

**ANNUAL TECHNICAL REPORT**  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
2023-2024



Government of  
**BELIZE**



# **Annual Technical Report**

Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology

2023-2024

# List of Abbreviations

ACE	Adult and Continuing Education
ATLIB	Association of Tertiary Level Institutions in Belize
BAPSS	Belize Association of Principals of Secondary Schools
BBTE	Belize Board of Teacher Educators
BCCI	Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry
BEMIS	Belize Education Management Information System
BESPlan	Belize Education Sector Plan
BESRPII	Belize Education Sector Reform Program Phase II
BNTU	Belize National Teachers Union
CABEI	Central American Bank for Economic Integration
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CANTA	Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies
CBE	Competency-based Education
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPRO	Communications and Public Relations Office
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CXC	Caribbean Examination Council
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualification
DEC	District Education Centre
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EQIP II	Education Quality Improvement Program Phase II
ETES	Employment Training and Education Services
E-UP	Education Upliftment Project
GER	Gross Enrollment Ratio
GLOBE	Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment
HRDS	Human Resource Development Strategy
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IEP	Individual Education Plan
ISEE	Instructional Supervision for Educational Excellence
ITVET	Institution for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
KRA	Key Result Area
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MoECST	Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology
NACB	National Accreditation Council of Belize
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
PEU	Project Execution Unit
PPRE	Policy, Planning, Research and Evaluation Unit
REGF	Rural Education Grant Fund
S&T	Science and Technology
SAGE	Skills to Access the Green Economy
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SpED	Special Education
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics
STR	Student Teacher Ratio
SWU	Student Welfare Unit
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
TEDS	Teacher Education and Development Services
TEI	Teacher Education Institution
TLI	Teacher Learning Institute
TPSES	Tertiary and Post-Secondary Education Services
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

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# Message from the Minister

## Hon. Francis Fonseca

This Annual Technical Report sets out details of the work that has been done in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology during 2023. In the three years since the launch of the Belize Education Sector Plan 2021 – 2025, our Ministry has remained true to our commitment to “Making Education Work for Belize.”

Guided by the clear mission of PlanBelize to enhance Access, Equity, and Quality in the education system, we have charted a path and stayed the course to ensure transformative impact. Our efforts have centered on four identified priorities: Reforming the System of Education, Transforming Teaching and Learning, Prioritizing Underserved Sectors, and Maximizing Human Capital. These areas reflect our unwavering commitment to creating an inclusive and high-quality education system that serves every learner in Belize.

Our work in the past year has focused on revising and updating our education policies and structures to meet society’s evolving needs. Modernizing the system will create a more efficient and effective framework for all our stakeholders.

We have worked diligently to enhance the quality of education by supporting the continuous professional development of teachers and the development of innovative teaching practices. Empowering our teachers will inspire and cultivate a generation of critical thinkers and problem-solving. Ensuring that every learner, regardless of background or need, has access to meaningful education is at the heart of our mission. We have committed to reaching marginalized and underserved communities, and engaging with both families and school communities to provide them with the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.

Investing in our people is the key to our nation’s growth and development. We have encouraged and supported a culture of lifelong learning and skill development and taken important steps to shore up the foundation that will help every Belizean to reach his or her potential and to contribute meaningfully to our society.

That continues to be the driving force behind all our efforts: that unshakeable desire to do our part to be good Belizeans, and to ensure that we build a system in which “our schools teach you or should teach you not to destroy but to build, not to transgress the rights of others but rather to work positively that the rights of all will be preserved and protected.” (George Price, National Day Celebration – School Children’s Rally, 1968)

We are grateful for the combined efforts of the extended education community who continue to work with us toward achieving our goals. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology will not stop working with you and for you, for Belize.

# Executive Summary

The achievements of 2023 are a testament to the MoECST's commitment to *'Making Education Work for Belize,'* its dedication to serving others, its obligation to uphold strong stakeholder partnerships, and its continued efforts to attain its overarching goals through a shared vision. With the consistent guidance of PlanBelize's clear mission to enhance Access, Equity, and Quality as reflected in the BESPlan 2021-2025, the MoECST continues to chart intentional, efficient, and impactful strategic actions devoted to Reforming the System of Education, Transforming Teaching and Learning, Prioritizing Underserved Sectors, and Maximizing Human Capital.

This technical report will detail the achievements of the Ministry in implementing its objectives and strategic actions and highlight the relevance of those actions to national, regional, and international development plans and commitments. Several key achievement indicators to be highlighted include:

**The Gross Enrollment Ratios of 44.2% at the pre-primary level, 95.8% at the primary level and 72% at the secondary level, which indicate an overall recovery of each level post COVID19. The preschool enrollment in particular represents a significant 29.1% increase in enrollment since 2022.**

**Free Education through the Education Upliftment Project enrolled three thousand one hundred seventy-four (3,174) students across nine government-owned secondary schools for 2023-2024, representing 574 more students than the target.**

**A decrease in Student Teacher Ratio, with 19 at the primary level and 17 at the secondary level across localities, which indicates improvement in teacher availability and resources relative to the in-school student population.**

**Increased completion rates at all levels in 2023-2024, resulting in a higher transition rate (84.8%) between the primary and secondary level.**

**Increased numbers of trained teachers at all levels (73.7% for pre-primary, 88.5% for primary and 68.4% for secondary).**

**Increased internet access to 66,000 students and 3,807 faculty and staff at the school level.**

**Increased TVET enrollment by 14.6% when compared to the previous year.**

While this report will provide 'Next Steps' for particular activities and unit achievements, the direction for the upcoming year will be mapped through a detailed description of the MoECST's priority areas from the BESPlan for 2024-2025.

The MoECST extends its gratitude to all who have given their unwavering support throughout 2023. We are mindful of lessons learned and we recognize that together, we can do more and be more for Belize.

# Introduction

In 2022, the MoECST identified ‘Next Steps’ and priority areas for the year 2023, and through continuity and solid commitment, even though some targets are still being worked on, many of those targets have been met. Under Reforming the System of Education, the Operations Division has been diligent in its determination to improve system structures to yield transparency and accountability, thus encouraging schools to **BE** better and to **DO** better for Belize. The Policy and Planning Services have improved the collection, handling, management, and reporting of data. As a result of the ongoing restructuring exercise, the School Supervision and Support Services have seen significant improvement in efficiency and effect. The focus, impact, and returns of these divisions are explained under Domain One.

‘Transforming Teaching and Learning’ hinges on the valuable work of MoECST personnel who provide Education Development Services. The targets for 2023 included reassessing the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), validating the updated Belize Standards of Practice for Teaching and Teacher Education, working with the Belize Board of Teacher Educators (BBTE), and maximizing the use of the Teacher Learning Institute (TLI). The activities and achievements in these areas and others are documented under Domain Two.

Domain Three, ‘Prioritizing Underserved Sectors,’ details the successes of the Student Support Services over the past year and, in particular, an evaluation of the ‘Education Upliftment Project: Together We Rise.’

The accomplishments of Workforce Development Services, which aims to increase the quality and productivity of Belize’s workforce, are covered under Domain Four, ‘Maximizing Human Capital.’ The BESPlan 2021-2025 has excelled in focusing and propelling the efforts of the MoECST.



## Priorities of the MoECST

The MoECST is responsible for ensuring that all Belizeans are given an opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for their personal development and to participate fully and actively in the nation's development. The MoECST's portfolio includes oversight of all educational institutions, the National Institute for Culture and History, the National Library Service, and the National Archives. The priorities of the MoECST are guided by the Policy Objectives of the BESPlan, 2021-2025 (p.19), which include:

- 1 Restructure the Ministry of Education to increase its efficiency and capacity to respond effectively to the needs of the education system.**
- 2 Align the Ministry's financial resources and mechanisms with targets for improved performance, expanded access, and increased equity and accountability.**
- 3 Strengthen the legislative, regulatory, and policy framework for better outcomes and improved governance and leadership of the education system.**
- 4 Reform the national curriculum so that students can gain the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed for personal and national development.**
- 5 Make innovative use of science and technology to transform teaching, learning and decision-making processes.**
- 6 Create a high quality and relevant assessment and examination system that is aligned to the national curriculum and that provides meaningful information for improvements in teaching and learning.**

- 7** Transform teacher education and development programs and incentivize quality teaching practices and performance results for improved student learning.
- 8** Implement early childhood policy and curricular reform and expand services in underserved areas to increase access to quality early childhood education.
- 9** Provide the legislation, policies, programs, and resources needed to improve the inclusion and experience of all students in the education system, including those with physical or learning disabilities, psychosocial challenges, and socio-economic needs.
- 10** Strengthen partnerships with industries and the private sector to improve the quality, relevance and responsiveness of the TVET sector.
- 11** Implement legislation, policies, and mechanisms to build the higher education sector's capacity to deliver quality programs and research services aligned to national development needs.
- 12** Expand access to relevant adult education programs to build Belize's human capital and upgrade the quality of the workforce.

# Vision Statement of the BESPlan (2021-2025)

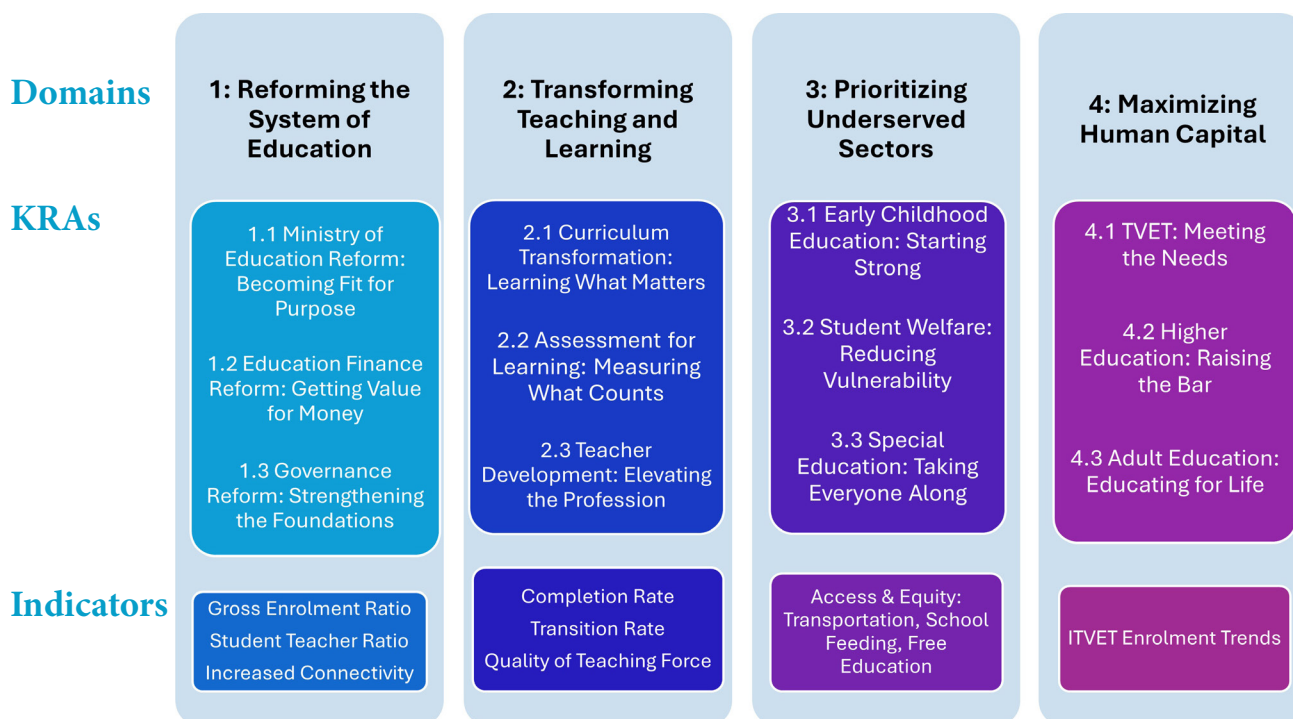
#PlanBelize focuses on strategic development to enhance education quality and access. It addresses the challenges of inequity and comprehensively supports the Ministry of Education to prepare the nation’s students for future needs, technological innovation, and societal changes. The vital role of #PlanBelize in improving educational outcomes and opportunities for all learners cannot be underestimated.

The vision and mission expressed in #PlanBelize, as summarized in the Medium-Term Development Strategy for the Ministry of Education, targets the fundamental rights of all Belizeans who should “have an opportunity to attend school and be educated and trained with relevant skills. Personal success starts with a good education” (#PlanBelize Medium Term Development Strategy, 2023, p. 24).

The MoECST, holding true to this commitment for the benefit of all, is guided by the vision that *The Belize education system will be inclusive, of high quality, accessible and equitable, technologically driven, and capable of fostering the development of good, productive citizens. The system will be accountable and effective in providing the support necessary to allow students, regardless of individual or family characteristics, to achieve their full personal and academic potential and to contribute positively to national development.* (BESPlan 2021-2025, p. 17)

The vision and policy objectives of the MoECST emphasize access, equity, and quality across all levels of the education system. In pursuit of this vision and priorities, the MoECST, through the implementation of the BESPlan 2021-2025, targets four domains using Key Result Areas (KRAs). Figure 1 below illustrates these domains and KRAs with useful indicators to measure progress.

**Figure 1: Domains and KRAs of the BESPlan 2021-2025**



## **2023-2024 Achievements**

# Reforming the System of Education: A Focus on Operations

The Operations Services of the MoECST have full responsibility to support access to quality education for all Belizeans from preschool to university by ensuring proper regulatory, operational, and fiscal oversight and by providing resources to students and educational institutions in an equitable, effective, and accountable manner. For the fiscal period 2023-2024, the MoECST spent 86.58% (\$221.5 million) of its allocated budget on Operations Services.

## Activities:

The Operations Division remained dedicated to “Making Education Work for Belize” by consistently providing financial, psychological, and professional assistance to students, teachers, schools, and the Ministry staff. Financial support was primarily distributed through various initiatives, including payments of grants, scholarships, school transportation, school fees, and textbooks, as well as improving school infrastructure, constructing new school buildings, supporting professional development and the MoRE Campaign, and paying teachers’ salaries.

Some of the most outstanding initiatives included 1) increasing access to education from preschool to junior college; 2) beginning the development of the FAST online platform and relevant Dashboard for the application, processing, and monitoring of student financial aid; 3) streamlining the Rural Education Grant fund to increase access to education for students from rural areas; 4) beginning a comprehensive review and revision of education legislation, regulations and policies to increase the effectiveness in the governance of the education system; 5) training managing authorities and principals on key areas such as education regulations, clinical supervision, financial management, and school self-assessment; 6) implementing a comprehensive rebranding and communications strategy to build the Ministry’s public image and capacity to inform internal and external stakeholders; and 7) encouraging primary and secondary schools to **BE** better and to **DO** better for Belize through the MoRE Campaign.

## Achievements:

The MoECST makes a substantial investment in both the development of teachers and the expansion of access to education for students from all levels. Approximately 88.4% of the Ministry’s budget is directly allocated to addressing the needs of teachers and students. This investment includes funding professional development programs to enhance teaching skills, providing essential resources such as textbooks and educational materials, and supporting initiatives like scholarships and grants to make education more accessible. By prioritizing these areas, the Ministry aims to improve education quality and ensure that teachers and students have the necessary tools and opportunities to succeed.

The MoECST facilitated access to preschool education for over 7,000 students (representing a significant 29.1% increase in enrollment since 2022), to primary education for approximately 60,000 students, and to secondary education for over 22,000 students. This expanded access was achieved by providing grants and financial aid to 52 government, 117 government-aided, and 54 private/specially assisted preschools. This assistance also extended to 59 government, 199 government-aided, and 56 private/specially assisted primary schools and 19 government, 29 government-aided, and 15 private/specially assisted high schools. Additionally, the Ministry assisted other government-aided and specially assisted education institutions, including 5 government and 1 government-aided ITVET, 3 government and 6 government-aided ACE institutions, 2 government and 9 government-aided junior colleges and the University of Belize.

Figure 2 Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) by level for the period 2018 to 2023 shows that preschool enrollment pre COVID 19 was at 47.7%, which declined to 34.2% and 34.3% during the pandemic. The GER increased to 44.2% in 2022/2023 post pandemic.

The GER for primary education was 108.3% in 2018/2019, but it declined to 95.8% in 2022/2023. This decline indicates a reduction in the number of children enrolled in primary education relative to the population of primary school-aged children. In response to this, the MoECST and the GoB recently raised the mandatory school age to 16 years. This initiative aims to ensure that all primary school-aged children remain enrolled in school.

The GER for secondary education remains relatively stable compared to preschool and primary levels. From 70.4% in 2018/2019, it peaked at 73.2% in 2020/2021, and slightly fluctuated to 72.0% in 2022/2023. The peak during the pandemic was directly related to the secondary school sector’s ability to support remote learning and use innovative technology to ensure that teaching and learning continued for the students.

The trends in GER illustrate overall recovery post COVID19.

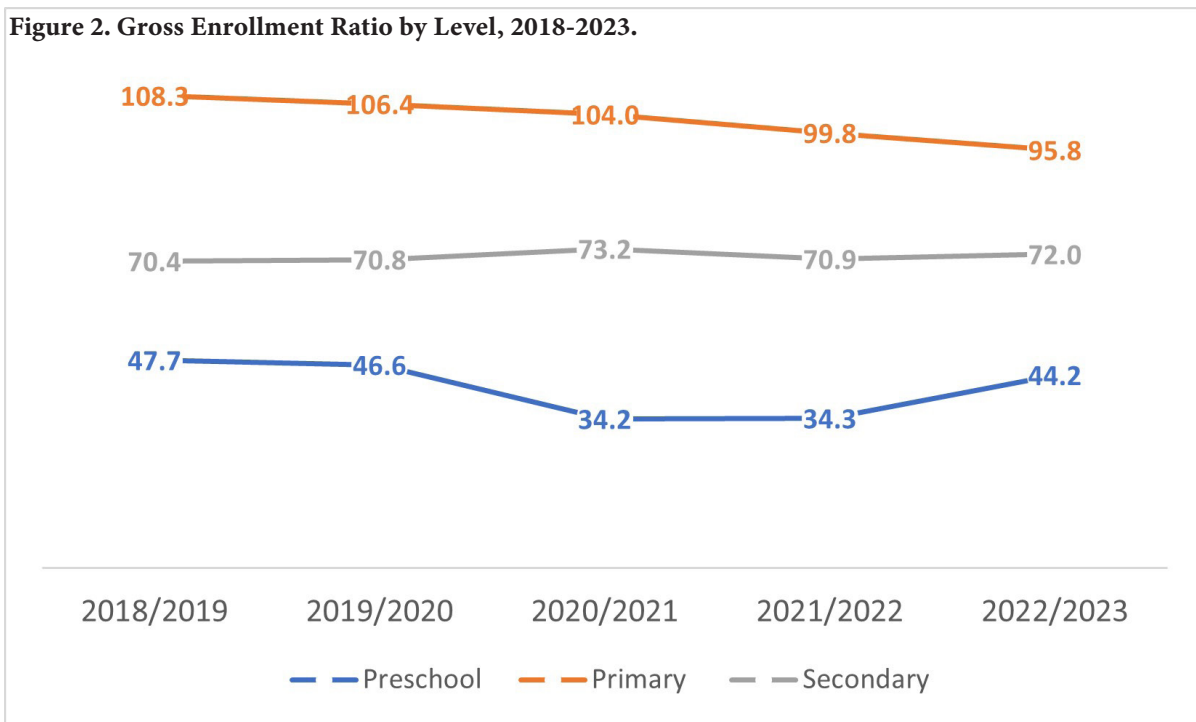


Figure 3. Student - Teacher Ratio (STR) at the Primary Level by Locality for the period 2018-2023 shows that overall STR remained constant at 21 from 2018 to 2021 then slightly declined to 20 in 2022 then 19 in 2023. There has been a general decrease in STR over the years across all localities, indicating an improvement in teacher availability and resources

relative to the student population at the primary level. Rural areas show a more significant decrease compared to urban areas. The progressive decrease in STR signals increased individualized attention to the benefit of each student’s learning needs and results in improved academic performance.

**Figure 3. Student - Teacher Ratio (STR) at the Primary Level by Locality, 2018-2023.**

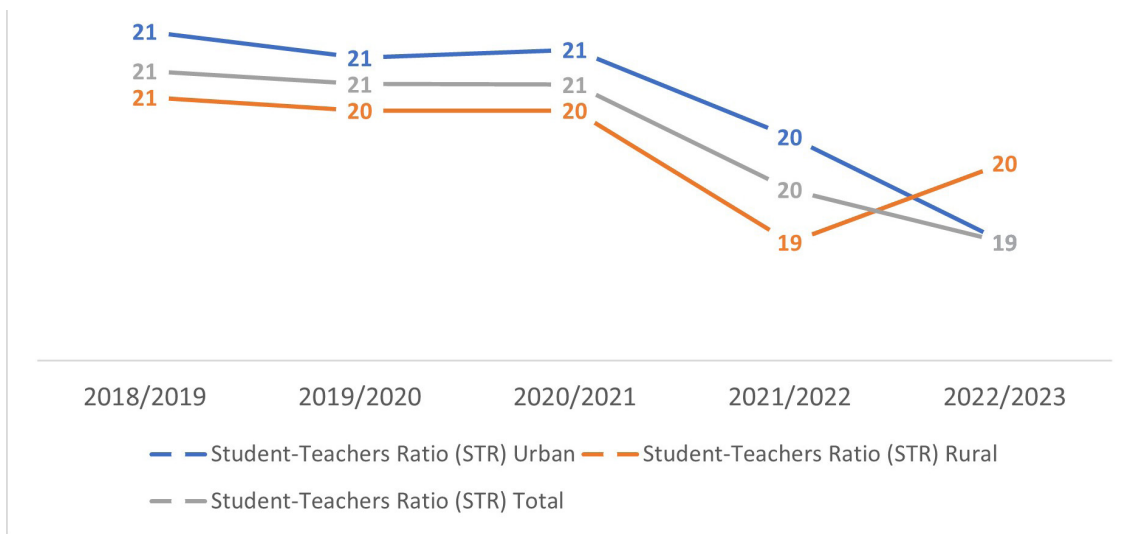
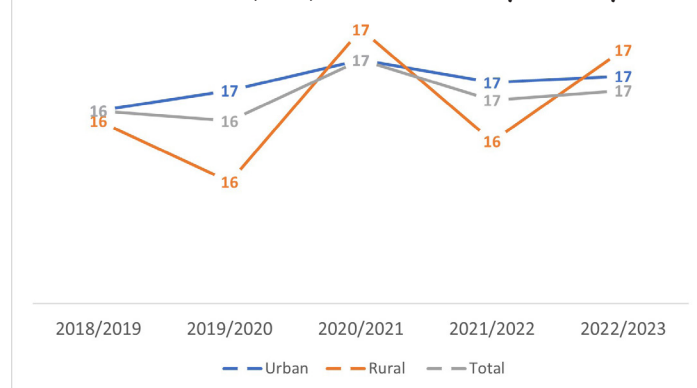


Figure 4. Student - Teacher Ratio (STR) at the Secondary Level by Locality, 2018-2023 indicates that urban and rural STRs both increased from 2018-2019 to 2019-2020 then stabilized at 17, except for rural localities where it temporarily decreased to 16. The total STR follows a similar trend, reflecting a

general stabilization at 17 in most recent years. These trends indicate an increased number of teachers at the secondary level with a manageable in-school population. With the increase in mandatory school age to 16 years, the in-school population will further increase; therefore, to keep the STR at an ideal 17, the number of trained teachers must also increase.

**Figure 4. Student - Teacher Ratio (STR) at the Secondary Level by Locality, 2018-2023.**



The FAST online platform and its accompanying dashboard for the application, processing, and monitoring of student financial aid are nearing completion. This platform is designed to enhance accountability, transparency, and efficiency in processing financial aid for students across various educational levels. By streamlining these processes, the platform will enable a more effective distribution of resources, prioritizing students with the greatest need and targeting areas critical for national development and growth. This system ensures transparent and efficient allocation of financial aid and supports the nation's strategic development goals by focusing on key sectors. The application is available on the Ministry's webpage under the link <https://www.moecst.gov.bz/resources/scholarships/>.

The Rural Education Grant Fund is strategically integrated into the FAST platform to ensure that students from rural communities can access a dedicated funding source specifically designed to address their realities. The integration ensures a seamless application and review process, making it easier for rural students to obtain the financial support they need. By targeting resources to underserved rural areas, the FAST platform will help to bridge the educational gap between urban and rural communities, promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities for all students. Moreover, the platform will enhance transparency by providing real-time updates and detailed reports on the status of grant applications and fund disbursements. This level of transparency will help to build trust among stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, and policymakers, ensuring that the grant fund is managed responsibly.

In response to KRA 1.3 Governance Reform, the Ministry boldly decided to initiate a comprehensive review and revision of education legislation, regulations, and policies. This process has made significant progress. Over February and March of

2023, sensitization sessions were held with teachers, school leaders, and managing authorities of pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools across Belize. These sessions were geared towards preparing these key stakeholders for their role in the education legislative reform. The Deputy Chief Education Officer conducted presentations on the context of the current education legislation of Belize, the Crown Counsel on the amendment and legislative process, and the Chief Education Officer on the way forward. Teachers, school leaders, and managing authorities were sensitized on the history of the Education Rules of 2000, the Education and Training Act of 2010, and the Education Rules Amendments of 2012. They were also given a clear explanation of the organization, structure, interpretation, and gaps in these legislative documents.

As a follow-up and continuation of the reform process, all school leaders and managing authorities received an electronic feedback form to capture teachers' recommendations for suggested amendments. Nationally, the sensitization sessions were attended by 4,444 teachers and school leaders, reflecting 86.8% of this stakeholder group. A voluntary survey launched during the sessions completed by 1,342 participants (30.2% of attendees) indicated that most teachers were only 'somewhat' familiar with the education legislation of Belize. 84.8% stated that they had not received any training or support from their school or management on the education legislation of Belize. Moreover, the majority (57.1%) also indicated that because of their unfamiliarity with the Education Rules of 2000, the Education and Training Act of 2010, and the Education Rules Amendments of 2012, they could not describe or identify a rule or rules requiring amending. The MoECST, through the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), has secured the services of a consultant to guide the revision of all relevant education legislation.

The Ministry's commitment to reform is further demonstrated by the recent legislative amendment



raising the school leaving age to 16. This change aims to improve retention rates among marginalized or at-risk youth, ultimately enhancing the overall standard of education for our young people. Extending the compulsory school age aligns perfectly with the Ministry's goal of expanding access to education, particularly through initiatives such as the Education Upliftment Project: Together We Rise.

In an effort to enhance the quality of school leadership and management across various educational levels, the Ministry, through the Chief Education Officer and the Teacher Administrative Services Unit, facilitated comprehensive training sessions for managing authorities and school principals. These sessions covered key areas, including education regulations, clinical supervision, and financial management. By providing training on education regulations, the Ministry aimed to ensure school leaders are well-versed in the legal and procedural frameworks governing educational institutions. This knowledge is crucial for maintaining compliance and fostering a transparent, accountable environment within schools. These training initiatives are part of the Ministry's broader strategy to strengthen school leadership and management, fostering a more effective, efficient, and accountable education system.

Furthermore, the Ministry made significant strides in implementing a comprehensive rebranding and communications strategy to enhance its public image and improve its ability to inform both internal and external stakeholders. As a key initiative, the Communications Office launched a Microsoft Teams Channel for Ministry personnel to streamline the delivery of particular messages, updates, and internal communications. Social Media communication efforts were boosted to enhance the Ministry's social media standings and communication tactics. The MoECST had a combined reach of 974,300 accounts on its social media platforms.

To improve the timeliness and effectiveness of information dissemination to external stakeholders, the Communications Office streamlined its external communication channels. This work included recategorizing media content and enhancing existing avenues through collaboration with the media and the GoB Press Office. Additionally, the Communications Office drafted a Crisis Communications Plan for the Ministry to guide communication efforts during natural disasters, hazards, and any other event that can significantly impact the education system and Ministry operations.

Lastly, the Operations Division introduced the MoRE Campaign in late November 2023 to encourage and inspire schools to BE better and to DO better for Belize. This campaign aims to highlight the objectives of existing MoECST programs and the school communities' great initiatives and achievements in their efforts to continue delivering MoRE on the BESPlan commitments. By March 2024, the campaign had received nearly 300 submissions, with numerous primary and secondary schools being rewarded for outstanding achievements.

The MoRE Campaign capitalizes on five pillars of excellence:

*be MoRE Digital* - the goal is to foster digital literacy and encourage the integration of technology in learning.

*be MoRE Inclusive* - the goal is to create a culture of acceptance and support for all students.

*be More Healthy* - the goal is to promote healthy behaviors at school to encourage nutritious and active lifestyles for students and school staff.

*be MoRE Involved* - the goal is to build students' pride in their schools through school engagement and community service activities.



*be MoRE Creative + Innovative* - the goal is to recognize teachers for utilizing new teaching strategies to develop each of the seven core competencies and for implementing competencies-based teaching approaches.

Participating schools are granted points for successful submissions, and some of the **Subjective Rewards** include:

Department of Youth Services (DYS) featured content - efforts will be featured in the DYS podcast.

Annual Awards - given in a ceremony with plaques/ trophies/monetary gifts for high scoring schools.

Video Feature on Local Media - efforts highlighted on “The Bright Side with Sabreana Daly” by Great Belize Productions.

MoRE Magazine feature - efforts will be highlighted in the MoRE magazine publication.

The **Point Based Rewards** include:

10 Points - Schools scoring 10 points are featured on the Ministry’s social media channels.

20 Points - Schools scoring 20 points receive cleaning supplies to help with daily activities.

30 Points - Schools scoring 30 points receive gift certificates for posters and decorations/ arts supplies for their school.

30 Points / Inclusion Pillar - Schools scoring 30 points in the INCLUSION pillar specifically receive at least one buddy bench for their campus.

40 Points / Specific Pillar - Schools scoring 40 points within ONE certain pillar receive a banner with the school name and academic year to display in front of school gates.

## Next Steps:

The full implementation and utilization of the FAST platform is a must for 2024. This online service will significantly improve the Ministry's capacity to respond to students' financial needs more timely and transparently.

Completing the Governance Reform is crucial for the MoECST. Recognizing that the current legal framework governing the education sector is over a decade old, the fiscal year 2024-2025 budget should specifically address the essential task of finalizing the comprehensive review and revision of existing education legislation, regulations, and policies.

A performance-based appraisal and recognition system for Ministry staff and service teams will be developed. This system will guide the development of a training schedule to address the professional development needs identified in the appraisal system.

The Communications Office intends to purchase an email listing management service subscription to consolidate emails and improve the dissemination of important notices and other information to Ministry personnel.

## Relevance:

Programs within the Operations Division are crucial for implementing the activities and goals outlined in the BESPlan. Enhancing access to education at all levels continues to be a central objective of the MoECST, and the Operations Division dedicates essential resources to fulfill these commitments. Restructuring governance and reforming legislation will lead to substantial advancements in achieving the objectives of PlanBelize's Education Policy, which emphasizes reforms to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

The programs and objectives of the MoECST's operations are also aligned with the following national, regional, and international outcomes and targets:

### Horizon 2030

Outcome 1: Strengthen management, monitoring and accountability in the education system

Outcome 2: Improve Access to Education

### CARICOM HRDS 2030

Outcome 1: Broadened and deepened access and participation in all HRD sectors

Outcome 2: Strengthened equity in the access to and provision of HRD in all HRD sectors

### SDG 2030

Target 4.1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

# MORE



[moecest.gov.bz/](http://moecest.gov.bz/)



# Reforming the System of Education: The Impact of Policy and Planning Services

The Policy and Planning Services of the MoECST drive the progression of Belize's education system through rigorous policy development, strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, project implementation, and the innovative integration of science and technology. Key responsibilities of this Division include managing the Belize Education Management Information System (BEMIS) and overseeing projects funded by international financial institutions such as the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), among other partners.

## Activities:

Key activities of the PPRE Unit in 2023 included conducting the annual school census and data verification exercise to gather information on the state and evolution of the education system, managing BEMIS, processing data requests, and preparing publications on the state of education. The unit also supported the design, administration, and analysis of various surveys and conducted sector diagnoses on critical segments of the education system.

The Science & Technology (S&T) Unit remained committed to its mandate as outlined in the BESPlan 2021-2025. Some of the key activities for 2023 included 1) increasing the number of students and teachers from Standard 4 to Form 4 who have access to high speed internet or an alternative wireless service and to an appropriate digital device; 2) maximizing access to educational resources through the National School Portal and learning platform, 3) developing a policy and strategy for Science and Technology Innovation, and 4) facilitating programs to increase interest in Science and Technology fields at both primary and secondary levels.

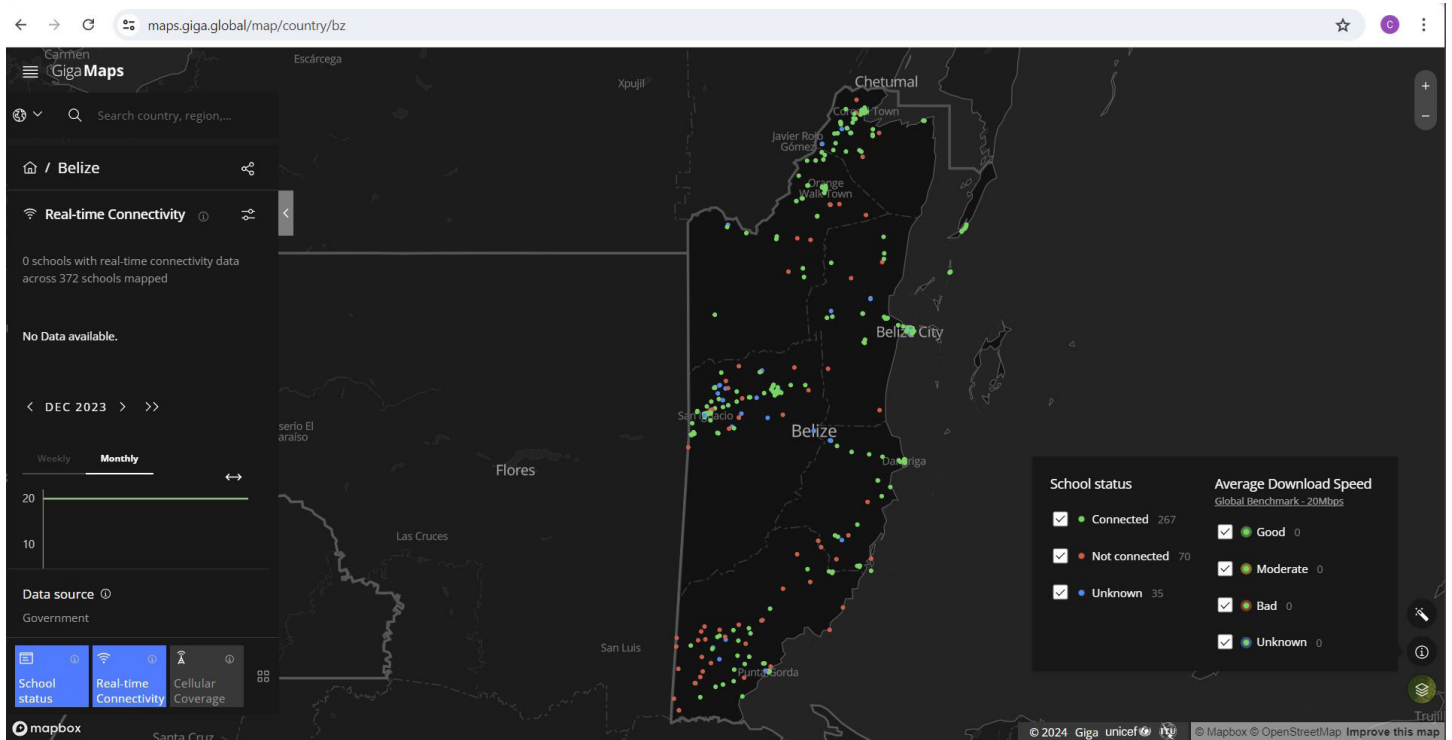
The Project Execution Unit of the MoECST has been instrumental in implementing initiatives under the Education Quality Improvement Program II (EQIPII). This includes efforts to elevate the teaching profession through teacher development and the construction of a STEAM Laboratory School, which aims to foster effective and innovative teaching in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics.

## Achievements:

The PPRE Unit is committed to managing and enhancing the use of BEMIS. The Unit has strengthened its collaboration with District Education Centres to streamline data entry and verification at the school level. A key focus remains on maintaining strong partnerships with school administrators and managing authorities to promote the use of BEMIS.

Recent enhancements to the system include streamlined features to improve data quality and reporting. New functionalities have been added to strengthen the capacity of BEMIS to collect data on students with special educational needs. The PPRE Unit has also prepared annual education statistical reports, including the Abstract of Education Statistics 2022, Education at a Glance, and Education Quick Facts. Furthermore, the Unit has been actively monitoring the implementation of the BESPlan 2021-2025 and conducting research in key priority areas such as the Preschool Sector Diagnosis. The unit also processed various data requests from within the Ministry, other government departments, the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB), educational institutions, secondary and tertiary level students, local NGOs, and international agencies and organizations.

The S&T Unit ensured the continuation of the ConnectED program, providing quality WiFi access to schools. As a result, some 66,000 students and 3,807 faculty and staff now benefit from reliable WiFi connectivity at the school level. Additionally, the GoB has partnered with Giga, a global initiative by



UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), with the goal to connect every school and young person to the internet, providing access to information, opportunities, and choices. Launched on May 11, 2023, at the San Ignacio Resort Hotel, the three-year Giga Belize initiative is led by the S&T Unit of the MoECST. The focus is on primary and secondary schools. The next steps involve working with MPUELE for infrastructure mapping to identify schools within the connectivity range. This initiative prioritizes connectivity, digitalization, and digital education.

Through the #LikeAGirl initiative, one hundred girls in second form from 20 high schools nationwide celebrated International Girls in ICT Day at the San Ignacio Resort Hotel on April 27, 2023. The S&T Unit of the MoECST and the Public Utilities Commission of Belize co-hosted an Hour of Code by code.org. The aim was to educate, inspire, and motivate young women who are interested in pursuing careers in ICT.

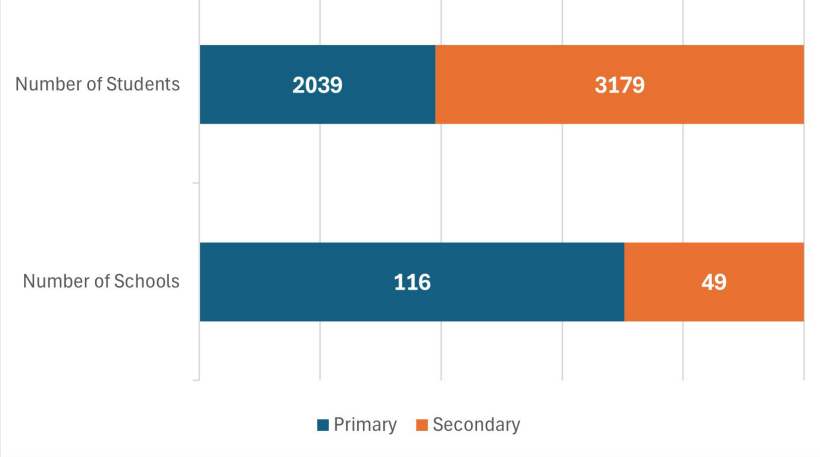
The drafting of the first-ever Science, Technology, and Innovation Strategy for Belize started this year. This Strategy aims to foster sustainable growth,

development, and innovation in all sectors of Belize and for its people over the next decade.

The Learning Loss Mitigation Project under the brand “Let’s Catch Up Summer Camp” was initiated in 2022. The Let’s Catch-Up Summer Program in 2022 was an eight-week long program that focused primarily on two key areas: literacy and numeracy. For 2023, the goal was to improve on the framework and foundation established by the 2022 team in the following areas: program duration, planning and preparation, selection of essential learning outcomes, learning tools (kits), teacher preparations, logistics, and overall program execution. Lessons in numeracy and literacy were live-streamed daily from the “STEAM Room” studio in Belmopan via the 501academy Youtube Channel and the MoECST Facebook page. Students accessed lessons via these mediums and through learning centers set up by the MoECST and UNICEF in partnership with schools. The Ministry made provisions for 1,600 students to access this program through the 20 centres (3 in each district except for Belize, which had 5). The target groups for this program were 5-6 and 7-9 year old students. The daily average of students accessing the lessons through the learning centers were: Week 1-



**Figure 5. Device Distribution by Level at 15% distribution rate, 2023.**



573; Week 2-487; Week 3-425; Week 4-251.

The 501academy platform continues to support the Curriculum and Assessment Unit of the MoECST in disseminating digital resources for teachers, including unit plans and assessment documents. After the launch of the Preschool Curriculum, a webpage was also created to support resources for this level. In September of 2023, the 501academy launched its social media pages on Facebook and Instagram to utilize social media as a communication tool in implementing campaigns like the MoRE campaign and the #LeadLikeAGirl campaign. The main objectives of these pages are to create visibility for and awareness of the various initiatives of the S&T Unit of the MoECST. The OPEN501 learning hub Project started in 2023. The OPEN501 learning hub will provide an extensive range of resources for Belizean Studies, in the form of media, exhibits, research, and more, to enhance understanding and support the teaching of Belize’s

culture, history, and geography. From exploring independence to celebrating music and highlighting key figures, the OPEN501 hub will enrich educational experiences and foster appreciation for Belizean history and contemporary life. The page is scheduled to be launched in August of 2024.

In April 2023, the former president of the Republic of China (Taiwan) donated 5,000 Chromebooks to the MoECST through the GoB. The S&T Unit led the distribution of the devices to schools nationwide. Because Chromebooks require internet connectivity, the S&T Unit, with the support of PPRE, focused on government and government-aided primary and secondary schools in Belize that either received internet connectivity through the ConnectedED program or had reliable internet infrastructure. The list of eligible schools was refined based on these criteria. Ultimately, 165 schools met the requirements, and a 15% distribution rate was used for equity. For primary



2023



2024

schools, 15% of students enrolled in Standards 4 to 6 received Chromebooks; for secondary schools, 15% of students from first to fourth form received the devices. The schools identified the beneficiaries of the devices based on needs. At the completion of national distribution, a total of 5,218 devices were given to students from primary and secondary schools across Belize as seen in Figure 5.

The Project Execution Unit under Component 2 of the Education Quality Improvement Program II (EQIPII) facilitated the construction of a STEAM Lab School (Itz'at STEAM Academy) for a total of 300 students to be enrolled over four years. Although Itz'at STEAM Academy offers unique STEAM training which is typically quite expensive, the MoECST has ensured that this high quality education is affordable and accessible by subsidizing the cost and making it comparable to the cost of government-owned secondary schools at around BZ\$550.00 per year.

The PEU also facilitated training in the latest

curriculum and technologies as well as pedagogical development in emerging fields like learning sciences, educational technologies, and socioemotional learning including:

- the promotion of diverse and inclusive STEAM teaching with particular emphasis of girls and women in STEAM;
- interactive distance education methodologies;
- formative assessment and development of individualized remedial education plans;
- strategies to promote student wellbeing, strategies to support at-risk students, and
- build the capacities of secondary education teachers to provide inclusive education and management of multicultural environments, including mentoring and counseling of migrant students.





In total, 114 teachers were trained through the STEAM Laboratory School, and 63 students enrolled in Year 1.

### Next Steps:

The PPRE Unit aims to strengthen its collaboration with school administrators, teachers, and district education officers to enhance the efficiency of the annual school census and data verification exercise. This will allow for earlier updates to BEMIS and the timely publication of annual statistics. The annual statistical publications will be reviewed and adjusted to better meet the needs of data users. Education performance indicators will be reassessed, and new calculation methods will be introduced for metrics such as 'dropout' and 'repeater' rates. The PPRE Unit will also continue coordinating and monitoring the implementation of BESPlan 2021-2025. Researchers within the Unit will leverage available resources to conduct studies in key priority areas.

The S&T Unit will focus on plans to increase the number of students and teachers from Standard 4 to Form 4 that have access to high-speed internet or

an alternative wireless service and to an appropriate digital device. They will also work to increase the number of available learning resources in the National School Portal and learning platform, and move towards drafting a Strategic Action Plan to meet objectives and targets, and develop programs to increase interest in Science and Technology fields.

The MoECST intends to complete the infrastructure projects under Component I (Learning Environment) of the BESRP II. The PEU of the MoECST, in collaboration with the IDB, will continue to develop the Skills for the Future Program, which will focus on accelerating learning in foundational skills and access to instruction that promotes learning in 4iR skills. In the 2024-25 academic year, it is expected that the current first-form cohort of Itz'at STEAM Academy will be promoted to second-form. Approximately 75 new students will be enrolled at the first-form level, and 4 additional teachers will be added to the teaching staff. Demand and growth are evident, and the target for 2026 is to have a population of 300 students across all form levels. By April 2024, the institution had received close to 100 applications for the 2024-25 academic period.

## Relevance:

The activities pursued under the Policy and Planning Services assist the MoECST in meeting several objectives under PlanBelize and the BESPlan 2021-2025. These include using research and quality data to impact decision-making in areas such as: increasing access to schools by understanding technology and infrastructure needs, increasing access to high-speed internet services and appropriate digital devices for students and teachers, and applying technology inside the classroom to promote and advance discussion.

The programs and objectives of the Policy and Planning Services of the MoECST are also aligned to the following national, regional, and international outcomes and targets:

### **Horizon 2030**

Outcome 2: Improve Access to Education

Outcome 3: Improve Delivery and Relevance of the Education Curriculum

### **CARICOM HRDS 2030**

Outcome 1: Broadened and deepened access and participation in all HRD sectors

Outcome 3: Improved quality in delivery in all HRD sectors

### **SDG 2030**

Target 4.1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

Target 4.4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

Target 4.a: Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

# Reforming the System of Education: The Returns of School Supervision and Support Services

The School Supervision and Support Services includes the Ministry's six District Education Centres (DECs), the Office of the General Manager for Government Schools, and the Government Bookstore. Units under this division are established to facilitate the efficient and coordinated supervision and support of schools and promote quality educational services. During the 2023 school year, DECs supervised 223 preschools and 314 primary schools country-wide; these included 52 preschools and 59 primary schools which are government-owned and managed by the MoECST through the Office of the General Manager for Government Schools. DEC Officers also serve as the primary liaisons/representatives of the Ministry on the Boards of Management for Secondary Schools.

## Activities:

The work of the DECs focused primarily on conducting structured school supervision to support and monitor school improvement plans and to monitor and provide support and feedback to managements, schools, and teachers in the implementation and delivery of the New Curriculum Framework. They also provided monitoring, support and feedback to managing authorities and administrators on the effectiveness of school leadership, identified professional development needs of school leaders and teachers, and represented the MoECST on secondary, tertiary and TVET Boards of Management.

The Office of the General Manager for Government Schools saw an active year in daily operations, providing professional development training and addressing the priority infrastructural needs of government-owned pre-primary and primary schools. To support the transformative progress of the National Curriculum Framework built on competency-based instruction, teacher training at pre and primary levels was imperative. Training for pre-primary school teachers took precedence after the launch of the National Preschool Curriculum Framework in March 2024. Government school administrators from the Northern, Central, and Southern Regions during the August Conference of 2023 were offered administrative support, training, and guidance to improve their efficiency in school operations and management.

In partnership with 'The Belize Project,' through a program called the 'Principal's Academy,' school administrators from Orange Walk, Corozal, and the Belize District were offered training in key areas of leadership and pedagogy. As a result of the synergy within the MoECST and the expansion of the National Healthy Start Feeding Program, five government-owned and managed primary schools, namely San Felipe, Trinidad, Carmelita, Trial Farm, and San Isidro were included in the school feeding program. The demand for infrastructural maintenance, renovations and new development required prioritization of needs and equitable distribution of the available budget. Hence, five government primary schools received medium and large-scale assistance to improve electricity generation, water storage, building security, and complete renovations. The Office of the General Manager also recognized school administrators and teachers for outstanding performance through service awards.

The Government Bookstore is fully responsible for implementing a revised and expanded national textbook program at the primary and secondary levels of education, with free learning resources aligned to the national curriculum. The textbook program aligns with the learning outcomes of the new competency-based curriculum.

## Achievements:

The DEC's continued monitoring and support visits to government and grant-aided preschools and primary schools across all six districts. These visits concentrated on monitoring the implementation of the competency-based curriculum at the preschool and primary levels. School leaders and teachers nationwide received extensive training to enhance their delivery of this curriculum. The DEC's also supported and monitored the delivery of the Literacy Alive Programme in government schools and the Literacy Intervention Programme for lower-division teachers in selected schools. As Ministry representatives, they served a crucial advisory role on secondary school Boards of Management. The DEC's facilitated professional development activities for teachers and were instrumental in BEMIS monitoring and support, contributing significantly to the annual school census verification for 2023.

The Office of the General Manager for Government Schools facilitated training to eighty-four (84) pre-primary school teachers to better understand the competency-based curriculum and how to plan for play-oriented instruction. The school administration training provided to school leaders from the north, central and southern regions was also successfully completed. As a result of this capacity building, school leaders will be able to apply key areas of the training to increase efficiency and improve management of school operations. Over 600 students from San Felipe, Trinidad, Carmelita, Trial Farm, and San Isidro Government School are now beneficiaries of a healthy daily meal at school through the National Healthy Start Feeding Program (NHSFP). The infrastructural investment in Living Word Primary, NaLum Ca Government School, United Community Primary School and El Progreso in 2023 was valued at over \$25,000 BZ. Electricity was provided to Living Word Primary School through the purchase of a solar electricity system to benefit their 19 students and 2

teachers. A water system was purchased and installed at NaLum Ca Government School. Thanks to a water system configured with two 400 gallon Rotoplast vats, water was made available at NaLum Ca, benefiting 38 students, two teachers, and the surrounding community.

To prevent the closure of the school, a water storage system was purchased and installed at United Community Primary School, and burglar bars were procured and installed to increase the security of the school's office. These infrastructural upgrades benefitted 521 students and 20 teachers. A water storage system was also purchased and installed at El Progreso Government School to secure water access during the drought. Access to water through this system was to the benefit of 143 students and 9 teachers. The renovations of the Double Head Cabbage campus of Belize Rural Primary School, destroyed during Hurricane Lisa, were completed. 70 students and 10 teachers are no longer displaced and have now returned to an upgraded facility. The Office of the General Manager awarded 8 retiring principals and 5 teachers with a plaque of recognition for their service. This celebration of commitment to education occurs annually. The MoECST congratulated all long service awardees from all managements and school levels.

The Government Bookstore procured a total of 155,068 textbooks to meet the demands of the National Primary School Curriculum. Textbooks were distributed in the following quantities for each district: Corozal 16,436; Orange Walk 19,028; Belize City 38,743; Cayo 43,734; Stann Creek 18,843; and Toledo 18,285. The free textbook initiative guarantees increased access to learning resources. Textbooks for the following subjects have been completed and are in use:

KLA 1: Language (English and Spanish) Sounds / Letters Series for Lower only

KLA 2: Mathematics (Math series completed for Lower/Middle/Upper)

### Next Steps:

The DEC's will continue to provide essential monitoring and support to all government and government-aided preschools and primary schools nationwide. DEC officers will spearhead the annual BEMIS verification exercise within their districts for the 2024-2025 academic year. Additionally, the DEC's will persist in their efforts to build capacity among Education Officers and other Ministry members who serve on secondary school Boards of Management.

The Office of the General Manager is committed to continue training preschool teachers in the competency-based preschool curriculum throughout the upcoming academic year. Moreover, through continued partnership with The Belize Project, the Office of the General Manager plans to offer three Principals' Academy Retreats in 2024-2025. Through the continued expansion of the NHSFP, the goal for the upcoming school year is to add 15 more schools to the program. The Office of the General Manager also intends to complete renovations and upgrades at Living Word Primary by removing the existing latrines and providing a septic system with toilets for teachers and students, to provide a smaller Rotoplast vat for the teacher house at NaLum Ca, to remove the dilapidated building that poses safety risks for students and teachers at United Community Primary School, and to renovate the roof of the main building at El Progreso. Now that renovations of Belize Rural Primary School (Double Head Cabbage) are completed, the plan is to close down the Rancho Dolores Campus and move students to the Bermudian Landing Campus. This will require further planning and investment. The returns of service from teachers in the education system of Belize are beyond value. To properly identify and recognize outstanding teachers, the Office of the General Manager plans to work with the larger ministry to develop a system of recognition which also

recognizes teachers' years of service for outstanding teachers and principals.

The Government Bookstore will continue to procure textbooks to meet the needs of the National Primary School Curriculum, ensuring that Language textbooks for both the Middle and Upper levels are included.

### Relevance:

Enhancing the supervision and support services is critical for the success of both the PlanBelize Education Policy and the BESPlan 2021-2025. Adequate school leadership and external monitoring of schools ensure that curriculum, professional development programs, student assessment systems, and policies and standards are properly implemented. Monitoring also allows for the identification of needs and for the appropriate support to be provided to administrators, teachers and students so that schools can continuously improve. The efforts of the Office of the General Manager are illustrations of the larger mission and vision of the MoECST.

The supervision and support of schools contribute to the achievement of the following national, regional and international outcomes and targets:

#### Horizon 2030

Outcome 1: Strengthen management, monitoring and accountability in the education system

#### CARICOM HRDS 2030

Outcome 3: Improved quality in delivery in all HRD sectors

#### SDG 2030

Target 4.1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes



# Transforming Teaching and Learning: Education Development Services

The primary objective of this division is to develop, review, and implement national curricula, student assessment systems, and teacher education programs that support the achievement of the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed for personal growth and national development. The units collaborate to ensure coherence between the national curriculum and student assessment system and also with teacher education and continuing professional development programs. This combined effort ensures that the core elements of education – curriculum, instruction, and assessments – are aligned with the national goals of education.

## Activities:

The MoECST recognizes the importance of the national competency-based curriculum to build Belize's capacity and relevance to real-world skills, personalized learning for mastery, improved student engagement, assessment and achievement for lifelong success, equity and inclusion in learning environments, alignment with national goals, global competitiveness, and adaptability and innovation. The National Curriculum Framework provides a flexible, relevant, and effective approach to education that aligns with the needs of students, the demands of the workforce, and the goals of Belize. With this mandate, the Curriculum and Assessment Unit continued its work on the national competency-based curriculum development for all three levels: pre-primary, primary, and secondary. The curriculum and toolkits for the pre-primary level were developed, launched, and distributed. At the primary level, guided by the National Curriculum Framework, Unit Plans in all 8 subjects were developed for all 4 Cycles. Unit Plans with corresponding ongoing and end of unit tasks to measure learning and monitor students' progress are available on the 501academy. These assessments benefit and support teachers, and their proper use will inform subsequent planning. At the secondary level, developed learning outcomes were piloted.

Teacher education is a cornerstone of educational excellence, societal progress, and national development. The MoECST recognizes the effect and influence of teachers and teacher education programs on the quality of education, student achievement, national development, social cohesion, capacity

building, equity, and inclusion. In this regard, the TEU, in tandem with CARICOM, the BBTE, MCC, and the Chief Education Officer of Belize, developed a 'Zeroth Draft Teacher Education Framework' aligned with teacher preparation and continuous professional development programs to match national curriculum efforts and the competency-based curriculum architecture. Draft Standards for Teachers, School Leaders, and Teacher Educators have been revised. A draft profile of the Belizean School Leader created through the MCC Working Group was launched in May 2023. Training of instructional coaches was conducted for Internship Coordinators and teacher educators at the 4 junior colleges and the University of Belize. The TEU coordinated and conducted external assessments of interns in the Associate of Arts, Certificate in ECE, and Primary Education Programs in April 2023 and December 2023 for several Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs). The TEU also coordinated and conducted an induction review for Newly Qualified Teachers enrolled in the Induction Program.

The Teacher Learning Institute (TLI) is an education portal designed to support Belizean educators as they explore relevant teaching and learning methodologies based on emerging research, trends, and best practices. With the mandate to offer Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training opportunities, the TLI was established to do just that. The prime objective of the TLI is to provide structured, comprehensive, year-round professional development programs based on the identified needs of teachers and school leaders. Throughout the academic year 2023-2024, the TLI established structures and support mechanisms to

assist in-service teachers and school leaders in their reflective practice and continuous learning to update their knowledge and skills to improve their teaching competence and student performance.

### Achievements:

In alignment with prevailing national and global trends in educational development, through the work of the Curriculum and Assessment Unit, the MoECST has facilitated the full rollout of its national curriculum reform, embracing a competency-based education framework for both primary and secondary education levels. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) was successfully implemented in the academic year 2023-2024 after extensive consultations on the curriculum involving various education stakeholders such as teachers, school leaders, managers, MoECST personnel, and other partners such as the BNTU, Pathlight International, UNICEF, and The Love Foundation. Most recently, the National Preschool Curriculum Framework was launched in March 2024. These significant achievements underscore the steadfast commitment of the GoB, facilitated by the MoECST, to transform the education landscape across all levels in Belize, spanning from foundational skills to upper secondary in this case. Efforts will persist in enhancing the post-secondary and higher education sectors.

The Curriculum and Assessment Unit, in partnership with UNICEF, also received sponsorship for the procurement of play-based materials to support the play-based preschool curriculum. All 51 government preschools have received an instructional kit with play-based materials to enhance learning, and an additional 75 instructional kits were given to denominational preschools.

The completion rate of preschool is significantly high (100% for those who engage) and enrollment has seen a steady increase. In 2022-2023, there were 7,007 pre-

primary students. However, the national population census of 2022 counted preschool aged persons in Belize at 15,784 (SIB, 2022). This indicates that only 44.4% of preschool aged children are enrolled and benefiting from a pre-primary education. More than 50% of this population are out-of-school, which is an indication of the effect of pre-primary education being non-mandatory in Belize. The achievements of increased enrollment and high completion at the pre-primary level are noteworthy but it is evident that there is more to be done to maximize the productivity of this sector.

As indicated by Figure 6 below, there is a significant improvement in the rate of completion by boys overall. Both male and female completion rates declined in 2019, but recovery is significant from 2020 onwards. Initially, females have a higher completion rate than males, but both genders converge around 2019. The total completion rate indicates a positive trend, with substantial improvements from 2019 to 2021, and stabilization at a high rate in 2022. These trends highlight the impact and achievement of the decreased STR for improved performance, successful school level interventions and curricular improvements in the primary education system, all leading to higher completion rates for both genders by 2021 and sustaining these rates through 2022.

**Figure 6. Primary Completion Rate by Gender, 2018-2022.**

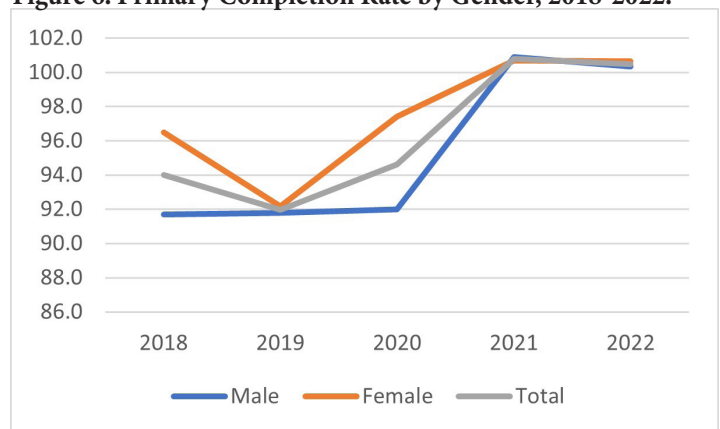




Figure 7. Primary to Secondary Transition Rate, 2018 - 2023 indicates that the transition rates for both males and females are almost identical across the period. There is a noticeable drop in transition rates during the COVID19 pandemic; however, the rates rebounded in the 2022-2023 academic year to approximately 84.8%. This data demonstrates the

results of key support mechanisms such as the increase in programmes that offered remediation, technology integration to support learning, the increase in mandatory school age to 16 years, and the increased intake at the secondary levels through the provision of free education under the Education Upliftment Project.

**Figure 7. Transition Rate from Primary to Secondary, 2018 - 2023**

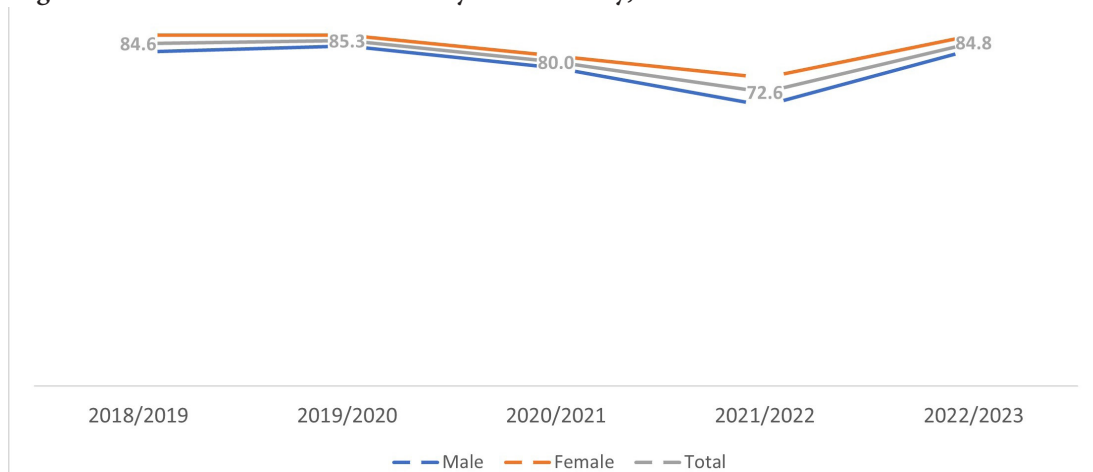
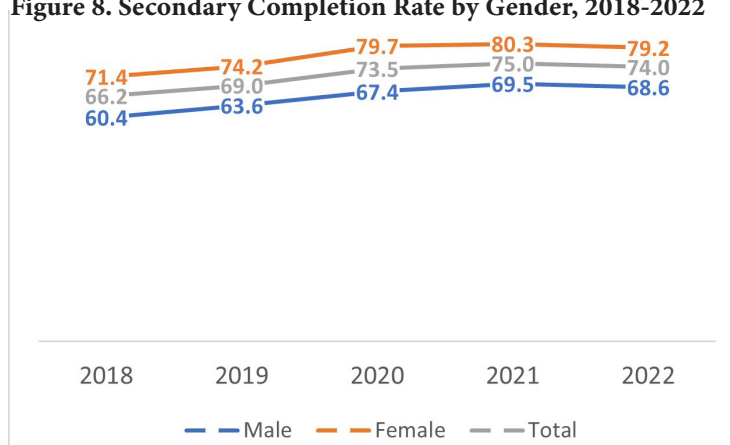


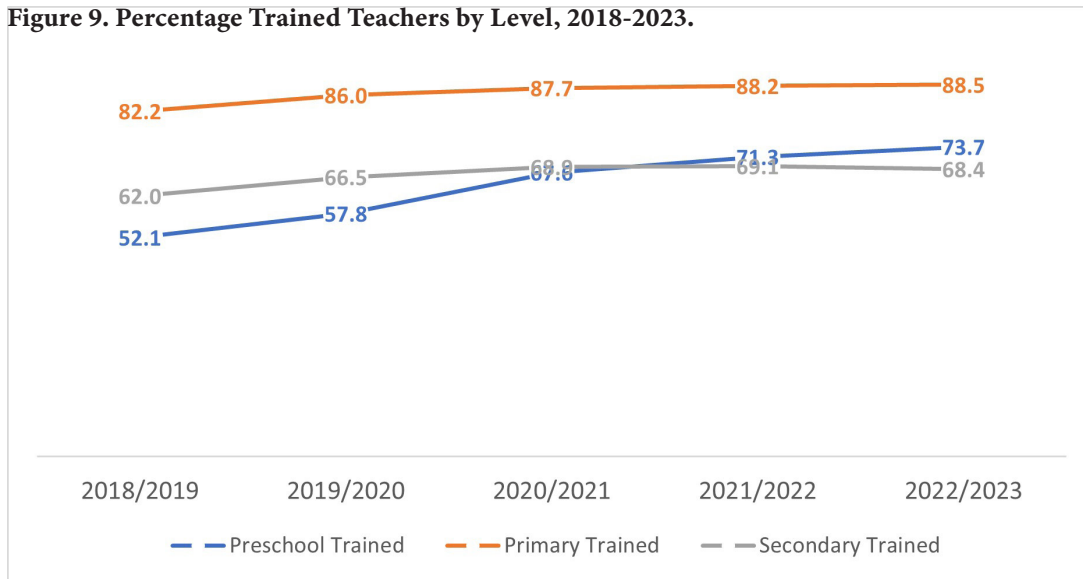
Figure 8 illustrates Secondary Completion Rate by Gender over the period 2018 - 2022. Not only have the completion rates continuously increased in both males and females, but the comparison over the five year period shows a significant increase of just under 8% for both genders. These trends demonstrate the impact of responsive legislation to increase the mandatory

school age to 16 years, the results of programmes such as the Education Upliftment Project and the National Healthy Start Feeding Program which have significantly reduced barriers to education access and retention, and the effect of curriculum reform which has impacted students' learning, progress and completion of secondary education.

**Figure 8. Secondary Completion Rate by Gender, 2018-2022**



**Figure 9. Percentage Trained Teachers by Level, 2018-2023.**



The pattern observed in Figure 9 indicates a significant improvement in the qualifications of the teaching force in Belize between 2018 and 2023. This achievement can be attributed to the numerous opportunities provided by the GoB through the MoECST. These opportunities include paid study leave and financial assistance in the form of scholarships and grants. The GoB, following the goals of #PlanBelize, through the strategic actions of the MoECST, will ensure that by 2030, 100% of teachers at the pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels are fully trained to teach in Belizean classrooms.

The noteworthy achievements of the TEU begin with the complete revision of the Draft Standards for Teachers, School Leaders, and Teacher Educators done in March 2024. Then, 30 teacher educators were trained to support TEIs in supporting student teachers on internship through a beneficial partnership between the MoECST and the University of Texas at Tyler. External Assessment was conducted for 37 student-teachers enrolled in the Associate of Arts in Primary Education. 67.5% of those student-teachers successfully completed internship; 12 student-teachers require greater support, and structures are in place

for their re-enrollment in the Internship Program for August 2023. A new ‘Teacher Development and Evaluation Rubric’ was implemented to align with the National Curriculum Framework. The Teacher Development and Evaluation Rubric being used for Internship and Induction addresses teacher development across the teaching continuum from emerging to advanced. This rubric is aligned with the revised Standards for Teachers and can be used to inform the revision to the Teacher Appraisal Instruments. Internships are no longer graded; rather, student-teachers must show some degree of pedagogical mastery. The External Assessment conducted for 132 student-teachers in the Associate of Arts and Certificate in Primary and Early Childhood Programs yielded 104 successful candidates. The Certificate in Primary Education Program has been discontinued effective August 2023 in an effort for potential teachers to be better pedagogically trained through a full teacher education program. Students who were already enrolled in the Certificate in Primary Education Program will be allowed to complete the program. Twenty-six NQTs successfully completed the Induction Program launched in September 2022.

Through partnerships with Autism Belize, BISELR, BNTU, Belize Athletic Association, Code.Org, Commonwealth of Learning, Cubola Productions, EduBalance, Mount St. Vincent University, Managing Authorities of Schools, Pathlight Belize, Peace Corps, Profuturo, MoECST Units (Curriculum and Assessment Unit, Student Welfare Unit, Teacher Education Unit), Sai-Info Tech, UB, Galen University and universities from the United States including University of Tyler Texas and Oklahoma State University, a variety of targeted CPD opportunities were offered. Areas of focus included:

- Competency-based Teaching Strategies and Assessments,
- Special Education,
- Artificial Intelligence and Technology Integration,
- Health and Wellness, STEAM Pedagogies,
- Physical Education,
- Financial Literacy,
- Art Education,
- Emotional Intelligence and Literacy.

A total of 221 CPD courses were offered over five cycles through the TLI platform. Sixty-eight of those users benefited from CPD training designed based on their school's needs. The MoECST recognizes that training teachers is essential for improving the quality of education, enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes, promoting inclusivity and equity, and fostering continuous professional growth among educators.

### Next Steps:

The Curriculum and Assessment Unit will target training for preschool teachers countrywide in the upcoming year. Additional procurement of play-based resources for the remaining 92 preschools will be sought. A teacher's guide for each class level for the competency-based curriculum will be developed. Textbooks are being developed to support the competency-based curriculum through the national textbook program. Training for teachers at the primary and secondary levels, heads of departments, and administrators on competency-based methods to increase students' engagement and achievement is being planned for the upcoming CPD period.

The TEU will continue with its revision of the draft documents to finalize and publish. Section 7 of the Teacher Education Framework is targeted for further development to better outline the initial Teacher Education Curriculum learning areas for the secondary level. This will be developed in collaboration with the MCC during the 2024-2025 Fiscal Year. The Zeroth Draft will also see further revision and development as agreed by the Chair of the Framework Committee. The TEU will also work with stakeholders and TEIs to revise the ECE and Primary Education Programs to align with the Teacher Education Framework. A full proposal for approval of the updated Standards will be shared for further validation from key stakeholders and partners. A revision of the existing appraisal for

Figure 10 TLI Platform Coverage, 2023-2024.



increased alignment to the Standards for Teachers will follow. The TEU will also develop a proposal to support a revised structure of the Induction Program for increased formality and mandatory requirements to provide sustainable and targeted support for all Newly Qualified Teachers. In relation to training, the TEU will design and implement a Training of Trainers Workshop to provide training for TEIs to build their capacity to train Instructional Coaches. This will enable the implementation of the Teacher Development and Evaluation Rubric to support and assess student-teachers during Internship. Training for all key stakeholders on the use of the rubric for internship will also be conducted.

For the upcoming year, the MoECST team attached to the TLI aims to continue making relevant CPD opportunities available with particular emphasis on PD for early childhood, secondary teachers, school leaders, and teacher educators. Based on an assessment of needs, areas of focus will include early warning systems in literacy and numeracy, technology and Artificial Intelligence, competency-based learning, differentiated instruction, clinical supervision, finance and budgeting, and teacher wellness. The data collected by the TLI will be linked to data on the BEMIS platform. To maintain the quality of facilitators and training offered on the TLI, capacity development for TLI Officers and PD facilitators/organizers will also continue.

### **Relevance:**

The Curriculum and Assessment Unit is guided by Key Result Area 2.1 Curriculum Reform: Learning What Matters of the BESPlan 2021-2025, which is directly aligned with the vision of PlanBelize to revise Belize's pedagogical model to "one where teachers are facilitators of learning in an environment that is student-centered, knowledge-rich, innovative, collaborative, and where life-long learning is emphasized and where learners are prepared for the

knowledge economy and global society."

The TEU's targets are guided by Key Result Area 2: Transforming Teaching and Learning, which aims to upgrade teacher education programs and ensure that all teachers at all levels are properly trained. The objectives of the TLI and its activities are guided by "Strategic Action 2.3.2 Ensure that teachers at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels of education, teacher educators and professional development facilitators are appropriately trained" of the BESPlan 2021-2025. The programs and objectives of the Units which comprise the Ministry's Education Development Services also assist the GoB in meeting the following national, regional, and international outcomes and targets:

#### **Horizon 2030**

Outcome 3: Improve Delivery and Relevance of the Education Curriculum

#### **CARICOM HRDS 2030**

Outcome 3: Improved quality in delivery in all HRD sectors

Outcome 4: Assured relevance to learners' and Member States' development needs in all HRD sectors

#### **SDG 2030**

Target 4.1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

Target 4.6: By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

Target 4.7: By 2030, ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship,

and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

Target 4.c: By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.

# Prioritizing Underserved Sectors: Student Support Services

The Student Support Services aims to strengthen the inclusion, development, and achievement of all students by promoting participation in early childhood education, establishing systems for the early identification, diagnosis, and support of students with diverse needs, and providing resources and programs to support students with social, economic, and psychosocial challenges. Transportation to school is a key factor in the provision of student support services. Within the SWU, the Counselling and Care Office supports proactively and reactively addressing issues related to healthy behavior and mental health of students through the creation of safe, healthy, and supportive learning communities through support to school counselors. Through the NHSFP, healthy meals are provided to primary and secondary school students in an effort to promote good health and nutrition, address SDG 2 – Zero Hunger, and reduce barriers to quality education access.

## Activities:

The Early Childhood Education Officers worked with pre-primary schools across Belize to develop an ECE campaign. A jingle was developed, a full stimulation month calendar was launched, and the planned activities were well executed. The National Preschool Curriculum development continued with the play-based methodology at the center of its design and was launched in March 2024.

A major focus of the SpED Unit is to provide the necessary assistance that students with diverse needs must have to achieve an education. Several specialized initiatives were launched in 2023, including:

- 1) development of a survey for teachers to identify students who may have a special education need and/or disability;
- 2) provision of specialized training to teachers on Early Intervention Strategies;
- 3) provision of training to families on speech, occupational and behavioral therapy support;
- 4) participation in the validation of the Special Education and Inclusive Education Policy for the Caribbean;
- 5) rolling out of the Essential For Living Life Skills Curriculum for persons with Moderate to Severe disabilities to all 30 Special Classrooms country wide;
- 6) assisting the Belize Mission to provide free full hearing screenings and fittings and repairs for hearing

aides in Cayo and San Pedro;

7) facilitating training on the use of WISC & WASI kits;

8) validating a study of the Child Functioning Module, Teacher's Version screener developed by UNICEF and the Washington Group for Disabilities – Belize is 1 of 2 countries in the region to have subscribed to such a study; and

9) creating awareness through the Disability Awareness Week, Deaf Week, World Down Syndrome Day, Autism Awareness Month, Blue Fridays, speaking at PTAs, the MoECST MoRE Program and the Buddy Bench Initiative.

A major focus of the SWU is the Education Upliftment Project (E-UP): Together We Rise. This initiative, launched in August 2022, provides specific targeted interventions in nine government-owned secondary schools catering to approximately 3,174 students. These institutions are located in vulnerable, at-risk communities on the south side of Belize City and in the southern districts of Stann Creek and Toledo. The first four secondary schools, currently in year two of the project, are Gwen Lizarraga High School (GLHS), Excelsior High School (EHS), Maud Williams High School (MWHS), Sadie Vernon Technical High School (SVTHS), referred to as GEMS schools. Five other government high schools, namely Corazon Creek, Toledo Community College, Georgetown Technical High School, Delille Academy, and the Agriculture and Natural Resources Institute were added to the project during this academic school year (2023-2024).

The aim of the E-UP is to provide targeted support for at-risk youth and vulnerable students from lower socio-economic households in secondary schools. The project's focus is to ultimately reduce poverty in Belize and work towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and 4 (Quality Education) through the provision of a meal at school, uniforms, school resources, and infrastructural support, transportation, and payment of school fees. With this mission, the SWU conducted monitoring visits to review school documents, procedures, teaching and learning, and student safety at the GEMS schools. Daily tasks included the support of wrap-around services, which filtered into the drafting of semester reports on students' attendance, performance, wrap-around findings, and a yearly report on the meal programs. The SWU also coached principals from the GEMS schools in providing direction for school improvement and planning with the agreement that principals would develop and implement policies and procedures to support students' health and safety. The SWU coordinated efforts through a multi-sectoral approach for school-wide programs that promoted social and emotional learning. Positive discipline and restorative practices at school and at home were encouraged, while school leaders of the GEMS schools were empowered through capacity building.

The Counselling and Care Office through the Comprehensive School Counselling Program aims to develop a national school counselling model and a certification program for all school counsellors in Belize in hopes of standardizing the counselling process. Several discussions and plenaries have been conducted since August 2023 with concrete targets being documented.

The MoECST takes its mandate under SDG 2 to reduce hunger and SDG 4 to provide access to quality education for all children very seriously.

These commitments align with the BESPlan 2021-2025 and #planBelize Medium-Term Development Strategy 2022-2026. The MoECST along with its donor partners, especially the Republic of China, Taiwan, expanded the National Healthy Start Feeding Programme (NHSFP) to cater for a healthy meal for 4,000 primary school students from 35 schools and 2967 secondary school students from 9 schools in the E-UP. These figures equal an investment of around \$20,000.00 per day in meals. The NHSFP follows the Sustainable Schools model, which

- (1) provides a healthy meal for students at BZ\$3.00 per meal;
- (2) follows a school feeding menu (developed in 2022) for primary schools that includes breakfast and lunch options that are nutritionally balanced and prepared using over 70% locally produced items;
- (3) provides kitchen upgrades for participating schools;
- (4) targets the teaching of gardening for every school to develop students' ownership of food security and healthy nutritional habits;
- (5) links community farmers and cooperatives with schools with the intent that producers can provide items directly to school feeding programs (established through a partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture); and
- (6) provides employment opportunities for kitchen staff (31 cooks are currently employed).

## Achievements:

The Curriculum Unit through the efforts of the ECE Officers and stakeholders are ahead in completing Strategic Action 3.2.1 which speaks to the establishment of a comprehensive, play-oriented preschool and lower primary education curriculum. A streamlined curriculum framework for the pre-primary level was launched in March of 2024.

The Special Needs School Survey was administered at 76 schools nationwide, with 830 teachers interviewed. The main aim of the survey was to identify students who may have a special education need and/or disability. The data from the survey is being hosted in a GIS app for easier interpretation and reporting.

As a part of the Skills for the Future/IDB/GPE funding, the SpED Unit, with the help of a consultant, was able to do a validation study of the Child Functioning Module, Teacher’s Version Screener developed by UNICEF and the Washington Group for Disabilities. Belize is one of two countries in the region to have done such a study. 15 Special Education Officers and 71 teachers from 36 schools were trained to use the CFM-TV. 40 schools in the Belize District participated in the study.

Table 1 summarizes the research conducted within the Special Education sector. Data collected from these surveys and studies will provide key information to inform the SpED Unit about the unique demands that are currently within the sector.

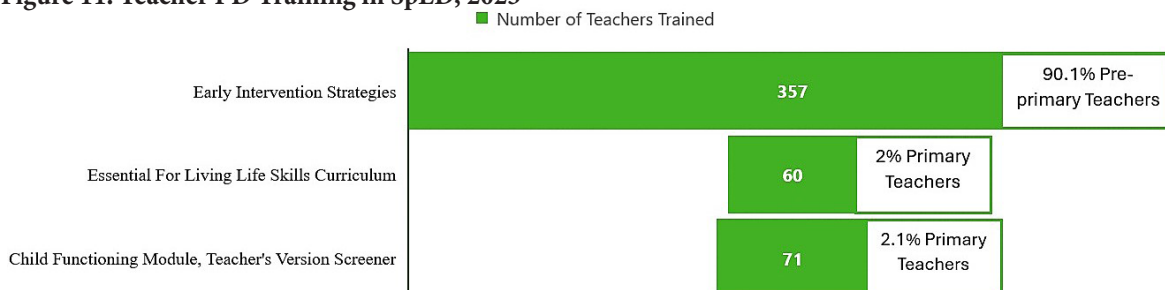
**Table 1. Research conducted in SpED, 2023**

Research Details	Stakeholder Groups
Special Needs School Survey	830 Teachers
Validation study of the Child Functioning Module, Teacher’s Version Screener (UNICEF & the Washington Group for Disabilities)	15 Special Education Officers 40 selected schools

To further enhance the capacity of teachers and Special Education Officers, the SpED Unit, in partnership with the Early Childhood Unit, organized an in-person training for 357 preschool teachers and SpED Officers on Early Intervention Strategies with facilitators from the University of Washington’s Special Education Department. In September 2023, the SpED Unit introduced the Essential For Living Life Skills Curriculum for persons with Moderate to Severe disabilities to all 30 (11 of which are at Stella Maris) Special Classrooms nationwide. 60 teachers and 16 SpEd Officers received full training on the use of the EFL Curriculum and approximately 250 students are enrolled in the program.

Figure 11 on teacher professional development training conducted in SpED, 2023 details the number of teachers by level who received training in the identified area and indicates the percentage coverage by level. The achievement of training 90.1% of pre-primary teachers in Early Intervention Strategies is noteworthy.

**Figure 11. Teacher PD Training in SpED, 2023**





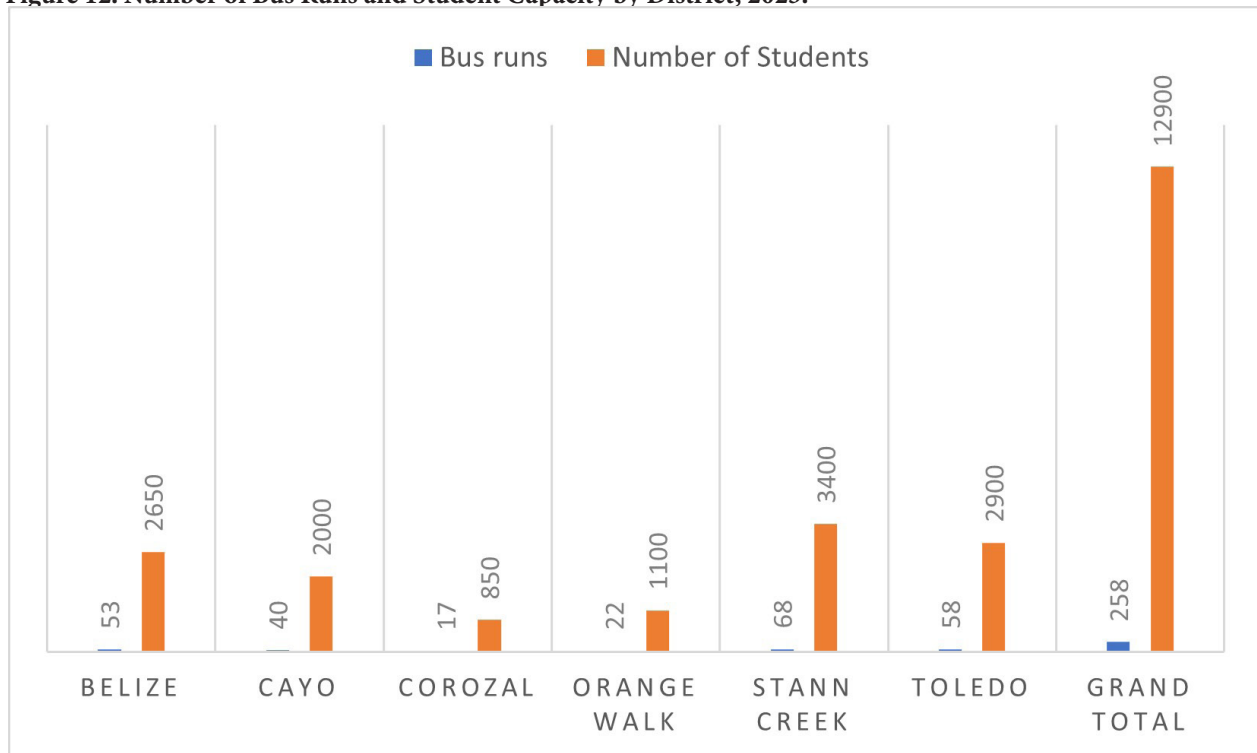
Training was also extended to families of children with special needs. 110 students/families through Therapy Adventures received an eight week training on Speech, Occupational, or Behavior Therapy. The objective was to develop a plan to address the learning needs of students who require special attention. The Belize Mission also completed its yearly visit to Belize and provided free full hearing screenings and fittings and repairs for hearing aides. The SpEd Unit organized this service, which was provided to 37 clients from the Cayo District and San Pedro Town.

**Table 2. SpEd Training for Families, 2023 summarizes the number of beneficiaries resulting from the trainings conducted.**

Name of Program	Number of Beneficiaries
Early Intervention Strategies	110 students/families
The Belize Mission	37 clients

In line with its dedication to expanding access to quality education, particularly in marginalized regions, the MoECST has taken significant strides to enhance accessibility by continuing to provide free bus runs for students. Presently, the MoECST operates 258 official bus runs nationwide, representing a substantial investment in facilitating student transportation. The weekly contracts for these bus runs amount to approximately \$277,242.68, equating to an average monthly expenditure exceeding 1 million dollars. This considerable financial commitment underscores the ministry’s proactive approach to fostering educational inclusivity and ensuring that students in underserved areas have the means to access educational opportunities.

**Figure 12. Number of Bus Runs and Student Capacity by District, 2023.**



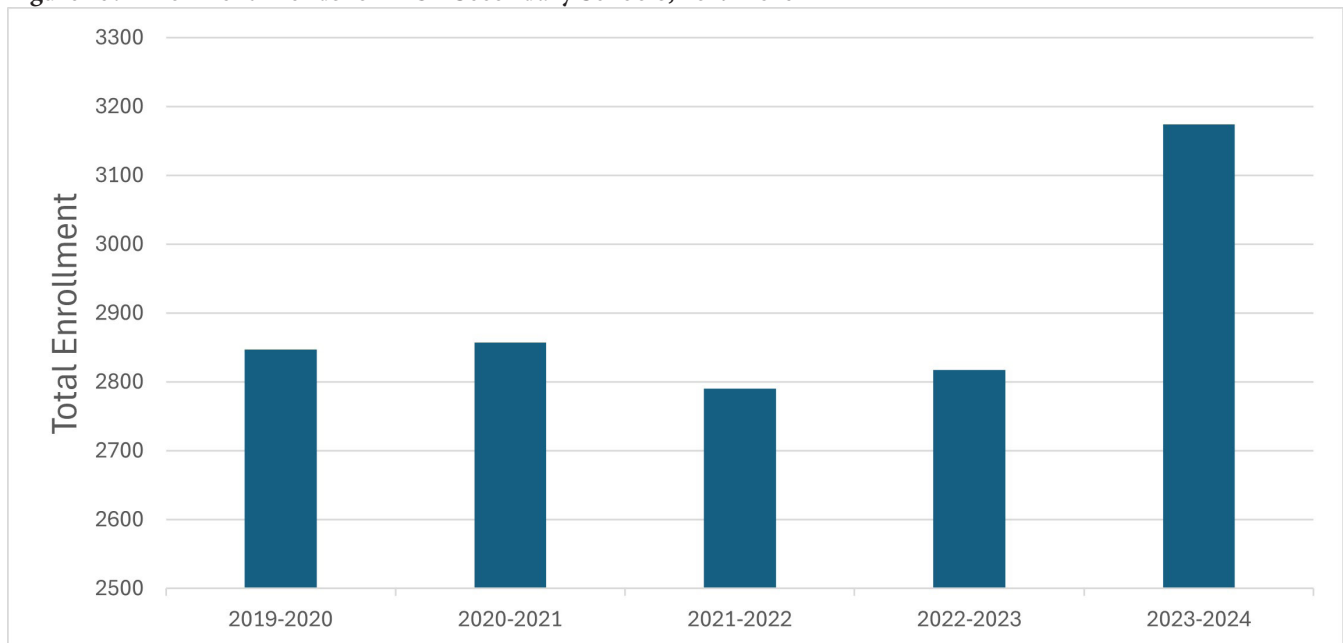
A total of 248 bus runs operated in 2023, benefitting approximately 13,000 students from across the country as indicated in Figure 12. The number of bus runs has grown consistently based on demand over the past 5 years, providing increased access to education at all levels.

The Education Upliftment Project enrolled three thousand one hundred seventy-four (3,174) students across the nine government-owned secondary schools at the start of the academic year 2023-2024. First-form students in the project received three sets of uniforms and a PE uniform free of cost. Students’ tuition fees at these nine high schools were covered by the MoECST. The National Healthy Start Feeding Program offered one free meal daily to students. Through collaboration with professors from the University of Texas at Tyler (UT Tyler) who facilitated “Data-Informed Instructional Leadership” for school leaders, including principals, assistant/vice principals, HODs, and counselors for the GEMS schools, the SWU ensured that capacity building in leadership at the GEMS

schools was achieved. The SWU also conducted working sessions with the four counselors of the GEMS schools to develop preventative and restorative programs and increase parental involvement. The psychosocial support program addressed issues related to healthy behaviour and the mental health of students. Through the program, schools received help to create a safe, healthy and supportive learning community. This program benefited 30 students from 11 schools and involved 12 parents and 10 teachers.

Figure 13 shows a drastic increase in enrollment trends due to the impact of the E-UP programme. Combined, there has been a 13% increase in enrollment between the academic periods of 2022-23 and 2023-24 among the current E-UP schools. These figures underscore the considerable success of the E-UP in bolstering enrollment and attracting more students to pursue secondary education in the participating schools. In return, higher transition to tertiary education is expected or a greater number of citizens with secondary education will result.

**Figure 13. Enrollment Trends for E-UP Secondary Schools, 2019-2023**

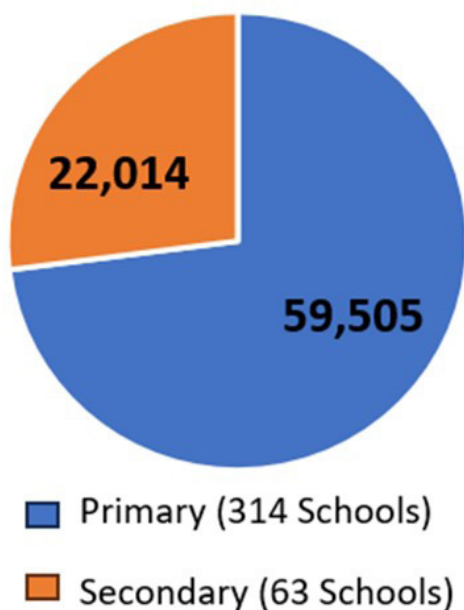


Note: The E-UP initiated in 2022-2023 with 4 schools and has now expanded to 9 schools.

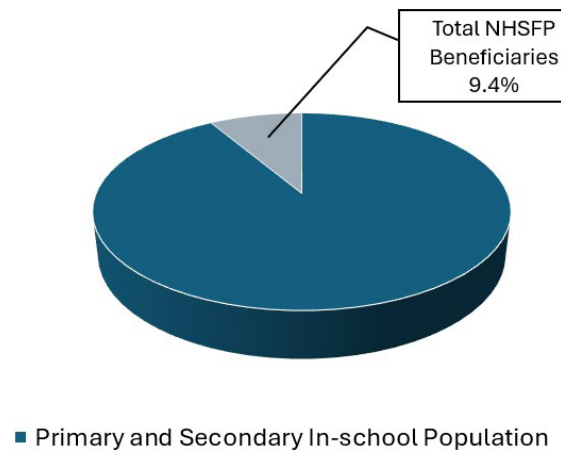
40 primary schools across Belize are part of the NHSFP as of the end of the 2023-2024 school year. Including the enrollment from the 9 E-UP secondary schools, the NHSFP benefited 7,633 students from primary and secondary schools across Belize. Efforts this year focused on expanding the NHSFP, promoting the program's school feeding menu, conducting kitchen assessments, providing capacity building for cooks, monitoring the performance of the program for year one and two schools, designing a user-friendly data collection mechanism on school feeding and building the commitment of schools to the Sustainable School Feeding Model.

Figure 14 Total Number of Students by Level in 2023 and Figure 15 Percentage Student Population benefiting from the NHSFP in 2023 graphically represent the program's achievement since its launch. 9.4 % of the total number of students in primary and secondary school are beneficiaries of a healthy meal at school. The provision of meals is significant to reduce barriers to learning, increase access to education and end hunger globally.

**Figure 14. Total Number of Students by Level, 2023**



**Figure 15. Percentage Student Population (Primary & Secondary) benefitting from the NHSFP, 2023**



### Next Steps:

Through internal collaboration with the Policy, Planning, Research and Evaluation Unit of the MoECST, the ECE Officers will function as key stakeholders in the drafting of a Pre-primary School Sector Diagnosis for 2024.

Special education is another major focus of both PlanBelize and the BESPlan. Intended actions include the resourcing of the SpEd Unit; implementing new Special Education policies and laws aimed at achieving inclusion and respect for those with special needs; hiring additional diagnosticians and field officers, especially in rural communities; and improving the effectiveness of referral processes and transition programs in BEMIS.

The SWU will continue collaborating with the Senior Management Team to provide wrap-around services (meals, uniforms, tuition) to the E-UP schools. Not only will the SWU liaise with the Curriculum and Assessment Unit to provide training and capacity building, but the unit will also continue to engage in inclusive and collaborative school development and

planning, monitor the teaching, learning, and safety of students, collaborate on intervention plans in literacy and numeracy at the GEMS schools, and collaborate with social service organizations to strengthen the system for identifying and supporting children with social barriers to inclusion and learning, including refugees, students living in poverty, and those from remote rural areas. The SWU will also continue its psychosocial support program for students, parents, and teachers to further support and encourage positive discipline in the home and school.

In the 2024-2025 budget, the MoECST plans to add 12 additional secondary schools to the E-UP program, increasing coverage to a target of 6,000 additional students. This expansion will include 9 government schools and 3 government-aided schools. With this expansion, the E-UP will cover 16 of 18 (89%) government-owned secondary schools and 5 of 30 (16.7%) government-aided secondary schools. This expansion is anticipated to bring the total coverage of the Education Upliftment Project: Together We Rise to 21 out of 62 secondary schools (33.9%) or 21 out of 48 government and government-aided high schools (43.8%) nationwide. The outreach to 21 schools will have a meaningful impact on an anticipated 9,526 of 22,051 secondary school students (43.2%). The expansion of the E-UP requires an investment of \$10,612,768.00, representing an estimated increase of \$6.6 million from 2023-2024. The schools earmarked for inclusion are Belize Rural High School, Ladyville Technical High School, San Pedro High School, Belmopan Comprehensive School, Mopan Technical High School, Valley of Peace SDA Academy, Chunox St. Viator Vocational High School, Escuela Secundaria Tecnica Mexico, Belize High School of Agriculture, Orange Walk Technical High School, Bella Vista Government Secondary School and Julian Cho Technical High School.

The Counselling and Care office will continue its collaboration with the Belize School Counsellors

Association (BSCA) to develop a national school counselling model and certification program by 2024-2025.

In the 2024-2025 budget, the MoECST plans to expand the NHSFP to cover a healthy meal for students across the 12 additional secondary schools that will be added to the E-UP program with an estimated enrollment of 5,950 students. With this expansion, the NHSFP programme will cover 16 of 18 (89%) government-owned secondary schools and 5 of 30 (16.7%) government-aided secondary schools. This is a true commitment from the GoB and its partners to ultimately increase access to quality education and to reduce hunger as stipulated by SDGs 2 and 4. The ultimate goal of the NHSFP is to get children to consume a wholesome meal while at school to improve their ability to learn. The National School Feeding Coordinator also aims to complete, through the work of a Nation School Feeding Taskforce, a National School Feeding Policy in the 2024-2025 year and plan for its implementation thereafter. The expansion of the NHSFP will also continue at the primary level.

### **Relevance:**

The efforts of the ECE aim to enhance the accessibility and quality of early childhood education. This involves implementing laws and ensuring free, widespread access to pre-primary education. Additionally, the focus on crafting policies and strategies for establishing and managing inclusive preschools, including guidelines for supervision, standards, training, and resource allocation are in direct alignment with Key Result Area 3: Early Childhood Education: Starting Strong.

The SpED Unit plays a crucial role in ensuring that students with diverse learning needs receive the appropriate support and resources to succeed academically and socially. The unit focuses on Inclusive Education, Individualized Support, Teacher

Training, Resource Allocation, Parental Involvement, Policy Development, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Collaboration with Stakeholders.

The SWU assisted with the implementation of the PlanBelize free education mandate through the Education Upliftment Project: Together We Rise which is in alignment with the MoECST BESPlan 2021-2025 Key Result Area 3.2: Student Welfare: Reducing Vulnerability. The E-UP program enables the MoECST to inform policy decisions, mitigate dropout rates, bolster completion rates, enhance human resource capabilities, elevate transition rates, and, possibly most importantly, alleviate poverty levels by reducing unemployment.

The establishment of the National Healthy Start Feeding Program with a school gardening component to provide nutritional support for students from low income families is strategic action 3.2.1 of the BESPlan 2021-2025 under the Key Result Area 3.2 aimed to reduce vulnerabilities. The precise alignment of each strategic action with each Key Result Area under each domain maximized the effort and the return on investment for the MoECST.

The work done under Student Support Services also propels the MoECST to achieve the following national, regional, and international outcomes and targets:

### **Horizon 2030**

Outcome 2. Improve Access to Education

Outcome 4. Develop Education Support Systems and Services

### **CARICOM HRDS 2030**

Outcome 1: Broadened and deepened access and participation in all HRD sectors

Outcome 2: Strengthened equity in the access to and provision of HRD in all HRD sectors

### **SDG 2030**

Target 4.2: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

Target 4.5: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

Target 4.a: Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

# Maximizing Human Capital: Workforce Development Services

The main objective of the Workforce Development Division is to increase the quality and productivity of Belize's workforce by supporting access to technical and vocational education and training, higher education, and adult education programs that are relevant to national development needs.

## Activities:

TVET is essential to workforce development, skills acquisition to address industry demand, economic growth and sector strengthening, productivity and efficiency, reduced unemployment, entrepreneurship, and social inclusion. The TVET Unit of the MoECST, in partnership with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), participated in several meetings to discuss the current status of TVET and the way forward to establishing an accredited National Training Agency (NTA). These discussions began in January of 2023 with the aim of drafting a policy document for the sector. The TVET Unit also participated in numerous meetings with the SAGE committee to develop a National Apprenticeship Program, particularly in livestock rearing and construction. The development of the apprenticeship program is in progress with completion targeted for 2024-2025.

Tertiary education is fundamental to national development. Advances in the tertiary sector result in economic growth and development through the production of highly skilled professionals in various fields essential for the development of key sectors like healthcare, engineering, technology, and business, higher employment rates, reduced poverty, social mobility, civic participation and democracy, and increased adaptation to technological transformation. The work of the Tertiary Unit of the MoECST is paramount. In partnership with TEDS and the BBTE, development training for teachers, teacher educators and facilitators for application in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools have seen steady monitoring and evaluation. Collaboration is ongoing with the University of Belize to facilitate tertiary level faculty in

pursuing advanced qualifications in areas of national priority. Scholarship support provided through the Tertiary Unit has gone beyond the budgeted ceiling of \$1,610,776 BZ to \$5,237,019.25 BZ.

Adult education plays a crucial role in the development and progress of a country for several reasons including but not limited to workforce development, unemployment reduction, poverty reduction, social and civic engagement, national development and innovation. By investing in adult education, the GoB, through the MoECST, can unlock the potential of its workforce, foster social and economic development, and create a more inclusive and prosperous society overall. The efforts of the Adult Education (AE) Unit in partnership with key stakeholders are geared toward this national vision. The AE Unit with the National Council on Ageing (NCA) conducted a revision of the Social Services Act – Regulations for Older Persons in October of 2023. While this collaboration is ongoing through the Ministry of Human Development, it is projected that the act will see necessary amendments to suit the current context of ageing persons in Belize. The AE Unit worked with the National Council on Ageing to further discuss and develop a national strategy for the council. The AE Unit was also actively involved in an advisory capacity to the University of the West Indies Open Campus, Belize for the development of relative program areas to be developed and offered by the university. In a similar role, the AE Unit played a pivotal role in working with the Chamber of Commerce and SAGE to identify skill areas to develop training modules and to support the Belize Apprenticeship Pilot Program. This initiative was later handed over to the TVET Unit for further development, leading to the work of designing a National Apprenticeship Program, particularly in livestock rearing and construction. The active

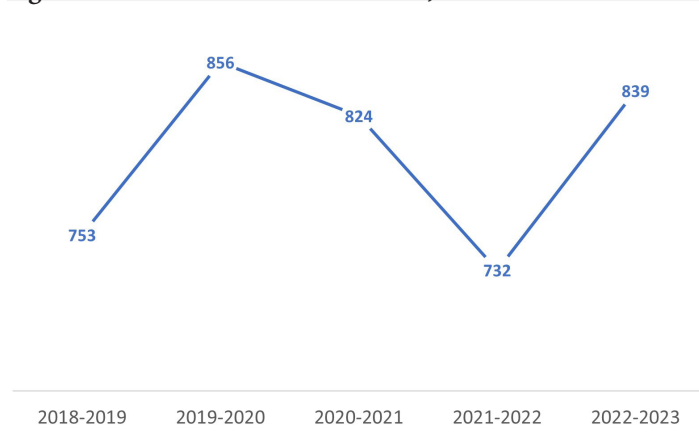
discussions of the ACE Directors' Association and ongoing monitoring, evaluation and support of ACE programs also continued throughout 2023.

### Achievements:

TVET investment develops a skilled and versatile workforce, drives economic growth, promotes social inclusion, and ensures sustainable development.

Figure 16 ITVET Enrollment Trend, 2018 - 2023 indicates a fluctuation in enrollment over the five year period and, ultimately, the TVET sector's recovery after the pandemic. Increased TVET enrollment in 2023 is a clear indication of the MoECST's investment in workforce development and recognition of industry demands.

Figure 16. ITVET Enrollment Trend, 2018 - 2023



A major achievement of the TVET Unit was the completion of CPD – CBETA training in August of 2023. CPD – CBETA training was developed and executed during Aug 14 - 18, 2023. Topics covered included: Understanding the Standards, Clustering Units, Lesson Plan Development, Classroom Management, CBET, Assessment Techniques, and TDAP Development. All new ITVET instructors and managers participated in the CBETA training.

The Tertiary Unit was also on track with the

establishment of a Higher Education Council with government, academia and private sector partners to set standards and provide quality assurance and accreditation in higher education institutions (KRA 4.2.1) which benefited all students from the thirteen junior colleges and two universities in Belize.

The AE Unit through active participation and collaboration with the National Council on Ageing through the Ministry of Human Development launched a National Strategic Plan for the National Council on Ageing. The plan not only guides the actions and objectives of the Board, but it also benefits older persons within the population as it allows agencies to better identify and serve the needs of those persons. A major achievement of the AE Unit was the development of materials for classroom management through CPD workshops for TVET and ACE teachers. All ACE teachers through the actions of the National ACE Coordinator received support in developing instructional materials during an Andragogy Training Workshop.

### Next Steps:

For the TVET Unit, the aim is to complete the NTA policy document by 2024-2025, complete and implement the apprenticeship program in livestock rearing and building construction, and to complete scheduled Quality Audits at all ITVETs within the period March to December of 2024.

The Tertiary Unit will continue to work with the University of Belize to develop programs and engage partners to address areas of national demand. The Tertiary Unit will continue to provide assistance through the REGF and continue to process and distribute financial assistance for tertiary education. Additional funding or a framework that helps to manage the demand for financial assistance is needed, so the completion of the FAST platform will be a priority.

Through stakeholder collaborations with the AE Unit, a draft with considerations for amendments to the current act on Social Services – Regulations for Older Persons will be sent to Cabinet for deliberation in 2024-2025. The completion and release of the national strategy for the NCA is expected for January of 2024. The primary focus for the AE Unit in 2024 is identified in strategic action 4.3.1 which is to develop a national policy for Adult Education, including standards for programs and providers.

### **Relevance:**

The work of the TVET Unit over 2023 targeted key result areas (KRAs 1-3) that spoke to the enactment of legislation for a National Training Agency; working with industries and the private sector to develop and deliver high-quality national apprenticeships in priority skill, service areas and emerging fields; and the upgrading of technical and pedagogical skills of TVET instructors to meet CANTA and CVQ standards.

The activities and achievements of the Tertiary Unit were guided by Key Result Areas 1 and 4, which spoke to the establishment of the REGF, transforming teacher training at the tertiary level, ensuring higher education council accreditation, and providing scholarship and financial support.

The activities of the AE Unit focused on the completion of strategic actions associated with Key Result Area 4, which targeted the strengthening of the regulations for managing and administering ACE institutions and increased employer support for increased enrollment in ACE programs.

The programs and objectives of the Workforce Development Services also aim to assist the GoB in meeting the following national, regional and international outcomes and targets:

### **Horizon 2030**

Outcome 2. Improve Access to Education  
Outcome 5. Develop Adult and Continuing Education

### **CARICOM HRDS 2030**

Outcome 1: Broadened and deepened access and participation in all HRD sectors  
Outcome 3: Improved quality in delivery in all HRD sectors  
Outcome 4: Assured relevance to learners' and Member States' development needs in all HRD sectors

### **SDG 2030**

Target 4.3: By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university  
Target 4.4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship  
Target 4.5: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations



## **BESPlan Priorities for 2024**

The future priorities and plans of the MoECST are outlined in the BESPlan 2021-2025. The MoECST remains fully committed to the following policy objectives:

**Restructure the Ministry of Education in order to increase its efficiency and capacity to respond effectively to the needs of the education system.**

**Align the Ministry's financial resources and mechanisms with targets for improved performance, expanded access and increased equity and accountability.**

**Strengthen the legislative, regulatory and policy framework for better outcomes and improved governance and leadership of the education system.**

**Maximize the use of BEMIS and other technologies to digitize the Ministry's processes and services.**

**Introduce a National Assessment Policy to measure the quality of education in alignment with the new National Curriculum Framework.**

**Capitalize on the innovative use of science and technology to transform teaching, learning and decision-making processes.**

**Transform teacher education and development programs and incentivize quality teaching practices and performance results for improved student learning.**

**Implement early childhood policy and curricular reform and expand services in underserved areas to increase access to quality early childhood education.**

**Strengthen partnerships with industries and the private sector to improve the quality, relevance and responsiveness of the TVET sector.**

## Financial Considerations

In addition to the restructuring at the Ministry staffing level, the MoECST committed to assuming full responsibility for the payment of 100% salary and service benefits for all government-aided secondary and tertiary teachers and support staff, effective August 2024.

This commitment will directly benefit over 900 teachers at the secondary and tertiary levels, as well as more than 175 support staff. The budget allocated for the fiscal year 2024-2025 will witness an increase in salary and service benefits, amounting to approximately \$14 million.

## Lessons Learned in 2023

The education sector is constantly evolving, and with each academic year, the Ministry recognizes numerous opportunities to learn and improve. This report outlines key lessons learned from recent initiatives, programs, and reforms within the education sector.

**Collaboration is key to success.** - The success of the BESPlan for 2023 is a testament to the power of collaboration. By working together, educators, policymakers, parents, NGOs, and community organizations have made significant strides in improving the quality of education in Belize. This collaborative model serves as a blueprint for future educational initiatives, demonstrating that collective effort is key to achieving lasting and meaningful progress in education.

**Data-Driven decision making increases education outputs.** - Reliable data is indispensable for making informed decisions that improve educational outcomes. It provides the evidence needed to develop effective policies, allocate resources efficiently, monitor progress, and tailor interventions to meet the specific needs of students and educators. As demonstrated by initiatives like BEMIS in Belize, leveraging reliable data can lead to significant advancements in the education sector, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and high-quality education system for all.

**Comprehensive support services enhance access.** - Comprehensive support services, including special education, are vital for addressing the diverse needs of students and ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to succeed. These services create an inclusive environment that promotes academic achievement, emotional well-being, and personal growth. The value of equity in educational experiences cannot be understated.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

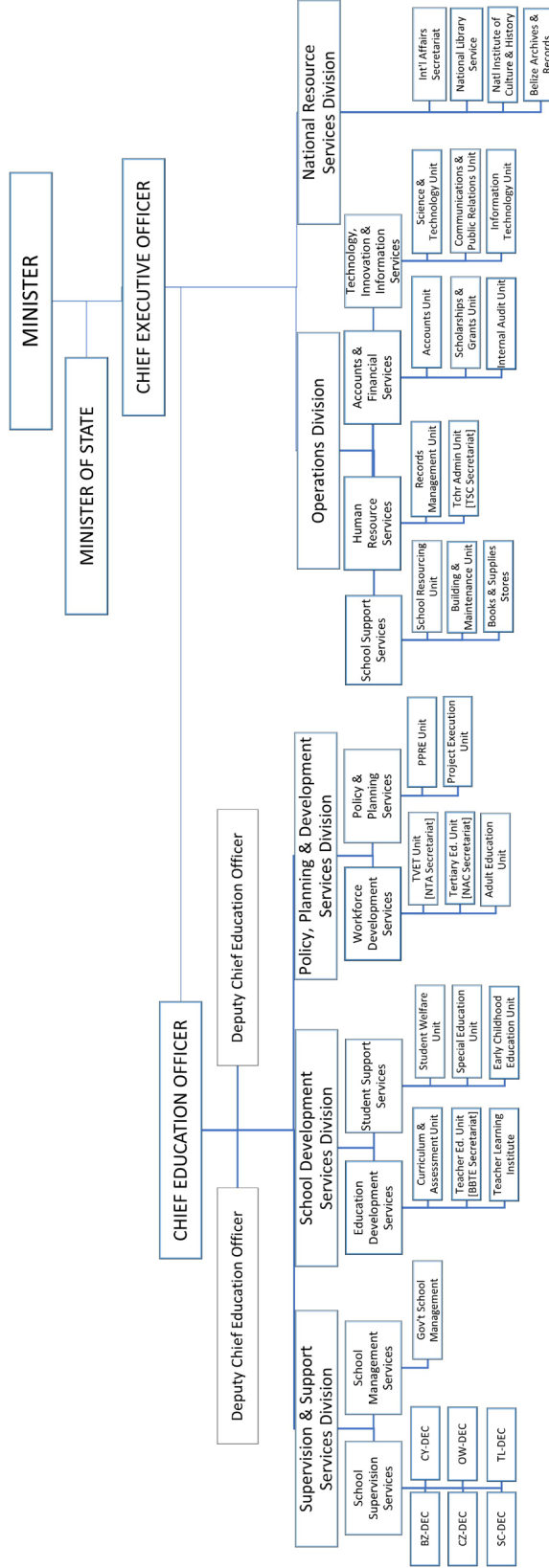
The MoECST remains steadfast and committed to realizing the BESPlan 2021-2025 and the #planBelize Medium-Term Development Strategy 2022-2026. With a clear path and streamlined goals, the Ministry has focused its efforts on strategic planning and effective implementation. The achievements of 2023 were made possible through robust collaboration with key stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, community leaders, and international partners.

This collaborative effort has led to significant progress in both the delivery and accessibility of quality education across Belize. Notable advancements include the introduction of innovative teaching methodologies, the expansion of educational resources, and the enhancement of infrastructure in schools. Additionally, there has been a concerted effort to provide professional development for teachers, ensuring they are well-equipped to meet the evolving needs of their students. Financial and human resources will be further strengthened to maximize efficiency in these areas.

The emphasis on inclusivity and equity has also been a cornerstone of this year's progress. Initiatives aimed at supporting marginalized and at-risk students have been implemented, ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to succeed. The integration of technology in education has further bridged gaps, providing students with access to digital learning tools and resources.

## Annex 1: Organizational Structure of the MoECST

The MoECST is committed to finalize the restructuring of its human resources to increase its productivity, efficiency and effectiveness. Key positions have been created and filled, while others are being reviewed to ensure relevance.



## **Annex 2: List of Professional and Technical Staff of the MoECST**

### **Senior Management Team:**

Mrs. Dian Castillo-Maheia, Chief Executive Officer  
Ms. Yolanda Gongora, Chief Education Officer  
Mrs. Cecilia Ramirez-Smith, Deputy Chief Education Officer  
Ms. Guadalupe Williams, Administrative Officer  
Mr. Dylan Reneau, Finance Officer

### **Heads of Units:**

#### **1. Operations Division**

Dr. Dian Danderson, Director - Teacher Administrative Unit, TSC Secretariat  
Mr. Ishmael Noble, Director - Information Technology Unit  
Ms. Namrita Balani, Director - Science and Technology Unit  
Mr. Anthony Bradley, Manager Government Book Store  
Ms. Guadalupe Williams, Records and Management Unit  
    , School Resourcing Unit  
    , Building and Maintenance Unit  
    , Accounts Unit – Finance Officer  
    , Scholarships and Grants Unit  
    , Internal Audit Unit  
    , Communications and Public Relations Unit

#### **2. National Resource Services Division**

Mrs. Lusiola Castillo, National Library Service  
Ms. Kim Vasquez, National Institute of Culture and History  
Mr. Kevin Montero, Belize Archives and Records  
    , International Affairs Secretariat

#### **3. Policy, Planning and Development Services Division**

Mr. Ricardo Gideon, Director - Policy, Planning, Research and Evaluation Unit  
Mrs. Ingrid Acosta, Director - Project Execution Unit  
Dr. Yvonne Palma, Director - Tertiary Education Unit, NAC Secretariat  
Dr. Sheldon Samuels, Director - Adult Education Unit  
    , Director - TVET Unit, NTA Secretariat

#### **4. School Development Services Division**

Mrs. Ines Paquiul, Director - Curriculum and Assessment Unit  
Mrs. Jeannie Garbutt-Franklyn, Director - Teacher Education Unit, BBTE Secretariat  
Dr. Candy Garnett, Director - Student Welfare Unit  
Mrs. Christy Almeida, Coordinator - Special Education Unit  
    , Teacher Learning Institute  
    , Early Childhood Education Unit

#### **5. Supervision and Support Services Division**

Ms. Melissa Andrade, General Manager of Government Schools  
Mr. Sebastian Cab, Manager - Belize District Education Centre  
Mrs. Kenya Collard, Manager - Corozal District Education Centre  
Mr. Hector Morales, Acting Manager - Orange Walk District Education Centre  
Mr. David Cano, Acting Manager - Cayo District Education Centre  
Dr. Tanya Nunez, Manager - Stann Creek District Education Centre  
Mr. Feliz Sho, Manager - Toledo District Education Centre

#### **Technical Staff:**

Mrs. Terri Wesby Langford, Education Officer II/ Researcher/Planner, PPRE Unit  
Mrs. Yvonne Casildo-Flowers, Statistician II-PPRE Unit

### Annex 3: Program Expenditure Summary

<b>PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE SUMMARY</b>										
No.	Programme	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Budget Estimate	2022/23 Revised Estimate	2023/24 Budget Estimate	2024/25 Forward Estimate	2025/26 Forward Estimate		
045	<b>OPERATIONS</b>	<b>\$250,138,264</b>	<b>\$206,395,676</b>	<b>\$222,609,395</b>	<b>\$216,996,212</b>	<b>\$240,916,246</b>	<b>\$240,831,892</b>	<b>\$240,763,892</b>		
	Recurrent Expenditure	\$222,572,135	\$201,131,764	\$209,167,273	\$209,866,261	\$226,050,891	\$226,050,892	\$226,050,892		
	Capital II Expenditure	\$16,857,237	\$2,119,347	\$3,330,695	\$2,904,657	\$6,841,900	\$6,781,000	\$6,713,000		
	Capital III Expenditure	\$10,708,892	\$3,144,565	\$10,111,427	\$4,225,294	\$8,023,455	\$8,000,000	\$8,000,000		
119	<b>EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>\$222,302</b>	<b>\$223,027</b>	<b>\$3,658,062</b>	<b>\$1,411,874</b>	<b>\$3,482,830</b>	<b>\$3,452,830</b>	<b>\$3,452,830</b>		
	Recurrent Expenditure	\$222,302	\$223,027	\$3,658,062	\$1,411,874	\$3,402,830	\$3,402,830	\$3,402,830		
	Capital II Expenditure	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$80,000	\$50,000	\$50,000		
	Capital III Expenditure	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
118	<b>SCHOOL SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT</b>	<b>\$5,142,594</b>	<b>\$4,153,178</b>	<b>\$16,039,048</b>	<b>\$11,251,347</b>	<b>\$18,911,801</b>	<b>\$18,906,801</b>	<b>\$18,906,801</b>		
	Recurrent Expenditure	\$5,142,594	\$4,153,178	\$16,039,048	\$11,251,347	\$18,906,801	\$18,906,801	\$18,906,801		
	Capital II Expenditure	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,000	\$0	\$0		
	Capital III Expenditure	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
120	<b>STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES</b>	<b>\$3,605,728</b>	<b>\$3,193,402</b>	<b>\$3,655,566</b>	<b>\$2,376,638</b>	<b>\$3,367,157</b>	<b>\$3,367,157</b>	<b>\$3,367,157</b>		
	Recurrent Expenditure	\$3,605,728	\$3,193,402	\$3,655,566	\$2,376,638	\$3,267,157	\$3,267,157	\$3,267,157		
	Capital II Expenditure	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000		
	Capital III Expenditure	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
121	<b>NATIONAL RESOURCE SERVICES</b>	<b>\$5,754,688</b>	<b>\$6,631,707</b>	<b>\$7,226,553</b>	<b>\$6,796,420</b>	<b>\$7,798,367</b>	<b>\$7,787,157</b>	<b>\$7,777,157</b>		
	Recurrent Expenditure	\$5,754,688	\$6,588,267	\$7,181,553	\$6,796,420	\$7,460,319	\$7,460,319	\$7,460,319		
	Capital II Expenditure	\$0	\$43,440	\$45,000	\$0	\$338,048	\$326,838	\$316,838		
	Capital III Expenditure	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
122	<b>POLICY AND PLANNING</b>	<b>\$7,530,959</b>	<b>\$1,826,439</b>	<b>\$4,572,119</b>	<b>\$5,687,355</b>	<b>\$7,073,306</b>	<b>\$3,073,306</b>	<b>\$1,073,306</b>		
	Recurrent Expenditure	\$484,534	\$416,762	\$1,047,127	\$419,215	\$1,043,306	\$1,043,306	\$1,043,306		
	Capital II Expenditure	\$0	\$24,783	\$25,000	\$58,838	\$530,000	\$30,000	\$30,000		
	Capital III Expenditure	\$7,046,424	\$1,384,894	\$3,499,992	\$5,209,302	\$5,500,000	\$2,000,000	\$0		
123	<b>WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>\$619,908</b>	<b>\$468,477</b>	<b>\$961,391</b>	<b>\$516,553</b>	<b>\$957,127</b>	<b>\$957,126</b>	<b>\$957,126</b>		
	Recurrent Expenditure	\$619,908	\$468,477	\$961,391	\$516,553	\$957,127	\$957,126	\$957,126		
	Capital II Expenditure	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
	Capital III Expenditure	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
<b>TOTAL BUDGET CEILING</b>		<b>\$273,014,443</b>	<b>\$222,891,906</b>	<b>\$258,722,134</b>	<b>\$245,036,398</b>	<b>\$282,506,835</b>	<b>\$278,376,269</b>	<b>\$276,298,269</b>		
	Recurrent Expenditure	\$238,401,890	\$216,174,877	\$241,710,020	\$232,638,307	\$261,088,432	\$261,088,431	\$261,088,431		
	Capital II Expenditure	\$16,857,237	\$2,187,570	\$3,400,695	\$2,963,495	\$7,894,948	\$7,287,838	\$7,209,838		
	Capital III Expenditure	\$17,755,317	\$4,529,460	\$13,611,419	\$9,434,596	\$13,523,455	\$10,000,000	\$8,000,000		

#### **Annex 4: List of Publications and Reports by the MoECST for 2023-2024**

1. National Healthy Starting School Feeding Program Menu
2. National Curriculum Framework 2022-2023
3. Abstract of Education Statistics 2022-2023
4. Belize Education Statistics at a Glance 2022-2023
5. Belize Education Quick Facts 2022-2023

