

Polly Ground Success Story

The Polly Ground Primary School which is situated in the hills of St. Catherine, has over the past two years been carrying out successful gender experiments. The main feature of the experiment is the division of the grade into single-sex classes, in addition to which each class is taught by a teacher of the same sex as the students.

The first experiment which was done in Grade 6 in 2004/2005 under the New Horizons Project (NHP), had resulted in the performance of boys in the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) actually exceeding that of girls. This was an outstanding performance, bearing in mind that the performance of girls had far exceeded that of boys up to the beginning of Grade 6. Encouraged by the results of the first experiment, Mrs. Beverley Jobson-Grant, Principal of Polly Ground Primary and her staff, decided to continue the experiment in the school years 2005/2006 and 2006/2007, which fall under the Expanding Educational Horizons Project (EEHP).

In the 2005/2006 school year, the experiment was again done in Grade 6 and was expanded to include Grade 1. The Grade 1 Inventory done at the beginning of the school year showed that 66% of the girls and 33% of the boys had mastered all four areas required. Using the same specifications as the previous experiment, whereby the boys were taught by a male teacher and the girls by a female teacher, it was observed that at the end of the 2005/2006 school year, the performance of 70% of both girls and boys in Grade 1 had mastered all four areas.

In the 2005/2006 Grade 6 experiment, the addition of a formal mentorship programme for the boys was added to the experiment, which again included single sex classes. Mentorship was provided by male role models from the area, such as members of the police force, bauxite workers, pastors, parents of other boys in the school and past male students of the school, then in high school. The results of the GSAT in 2006 showed that boys and girls had both performed equally well. Mrs. Jobson-Grant is also pleased to emphasize, that as performance has improved, so has behaviour and deportment, particularly among the boys.

The gender experiment continues at Polly Ground in this school year (2006/2007) and has again been expanded, this time to include Grade 3 along with Grades 1 and 6. One variation this year in Grade 1 is that the faster students have been grouped together in one co-educational class and are being taught by a female teacher; whereas the slower ones are again segregated by sex and are being taught by a teacher of the same sex as the class. We anxiously await the results of this year's experiments.

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