

**November 12<sup>th</sup> 2021**

**DOUBLE CELEBRATION FOR OUR NATION'S CHILDREN**

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**Introduction**

The week of Monday November 1, 2021 was an especially exciting week for our nation's children at all levels of the education system. Still in a celebratory mood from the release of some very excellent results obtained by schools across the country that sat the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC), our students were after months, returning to face to face learning. The announcement by the Ministry of Education that schools across the country would reopen with full face-to-face learning in some instances and a blended/hybrid format in others, was welcomed news for our students. The Covid-19 pandemic had caused major disruptions across our education system since 2020 and the explosive eruption of the La Soufriere volcano on April 9, 2021, caused even further disruptions. The use of the schools in the green and yellow zones as emergency shelters for the months from April to August 2021, meant that our students could not have the benefit of face to face learning. The use of the online platform during the period of disruption presented many challenges to the teaching/learning experience with the expected teething problems as well as other challenges some of which were beyond the control of teachers and students. Despite the best efforts of the Ministry of Education in providing devices for all students and ensuring that teachers were trained in the use of the online platform, the availability of reliable internet connections across the country proved to be a constant challenge for both students and teachers. Notwithstanding those challenges, those committed teachers worked through

every obstacle, encouraging and motivating their students, who displayed determination and a stubborn will to succeed. At the end of it all, schools across this nation were able to record improved results with very notable individual performances that make this nation proud, giving us cause to celebrate our children.

### **Celebrating CSEC Results 2021**

Despite the many challenges faced during their preparation for examination, the preliminary results of the CSEC showed an overall increase in the results compared to last year. The results for this year showed that 85% of the subject entries were awarded Grades I, II, or III, up from 82% in 2020. These results when examined even further show that the improvements were not only in the quantity but also in quality as more students got Grade Is and IIs than in 2020. The number of Grade Is rose to 28.05%, up from 15.62% while the number of Grade IIs decreased from 45.85% last year to 32.83% this year. At the school level, 11 of our nation's 25 secondary schools scored a pass rate of 80% or higher, with no school securing a pass rate less than 67%, a positive achievement over last year. The St. Clair Dacon Secondary School with an 83% pass rate this year, and the Union Island Secondary School with a pass rate of 68%, recorded the biggest improvements in their results with increases of 17% and 19% respectively. On the individual level, three students were recognised as the top performers; Kajé Jack of the Grammar School with 14 passes all with Grade I, Anjú Dowers of the Mountain View Adventist Academy with 16 passes (13 ones, 2 twos and 1 three) and Akayla Crichton of the Girls High School with 14 passes (11 ones and 3 twos). These results attained by our students would represent a wonderful achievement under ordinary circumstances, but the extraordinary nature of our experiences this year, makes them all the more remarkable and we should be justly proud in celebrating and congratulating our children.

## **School Reopens for Face to Face Learning**

The reopening of school on Monday November 1, 2021 to full face-to-face in some schools and the use of a blended format in others meant that for the first time in months, students were going back into classrooms. Students, parents and most teachers had long been expressing their wish to have face to face instructions, as a preference to the use of online learning that posed too many challenges to the teaching/learning process. The general consensus among stakeholders seems to be that while online learning adds significant value to the process and should be maintained, it cannot currently serve as a replacement for face to face instructions. The excitement on the faces of students returning to school was clearly visible as they walked along sidewalks in groups, or interacted in their school yard, the students were excited to be back in school. It was also clear that similar feelings of excitement were felt among teachers, as they too were happy to be back in the classroom environment where they are now able to instruct the student in their most familiar methods. The pleasant exchanges between “Miss” and her students, the face-to-face introductions for the first time and the forming of friendships that can potentially last a lifetime were all now taking place. Those First Formers who were so anxious to put on their new school uniforms, could now do so, and walk through their neighbourhood proudly, they achieved that right of passage but so far, Covid-19 and the aftermath of the volcanic eruption had robbed them of this. We are excited for our students and wish them all the best as they embark on the new school year, engaging in face to face instruction.

## **Conclusion**

While we celebrate with our students their outstanding achievements over the last examination cycle, we must recommit to ensuring that

they are given the best opportunity possible to succeed. The government continues to do its part, constructing facilities to properly house students, training teachers and making sure that the conditions of work are more than adequate. The fact however that some schools have not yet returned to face-to-face instruction tells a story of some teachers' reluctance to get vaccinated to ensure the working environment is as safe as it can be. We continue to encourage all teachers to get vaccinated, so that all students across this nation can have the benefit of face to face instructions.