



Opposition Vows to Reform Education Sector Amidst National Literacy Crisis

Kingston, Jamaica. June 11, 2025: The People's National Party expresses deep concern about the growing literacy crisis in Jamaica's education system, following alarming reports that over 70 percent of Grade 7 students at Pembroke Hall High School are unable to read or are reading at or below a Grade 3 level.

Deputy Opposition Spokesperson on Education and Community Development and MP Candidate for South East St Ann, Dr Kenneth Russell described the situation at Pembroke Hall High School as devastating. Noting that this is not an isolated case, Dr Russell highlighted similar reports that have emerged from Holy Trinity High and other schools across the island.

"This is not a Pembroke Hall or Holy Trinity problem. This is a Jamaica problem. What we are confronting is a deep, systemic failure to provide students with the foundational skills they need to succeed. This is the result of years of neglect, underinvestment, and policy failure by the Andrew Holness-led government which has been in office for almost 10 years. The fact that students are reaching high school unable to identify basic letters of the alphabet is a national disgrace", said Dr Russell.

The Deputy Opposition Spokesperson claims that, while the 2024 PEP results show that 67 percent of students are proficient or highly proficient in Language Arts, this statistic paints a misleading picture. The hard truth is that many students are being promoted based on scores, not skills. PEP may be showing numerical gains, but those numbers mean very little if students are unable to read, write, or comprehend after completing primary school.

He continued, "The disconnect between the test data and the realities teachers face in the classroom could not be more glaring. If nearly 7 in 10 students were truly proficient or higher, why are so many high schools receiving cohorts of students who are functionally illiterate?"

Dr Russell explained that the results we see at CSEC support his argument, with less than 20 percent of students leaving high school with five or more CSEC subjects including Mathematics and English. This, he says, is not because they lack intelligence or potential, but rather because the system has failed them at every level.

We must be honest with ourselves. The current system is not working, not for students, not for teachers, and certainly not for Jamaica's future.



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The People's National Party is committed to reforming early childhood education. We will ensure that all children including those with special needs and disabilities are given the necessary support to meet foundational standards. We will also equip our teachers with the necessary resources to carry out their duties in and outside of the classroom.

A future PNP government will act with urgency, compassion, and clarity in prioritising education. We will rebuild the foundations of our education system and give every Jamaican child the chance to succeed, starting with the ability to read.

We cannot build a knowledge economy if our children cannot read. We cannot build justice if our system continues to fail the most vulnerable.

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For more information, contact:

Dr. Kenneth Russell

Deputy Opposition Spokesperson on Education and Community Development

PNP Media Unit - Tel: 876-408-3160