers monitored their registers and identified delinquent students. The statistics was forwarded to the principal who immediately sent out information to the relevant parents. Letters were written highlighting the period of absence and a questionnaire prepared to determine the reason for absence. Home

visits were also done.

Some of the causes cited by parents included:

1. No money
2. No lunch
3. Rainfall
4. Had to help in home
5. Had to help in field
6. Had to stay home with baby.

Parents agreed that with help they would be prepared to send their children to school.

Addressing this problem of poor attendance is crucial not only in ensuring that students are safely in schools but also help in addressing other problems such as poor performance academically and the building of character.

Implementation

Since the lack of money was the root of the problem action was taken swiftly.

Targeted students were provided with lunch on a daily basis and as the need arise at the school's expense or from subsidy. Parents were encouraged to come in, whenever convenient, to discuss related matters in order to continue the process.

There was evidence of improvement in attendance generally, as a direct result of the Programme. Statistics has shown that by the end of the first month, there was an increase in the overall attendance of each class.

At the end of the term there was an increase in the overall attendance of targeted students of 32%.

Delinquent Students

Total =74

Av. Att. at end of term=23

It was noted that the pattern of attendance fluctuated over time and revealed other cause such as custom.

An active monitoring of students, yielded incremental success in the different classes and this process will continue, as there is all indication that the process can be successful.

Constant communication with parents can and does serve to encourage pupils' attendance. However, where the elements are the deciding factor, the pupils affected, still maintain a constant pattern.

In reference to the question asked at the beginning of the research, it could be concluded that there are definite answers. Providing lunches did help to encourage 19 consistent students. Communicating directly with parents opened the door for continuing communication and monitoring of students also aided in the improvement. Lunch assistance has helped. This was later interrupted due to the breakdown of the refrigerator, which resulted in the discontinuation of this assistance. This has impacted greatly on the true outcome of the project.

Conclusion

The entire project demonstrates that if an organization is willing to invest time and manpower in trying to solve issues, Positive results can be achieved. It must be noted that action research need not be an elaborate exercise. Instead it just needs focused thoughts and a willingness to act on statistical findings. The absence of data will make your efforts appear meaningless.

In addition, working with others in solving problems or seeing a positive change, does give a rewarding feeling. It does allow the organization to experience a feeling of collective success.

Winston Mcclearly, Principal

ACTION RESEARCH AT WORK-HAPPY GROVE ALL AGE

Happy Grove A/A school is located in St. Elizabeth North West. It is located on the main road between the Shrimp Country, Middle Quarters and the Agricultural Wholesale Market, New Market. Happy Grove All Age School students are predominantly from a farming family and to a lesser extent, vending.

Background

Based on the Grade Four Diagnostic Test, percentage 'at risk' students are higher than the national and regional averages. This means that a disturbingly high number of grade four students face the risk of not being able to read before leaving primary school, hence not being able to read any at all.

An Examination of the problem

A closer examination of the problem revealed that it is the boys that face the difficulty of illiteracy. According to the grade four Diagnostic Test 2000-2001 literacy average for boys was twice as low as the girls average. This lowered the entire class average telling what appeared to be an appalling story.

Class Average =45 %
Boys =33%
Girls =57%

Further inspection showed that only six boys from a class of 22 performed deficiently with averages in single digits to 20s.

The researcher therefore sought a way to offer assistance to these boys.

A Problem Statement was developed.

“ An investigation into whether boys interest particularly sports can motivate their learning.”

The researcher sought answers to the following questions:

1. Will involving students in activities of choice motivate them to read?

2. How well will students recognize word when they are used with real objects?
3. How would using sports as a motivator work within the present educational environment?
4. To what extent will the students improve when the strategy is used?
5. Will students recognize words when seen in strange places?

Implementation

In order to answer the above-mentioned questions, samples were selected using the Grade 3 & 4 Diagnostic Test results.

They were asked to answer the following questions-

1. What would you like to do on a daily basis to stem your reading problems?
2. Will it encourage your interest and full co-operation including attendance?

Answers

All samples said sports and cricket in particular. They vowed to comply fully fearing that they might lose such rare opportunity. All samples were eager to start the programme.

Strategies were administered for 50 minutes each day. It was done in two parts.

Section 1: 25 minutes
This involved active cricket playing.

Section 2: 25 minutes
This involved the recognition of cricket related words.

The link between sports and literacy was immediately recognized.

Words chosen were:

RUN, OUT, HIM, BAT, STUMP, ALEX, JEFFERY, OLIVER,

TREVOR, WICKET, BALL, PETER, FIELD.

The sample was not able to call the words correctly. They proceeded to call them a cricket word at random. The words were then written on cards cut out in shape of bats and other objects.

On day 2 the sample was given the same set of words. Most of them were able to recognize more than 50% of the words. However some words were wrongly called e.g. **Wicket for wicket.**

On day three similar exercises were done with a difference. The words were seen in isolation in the environment. None of the boys was able to recognize more than 15% of the words.

On day four the sample was given the words to match with the objects and they were able to achieve 55 % accuracy. The sample was later given the words to use in sentences. After four weeks all members of the sample were able to recognize at least 30 sight words when seen.

Conclusion

Answers are generally based on evidence. It is therefore true that using a child's interest as a motivational factor for learning; it can improve his learning by approximately 60%.

Students will recognize words whenever they are used with real things that they are engaged in. Inadequate human resources can hamper the entire progress of such demanding activity. Students will recognize the words in their environment after long exposure. We believe that lifting the boys' standard of achievement can improve an entire class result.

Similar research was conducted with grades 2 & 3 and yielded the same results.

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Ricardo Ramsay, Sports coordinator

ACTION RESEARCH AT WORK-SIMON ALL AGE

The Action Research Project, introduced to the Simon All & Infant School, was indeed a powerful instrument, which allowed teachers to tackle a particular problem that existed in the school over a period of time.

It was observed that the children's scores for the Grade 3 Diagnostic Tests, Grade 4 Literacy Tests and the Grade Six Achievement Test were not on par with the National and Regional scores. It was evident that in the internal examinations the boys' scores were higher than the girls'.

Investigation was made into a number of factors that may have contributed to this. The following were discovered:

1. Minimal learning support at home
2. Nutritional factor which contributed to tardiness and lack of energy during the days

The teacher found out that doing an Action Research would definitely be a challenge since the research requires:

1. Stamina and perseverance
2. Quality planning sessions
3. Positive preparation
4. All possible resources e.g. human/natural.
5. All type of material including computer etc.
6. Flexibility

Enthusiasm ran wild. Teachers undertook the action research and focused on various skills such as writing, dramatizing, listening, speaking, computer application, collecting, drawing, composing, entertaining, recording and discovering. These give the teacher better knowledge about the student, help them to interact deeply with the students and reciprocal learning will also take place.

A further investigation revealed that 40% of the students were performing below their grade level.

As mentioned earlier, inadequate parental supervision and economic circumstances form the base of the existing problem. This posed a major challenge for teachers since they know that every child has the potential to achieve high standard in academic achievement and personal development. It was out of these concerns that the problem statement was formulated:

“An investigation into whether team planning on improved teaching strategies will improve literacy and numeracy among students at the Simon All Age & Infant School.”

The researcher was confronted with a number of questions. These include:

1. Will team planning and improved teaching strategies improve literacy and numeracy among students?
2. How will the students react once the implementation begins?
3. Will there be a mark level of improvement in students' literacy/numeracy achievement?

The formulated programme of intervention was staff development workshops, effective team planning sessions, instructional material, designing effective students involvement and participation, identifying learning needs of individual students and appropriate teaching learning strategies to meet those needs. Teachers met twice per week for about two hours to collectively plan appropriate instruction for students' development. Peer supervision strategy was employed to ensure that activities were executed as planned. This

yielded an overwhelming result. IN totality , the implementation process was a stimulating and compensating experience. It was rewarding to see the children of Simon All Age and Infant School participating in group work, drama,music, computer applications, poetry and story writing. They also read and used learning materials in and around the environment. There was also a noticeable decrease in the noise level as new activities occupied their time.

Students became enthused about the Literacy Window; hence, total involvement was experienced. Discussions from stories were linked to their everyday experiences. Dramatization became a natural factor because children were able to visualize scenes from stories. The reading levels in all grades improved by a remarkable 10%.

Parents, guardians, teachers, and peers are aware of the moving achievements, which are now evident. All the children that were involved in this research are proud of themselves in their reading and tries to out do others.

Overall, the improved teaching strategies planned were utilized and teachers of all grades were able to attest to the fact that the children showed improvement in literacy and numeracy and this reflected in the other subject areas as well. The parent, community members are also proud of the children's all around achievement. It is hoped that this programme will continue through out the school.

Mr. Wilson, Principal

ACTION RESEARCH AT WORK-ALDERTON ALL AGE SCHOOL

The school community is a typical rural farming community where only subsistent farming is done. It benefits from basic amenities such as piped water, electricity supply and telephone services. Standard of living is not very high since most community persons who are literate leave the community in pursuit of their goals or employment opportunities. Remaining, therefore, are skilled workers, three teachers, one nurse, one probation officer and two clerical assistants. The lack of housing development has retarded the growth and development of this community and forces teachers to live outdoors.

Many of the community members who remain are either unskilled, under achievers or those who lack the zeal and determination to improve their capabilities. Hence these persons are either semiliterate or grossly deficient.

These deficiencies often limit parents' involvement and participation in school and community activities. Hence they are not visible at Parent Teachers Association, the churches or Civic Groups within the community. There is therefore a great need for leaders and emergent leaders. These parents and guardians are unable to give proper supervision of and assistance to their children in their academic work. The students also report that they are often chased, when they seek assistance from these parents and guardians in their schoolwork. This is often done on the premise that there is inadequate time to deal with them. As a result, remediation work was duly considered and a decision taken to find a suitable place within the community in which a learning center can be established. The center will be furnished and equipped with the necessary material, and equipment to facilitate family literacy. Inclusive of these materials and equipment are books, games, flash cards, computers and audio visual aids.

A problem statement was developed as a means of engaging in an action

research to remedy the situation.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

'An investigation into whether the establishment of a learning center within the immediate school community to facilitate Family Literacy among parents and other community persons will act as a support for students' learning.'

The aim therefore was:

1. To get permission from the community members to establish a learning center at the community center.
2. Acquire skills through the utilization of the facilities of the learning center
3. Use the acquired skills to broaden parents' knowledge.
4. Use literacy skills to assist their children meaningfully
5. Develop a high level of self-esteem, a sense of worth and confidence.

Community members drawn from all groups along with JAASP donated materials, time, labour, money and books. All contributed to the success of the establishment.

It was expected that at the end of the prescribed period the completed learning center would be in full use by members of the school community. It was noted that members from the community borrowed books. And three persons have read one book each. The books were at the pre primer level and the reflection on their faces revealed that they thoroughly enjoyed the exercise. It is also expected that literate students and parent will offer assistance to those who have difficulty in reading. It is hoped that the supply will be replenished periodically to ensure that many generations to come will be served. Since the learning center is located on the school premises, it will be much more secure and will be a means by which parents, guardians, students, and teachers are brought

together in a teaching /learning situation. It is also expected to be the means of motivation for slow learners and a challenge to the more alert students also.

The project though tedious, was a satisfying one for the project designer. A sense of achievement swelled her as she observed each person entering the center and gravitating almost spontaneously towards a book. The ambiance of the room also created a lively welcoming and interactive environment. It was noted that corporate approach to problem solving is key to its solution. As people are given the opportunity to become involved, they can identify with the intent and purpose of the problem /solution and work toward solving it. Community persons can now be engaged in family literacy without fear or undue stress.

Overall, the project will have immeasurable impact on the lives of community members.

It is widely perceived that the difficulty that exists in teaching adults is simply to get them to acknowledge their weaknesses and also to think. The thought process is best stimulated through interaction with others.

It is with pleasure that I recommend that leaders embarked on new and interesting strategies that will help to boost the interest of learners. It is hoped, that as the age of technology overwhelms us, administrators will become proactive and embrace changes readily. I recommend that the attendant public value this learning center and make serious steps to preserve it so that many generations to come will benefit.

Mrs. Cunningham, Principal

PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE GURNEY'S MOUNT ALL AGE

When I assumed duties as principal of the Gurney's Mount All Age School in 1995, the physical plant was in a dilapidated and deplorable condition. There was no electricity, proper sanitary conveniences, canteen, library, principal's office, staff room and playfield. There were five teachers on staff two of whom were trained and three untrained. My first priority was to undertake the rehabilitation of the physical plant. The reason being that deplorable physical condition has a demoralizing effect upon teachers and students alike.

In early 1996, I spoke with a group of concerned citizens who are past students of the school. Coming out of those discussions the Cold Spring School Community Outreach Programme for education S.C.O.P.E. was formed to seek assistance to improve conditions at the school. Letters of appeal were written to the Associated Hanover Charities, The Tryall Trust Fund and Hanes Garment Factory. The Tryall Trust Fund responded with a donation of fifty (50) gallons of paint. They also contributed seventy (\$70,000) thousand dollars to assist with the payment of architectural drawings. At present the Tryall Trust Fund is paying the salary of Teacher's Aide in Grade three (3). The Tryall Trust Fund also, pays for teacher's professional development courses in computer integration.

The Hanover Charities responded with an initial contribution of sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000) to be used for literacy education and remedial reading. A sum of fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) was deducted from

that and was used for electrical installation. Every year Hanover Charities contributes the sum of sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000) towards literacy education and remedial reading for grade four (4).

Appeal was made to Hanes Garment Factory for furniture and they contributed three (3) long benches.

Since 1997 the Alumni Association has been making contributions in cash and kind. The Adopt-A-school Program to which the Alumni Association president is affiliated is to undertake a project to improve the quality of early childhood education at Gurney's Mount All Age School and the feeder school the Cold Spring Basic School. In 1996 a project proposal for the complete rehabilitation of the physical plant and the construction of a building to accommodate a library, sanitary conveniences and a canteen was presented to the Jamaica School Investment Fund (J.S.I.F.) The project was approved and undertaken in September 2000 at a cost of over five million dollars (\$5,000,000). Grace Kennedy Foundation Contributed the furniture for the canteen.

It was discovered that not all Private Sector Organizations are willing to finance Educational Development; those that do make the contribution have to be convinced that they are contributing to a worthy cause.

This was a challenging exercise. The main challenges faced were the doubts and fears both from the point-of-view of the teachers and from the other community members. They

believed that being in a rural school that is not popular and outstanding no one would respond to their plea for help.

The main problems faced were efficient and effective implementation. Community members and teachers were interested in knowing what financial benefit would accrue to them out of the School Improvement Programme.

The teachers, community members, visiting past students and students are greatly appreciative of the improvements that have taken place. Teachers have been inspired to pursue higher education. At present two (2) members of staff have successfully completed their Bachelor's Degree in Education. Three members of staff have diplomas from Teachers College and one is pursuing the trained teachers Diploma Programme.

Overseas past students have contributed a total of eleven (11) computers. Community members have expressed a keen interest in Adult Education classes; the current population itself appreciates the improvements that have taken place.

The involvement of the Private Sector is very closely related to the School Improvement Plan because when letters of appeal are made to Private Sector Organization the vision of the school has to be stated along with the learning goals that are documented in the School Development Plan

Mr. Harris, Principal.

INCOME GENERATION PROJECT AT MORGAN'S PASS ALL AGE

The welfare component of the schools programme plays an important part in the schools development.

There is always the need to subsidize the most needy students in many ways .The school feeding programme forms one of the most important part of the total welfare provision.

To provide one hot meal daily, for the students, five days per week for each term, has always been a challenge.

The Ministry of Education's cash and material subvention have always been inadequate to fulfill basic needs. The constant increase in the price of the commodities has compounded the problem. The desire to find additional economic support to subsidize the feeding programme has been a necessity.

The JAASP subsidized the programme in one year with a contribution of \$19000.00.

For obvious reasons the contribution was discontinued the second year.

I submitted a proposal to start a

"100 chicken growing project". On approval I immediately began the implementation process. Materials to construct a 16'x8' coop were bought.

Lumber,Zinc,nails etc.-	\$23550
20 bags feed -----	\$6400
100 chickens	-\$2300
2 feed pans	-\$600
2 watering fonts	-\$1860
<u>Total</u>	<u>\$34770</u>

Due to bad weather and other pressures there was a delay in constructing the chicken coop. The first batch of chicken was bought 24/9/2002. They were put in temporary facilities already present. The chickens grew exceptionally well, reached market age and weight in market time.

The birds were slaughtered and \$11000.00 worth was sold. Disaster struck shortly afterwards praedial thieves broke into the coop and stole approximately half the chickens. Projected earnings from the first batch of chickens were estimated at about \$ 24000.00.

Approximately half the sum

would remain capital to continue the project. The remainder would have gone to the feeding programme, but there was a temporary setback. Within the next three weeks we intend to complete the house and continue the project.

Over time with a little luck, this project can be expanded to accrue more funds and a wider financial base and can therefore benefit more students in other areas.

Mr. Bailey, Principal

ACTION RESEARCH-PRICKLY POLE ALL AGE

The researcher observed that some pupils in grade three were not reading at their grade level. Most of them were reading at the frustrated level. They showed little or no interest in reading and had to be encouraged using various methods. Poor reading, reversals and phonetic decoding skills plagued pupils. Even though the researcher employed different strategies the desired results was not obtained.

However, on a Friday afternoon students and teacher were involved in a reading exercise which consist of games, the teacher realized that students were highly motivated and performed well. This formed the basis of a new strategy to promote reading among students

Hence, a problem statement was developed.

“An investigation into whether the use of reading games and activities will be able to motivate students to improve reading skills.”

The researcher has chosen to embark on an action research, which is most suitable in gathering information and implementing strategies.

A total of five students was chosen and used as a sample to carry out the investigation.

In week one the sample group was given a pre-test, which consisted of an Informal Inventory Test (IRI), comprises of a reading test and word recognition test-words taken from the Dolch Word List.

The grades were as follow:

Students	Marks%
A	20
B	30
C	25
D	50
E	65

The programme was implemented. Activities carried out included flash cards, phonic wheels, pictures, vowel

games and puzzles. Students worked in groups and were dealt with accordingly .The frequency of the intervention lasted twice per week for eight weeks

At the end of the eight weeks period a posttest was administered. The result is noted below.

Students	Marks%
A	35
B	45
C	40
D	59
E	79

With reference to the table above it was evident that there was a marked improvement in reading over the eight-week period. One can conclude that student learn better when strategies are used that they enjoy. The intent is to extend the programme to include other students from various classes. Most of the problems were addressed and students are willing to read without fear.

Despite the limited time the researcher had to compile the study, enough data was collected to ascertain that there are several factors that have bearing on the students reading development. In view of the findings, the researcher would like to make several recommendations, to the individuals that have a pivotal role in this developmental process.

The Students

Reading is one of the most important processes in man’s development. It is recommended that students:

1. Become a member of a library make borrowing and reading of books a hobby.
2. Try to improve on reading by spending quality and leisure time reading suitable materials.
3. Seek help from parents or any other persons who can help constructively to develop reading skills.

PARENTS

Language usage is initiated long before the child has his first encounter with

school; because of this the home is considered an important part in the school’s endeavours. The researcher recommends the following ways and means by which the parent/home can help the child to build positive attitudes towards reading.

1. Parents can assist the teacher by providing educational opportunities for the child at home.
2. Show interest in what the child reads and be willing to explain and discuss reading material.
3. Read stories to the child to stimulate imagination and increase listening and oral Language.
4. Provide a stable family life wherein the child can feel a sense of love and self worth.

THE TEACHER

1. Know the student you are teaching, seek to understand their social, cultural and language background.
2. Use games stories, colourful pictures, to motivate students and thus form a basis for the development of the lesson. Recognize that every child has an unique pattern. When possible, it is best to correct a child’s problem on a one to one basis.
3. Reward the child’s progress not perfection. Keep the doors open for communication between the teacher and the parents informing them about the child’s performance from time to time.

Ms.Lilleth Luke, Teacher.

ACTION RESEARCH AT WORK-MOUNT LIBERTY ALL AGE

Comprehension is the primary aim of reading. Children should be taught to understand and compare story themes, respond to characters and events, identify common theme and make simple inferences by referring to the text.

Upon investigation it was discovered that most students from grades 2-9 were not performing satisfactorily in comprehension. Among the perceived causes were:

Most teachers used limited teaching strategies.

Insufficient exposure to books by students

Books in classrooms are not used effectively

Lack of oral communication in comprehension

Use of home language by students

Reading without purpose

Questionnaires were administered to teachers and parents to substantiate the claims made above. The data revealed that teacher taught comprehension in class but most students were not using comprehension skills to aid in reading and an approximately 60% of parents did not read with children at home and 50 % gave reading books to students as a form of punishment. With these factors in mind a problem Statement was formulated.

Problem Statement.

“An investigation into whether improved teaching strategies through the use of higher-level comprehension skills will enhance literacy among a group of students at Mount Liberty All Age, Clarendon.”

The researcher was led to ask a number of question to which answers were sought through the implementation of a number of strategies.

1. Will increased vocabulary work improves students reading level?

Will story telling, oral questioning and reading to students increase their

interest in reading?

Will improved teaching strategies improve comprehension skills?

Proposed Strategies

It is the teacher’s job to identify and utilize a range of strategies to maximize on students potentials.

After investigating and finding out where the problems lie, it was agreed on that if they were to be dealt with effectively a number of issues would be addressed. These include:

Staff development workshops to assist with comprehension/ questioning strategies.

Sensitize parents of the problem and organize Parents’ Reading Club.

Use comprehension activities that are fun but purposeful to develop students’ comprehension skills.

Engage students in

Reading/comprehension activities at least 30 mins. daily outside planned lessons

Allow students to explore and develop comprehension skills through Art, Music and Drama.

To effectively access the outcome of the intervention a pre test was administered to students from grades 2-9. Out of a total of 268 students the result was as follow:

Girls		
13 mastery	23 near mastery	79 non-mastery
Boys		
3 mastery	16 near mastery	131 non-mastery

Based on the poor result from the pre-test, strategies such as: pulling passages apart with students, setting questions at a higher level which were answered by students and teachers as well as integrating comprehension in all subject areas were embarked on.

After the intervention students were given the posttest.

The result is as follow:

Girls		
44 mastery	22 near mastery	49 non-mastery
Boys		
20 mastery	26 near mastery	99 non-mastery

Although the desired result was not achieved, it was concluded that students worked and learned best when a variety of activities and methods are used. This has helped students to become more confident and more willing to share their ideas and opinions.

Teachers who contributed to the success of the research are confident that students who have come to value the use of talk and higher level of comprehension skills in their learning;

Are more likely to explore beyond facts.

Are able to make connections with information

Are aware of various solution to problems

Understand printed material

Based on the outcome of the research, it is the view of the teachers, parents and students that using variety of teaching strategies in developing higher comprehension skills will definitely enhance literacy in students.

Control over what is learned is a partnership between the teacher, students and also parents.

Angella Haewood, Teacher