



Peace
Corps

RESPONSE

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

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Finally, many thanks to all the Peace Corps Belize staff for their unwavering support, encouragement, and dedication to the mission of world peace and friendship.



Thank you all for stepping forth and embracing each new day together. Ak'kutan.

Introduction

Background and Context for PCRVs in Belize

Established in 1961, the Peace Corps is a United States government agency that brings together skilled and committed volunteers with welcoming international host communities. The Peace Corps arrived in Belize (then British Honduras) in 1963 when the agency was still in its infancy. Over the past 60 years, Peace Corps has partnered with the government of Belize to supply volunteers in several sectors of service (Agriculture, Environment, Community Economic Development, Health, Education, and Youth in Development). Since the agency's inception, Peace Corps Volunteers have worked in approximately 142 countries all over the world supporting community-based service projects. The overall mission of the Peace Corps is to promote world peace and friendship by fulfilling the following three goals: (1) to help the countries interested in meeting their need for trained people, (2) to help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served, and (3) to help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans. The Peace Corps Response (PCR) program was established approximately 20 years ago to deploy highly experienced professionals for short-term, high-impact assignments in communities worldwide.

The 2024-2025 Project Umbrella and Evolution of Partnership

Partnering with the MoEST, PCRVs focused their work to support the MoEST's BESPlan Strategic Goal II: Transforming Teaching and Learning. PCRV's work specifically supported the following strategic actions outlined for this goal:

2.1.2 Use the National Curriculum Reform Framework to streamline the curriculum at the primary and secondary levels and to allow for in-depth acquisition of the literacy, numeracy, technological and critical thinking skills needed in the 21st Century.

2.2.5 Develop teacher resources and provide training to teachers in administering screening tools and diagnostic tests and in the use of appropriate assessment strategies to promote learning.

2.3.2 Ensure that teachers at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels of education and teacher educators and professional development facilitators are appropriately trained (Belize Education Sector Plan 2021-2025, pp. 43, 48, and 52).

The work of PCRVs is grounded in the following core beliefs:

- All children deserve to be taught in ways that they learn.
- The science of how children learn informs our work.
- What and how we teach really matters.
- A focus on best practices and prevention will ensure more children learn and reduce the need for intervention.
- Individualized instruction honors students' needs.

The Peace Corps Response Literacy Intervention Project was launched in 2017. Initially, the project centered around providing support for students in need of intervention at the Standard 1 level based on reading benchmarks. However, recognizing the importance of early intervention in preventing long-term literacy challenges, the program shifted its focus to the

Infant Division this year. Cultivating teachers' skills in early literacy aims to reduce the need for remedial support and promote sustainable academic success from the start of a child's educational journey.

In the 2024-2025 academic year, two new projects and one new pilot were added to the PCRV portfolio. One PCRV served as a STEAM Instructional Specialist in partnership with the Science and Technology Unit and one PCRV served as a Special Education Support Specialist with the Special Education Unit. Additionally, one PCRV working in the Literacy Project also supported the creation of a pilot project focused on play-based learning in Early Childhood.

Purpose and Intent of this Report

This report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the Literacy, STEAM, and Special Education Projects, as well as the Early Childhood Pilot. It serves as a tool for sharing insights with stakeholders about the progress and impact of the various PCR projects and as a guide to future Education sector cohorts. Additionally, this report makes recommendations to build upon the dedicated efforts of individuals working to improve teaching and learning in Belize. We honor the efforts that have already begun to achieve Belize's vision of education to "Be inclusive, accessible, equitable, of high quality, technologically-driven and capable of fostering the development of good, productive citizens" (MoEST, 2025).

Early Childhood Literacy Project

Overview

The Early Childhood Literacy Project concentrated on building teachers' abilities to incorporate research-based practices aligned with the Science of Reading (see [Appendix A](#)) in Infant 1 and 2 classrooms. Teachers explored the foundations of reading instruction through workshops that targeted phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Supported by workshops, coaching conferences, and collaborative planning sessions, teachers implemented effective teaching practices, and student learning improved based on assessment results across seven schools in three districts (Cayo, Orange Walk, and Stann Creek).

STRATEGIC SUPPORT	TOTAL #
Training sessions delivered / co-delivered by PCRV	32 Sessions
Teachers trained / co-trained by PCRV (with CPDs)	75 Teachers Engaged
Consulting conversations in partnership with PC-BZ	4 Expert Consulting Sessions
Coaching visits	313 Coaching Conferences

Successes

The project was marked by several key successes, both system-wide and at individual school sites. One of the key accomplishments was the development of a culturally relevant phonemic awareness assessment ([Appendix B](#)) which considers Belizean accents and words. This tool, while not diagnostic, was created by PCRVs with experience in assessment development and advanced degrees in education. It was developed in alignment with published assessment tools. It is specifically designed to assess critical phonemic awareness skills in Infant 1 and 2. It can be shared across districts to support educators in identifying students' needs.

The assessment results were instrumental in forming small instructional groups for students who demonstrated difficulties with phonemic awareness. These students received daily practice in identifying individual sounds (phonemes) as part of whole-group lessons and during dedicated times for intervention (during or after school). Additionally, teachers began integrating Elkonin boxes more consistently into their phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, enhancing students' ability to segment and manipulate sounds. This structured, research-based approach contributed to more intentional and effective literacy support across classrooms.

Three volunteers partnered with 22 teachers at seven schools on a weekly basis to support best practices in literacy education and data-informed pedagogy. In addition to these

consistent coaching relationships, volunteers co-led three individual workshops with two additional schools as well as a school-wide, four workshop series on student engagement.

In the sections below, we present our findings from one academic year of intervention work in partner schools. Findings and successes may be found under subheaders for Phonemic Awareness Data Analysis, Professional Development on Assessments, Data Analysis and Differentiated Instruction, and Coaching.

Phonemic Awareness Data Analysis

Partner teachers and PCRVs collected data on phonemic awareness skills for Infant 1 and Infant 2 students to identify specific areas of strength and need in foundational skills. It assessed students’ abilities in key components of phonemic awareness such as identifying initial sound, final sound, blending, and segmenting phonemes. This data helped teachers target deficit skills in whole group lessons and prepare small groups to support intervention.

Two key predictors of early reading success are alphabet recognition (knowing the letters and their sounds) and phonemic awareness (understanding and manipulating sounds in words). These foundational skills are essential in learning to read. From these skills, students gain the prerequisite knowledge needed to decode (sound out) words in isolation, sentences, and in a text. Over the course of the year, through intervention and targeted instruction, 100% of students showed measurable growth in at least 4 out of 5 areas of phonemic awareness assessed.

*The bar graphs below outline the average score in five phonemic awareness skills. The scoring guide marks the level of student understanding for each concept. A score of **pre-emerging** indicates that a student has little to no grasp of a concept. Scores of **emerging** and **developing** show progress, yet still remain below grade-level. A score of **achieving** demonstrates that a student is meeting grade-level standards. This assessment did not measure for mastery, as only grade-level phonemic awareness skills were tested.*

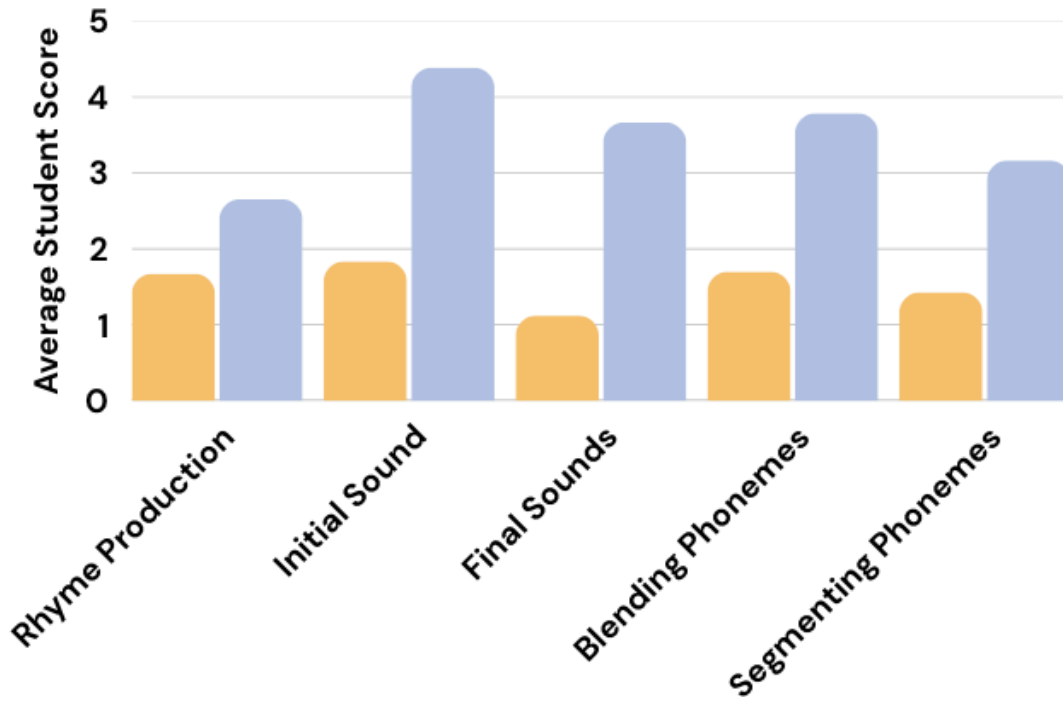
Key

Scoring Guide	Pre-Emerging	Emerging	Developing	Achieving
Skill Assessed	0-1 correct	2-3 correct	4 correct	5 correct

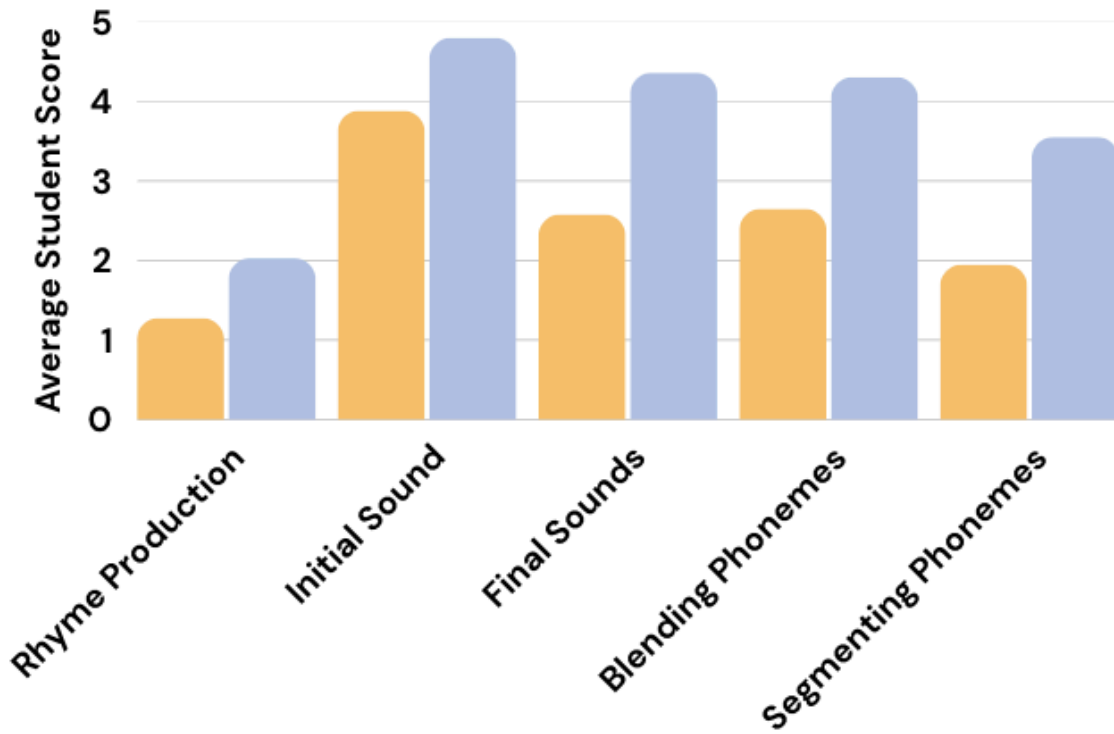
Beginning of Year

End of Year

INFANT 1 DATA

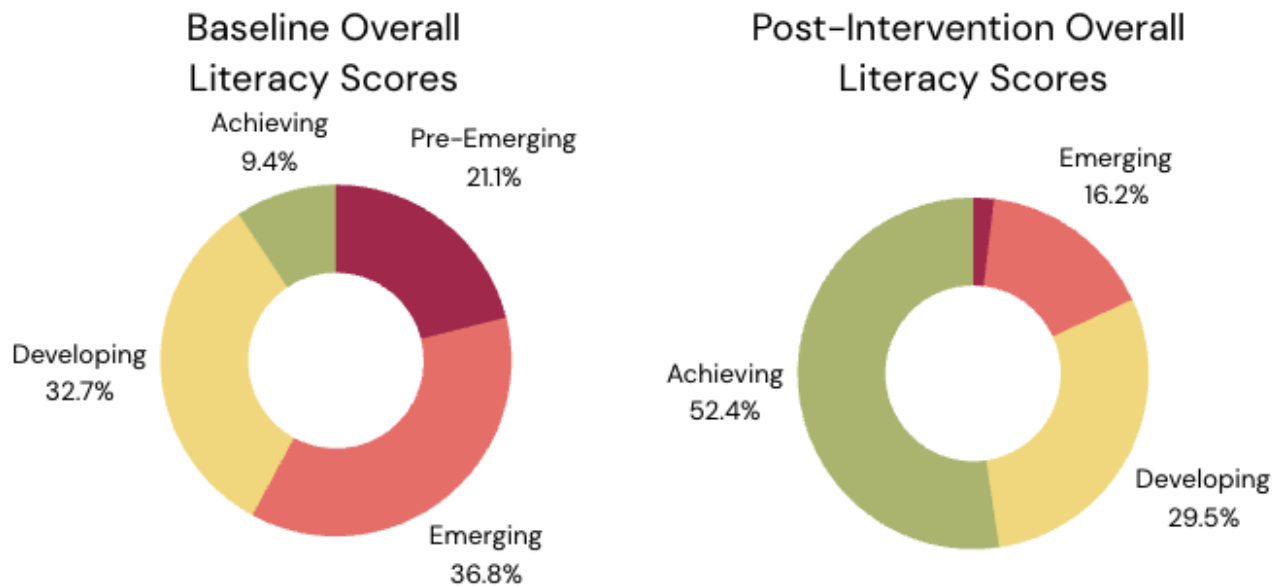


INFANT 2 DATA

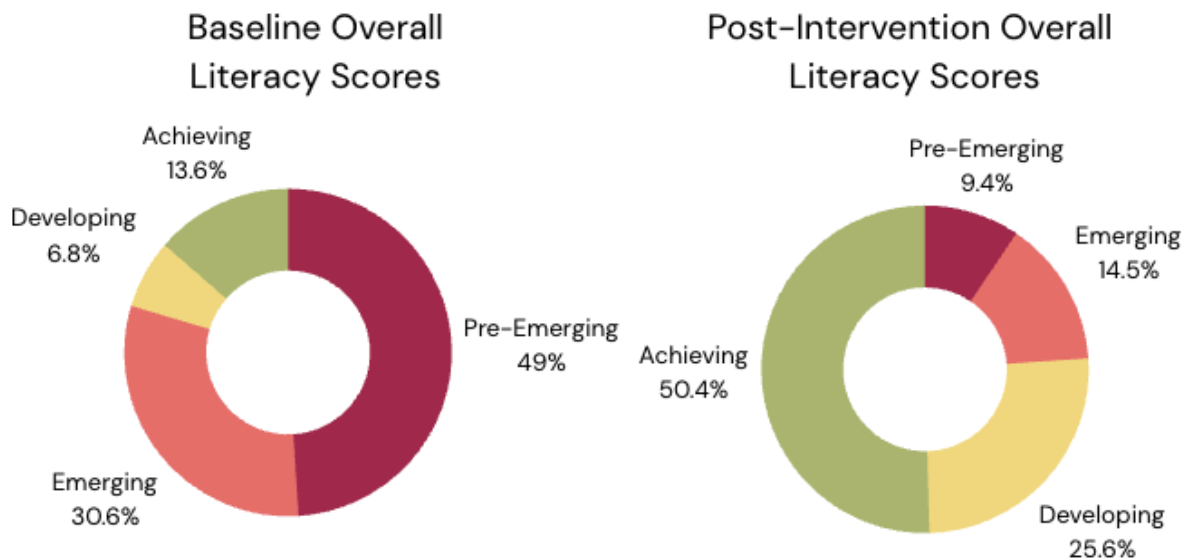


The majority of Infant 1 and Infant 2 students entered the year well-below grade level in the areas assessed, with a score of pre-emerging or emerging on the assessment. After interventions and teacher coaching, the majority of students tested at grade level. This data is consistent with current research on the Science of Reading ([Appendix C](#)) which asserts that 10-15% of students require explicit, intensive instruction and frequent repetition. Some factors that may have affected this group of students may include truancy or a learning disability. Further breakdown of our findings may be found in the following pie charts.

INFANT 2 DATA



INFANT 1 DATA



The data highlights that, overall, both Infant 1 and Infant 2 students struggled in phonemic awareness at the beginning of the year. The marked improvement in the data reflects the effectiveness of the instructional strategies employed and the increase in confidence and engagement in student learning. Furthermore, it demonstrates the value of early, focused intervention in developing essential skills to support long-term academic achievement.

Considerations regarding validity of the data:

- Assessment windows varied by school
- Differentiation between assessors (classroom teacher vs. Response Volunteer)
- Variation in assessment (Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Assessment vs. Peace Corps developed assessment)
- While this data demonstrates growth in the schools we supported, the data does not have a control group, which limits the ability to fully attribute the growth to the interventions outlined in this project.

Professional Development on Assessments, Data Analysis, and Differentiated Instruction

Over the course of this project, the Literacy team trained 75 teachers in 32 workshops broken into four sessions per school. Each session was structured to progressively build the teachers' capacity in administering assessments, analyzing data, and differentiating instruction. These workshops were available on the Teacher's Learning Institute (TLI) to earn Continuing Professional Development (CPD) hours.

Workshop Participant Feedback

"I gained much knowledge on phonemic awareness." -Infant 2 Teacher

"Great ideas for read aloud. I liked that the strategies were modeled."
-Infant 1 Teacher

"The CPD was very informative. I'm excited to see what the other workshops will focus on."
-Primary School Principal

In the first session, PCRVs, principals, and teachers reviewed key elements in the Science of Reading, compared the difference between phonics and phonemic awareness, and gave teachers the tools to accurately administer assessments. In the second session, teachers learned how to analyze their data based on the baseline results to prepare for Tier I instruction and intervention lessons. The third session introduced a variety of questioning and engagement techniques that teachers could use during a read aloud to improve their understanding of texts and deepen their comprehension of oral language. Finally, teachers learned how to utilize student work samples to guide differentiation of content, process, and/or product in writing lessons.

Coaching

PCRVs led instructional coaching sessions with 22 partner teachers in 313 sessions throughout the school year. Coaching sessions were most effective when teachers understood the purpose of the visit, a relationship of trust had been built, and guiding questions were utilized to encourage reflection. The diagram below outlines the coaching cycle PCRVs used over the course of the project.



Observations & Opportunities

In the section below, we present our observations from implementation of the Literacy Intervention Project this academic year, as well as potential opportunities to strengthen or reinforce best practices in the following aspects of literacy instruction: teaching practices, curriculum and other considerations.

Some high-leverage teaching practices include the use of data to guide instruction, teaching for mastering, and effective use time. Below you, you will find observations related to these three topics and opportunities leaders might consider when planning for future school supports. (See [Appendix D](#) for more information on Professional Learning Communities.)

Teaching Practices		
Topic	Observation	Identified Opportunities
Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers had limited experience collecting and analyzing data to inform instruction. There was a time constraint to collect data efficiently. 	<p>Data should be collected throughout the year to measure students' level of understanding. Support in data analysis through PD & Professional Learning Community (PLC).</p> <p>Build time into yearly calendar for assessments.</p> <p>Share established assessment tools that all teachers can use.</p>
Teaching for Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Checking for mastery varied from teacher to teacher. Activities did not always align with the learning outcome (LO). 	<p>Teachers need a deeper understanding of learning outcomes (LO) to prioritize foundational skills and check for understanding in a way that measures the LO.</p> <p>School leaders are encouraged to support teachers in unpacking the LO in PLC.</p>
Effective Use of Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional time was often spent preparing for school events. Some teachers did not follow their daily schedule. 	<p>Activities must be purposeful and align with the objective.</p> <p>Avoid copying off the board, rote memorization, and extensive handwriting practice.</p>

As teachers advance in implementing the competency-based curriculum, they continue to seek clarity and resources to strengthen their practice.

Curriculum		
Topic	Observation	Identified Opportunities
Competency-Based Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers still have questions regarding the CBC and how its implemented in the classroom. Infant 1 & 2 unit plans were not available at the beginning of the school year. 	<p>Increase teachers' ability to navigate the curriculum to highlight foundational skills through professional learning communities.</p> <p>Adjust daily schedules to ensure all portions of the reading block are covered.</p>
Multilingual Learners and Special Education Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is limited differentiation embedded in the unit plans and no curriculum for students in SPED. Multilingual learners have specific learning strengths and needs which are not being met. 	<p>Prepare teachers with professional development regarding special populations.</p>

Other items to consider in effective implementation of the literacy project includes the consistency of interventions and ongoing commitment to the project's goals.

Other Considerations		
Topic	Observation	Identified Opportunities
Participation in Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School events and/or holidays led to inconsistent implementation of intervention plans. 	<p>Provide interventions during or afterschool depending on campus needs.</p> <p>Utilize a tracking tool to ensure consistency of interventions.</p>
Family Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some schools faced truancy issues. 	<p>Facilitate family workshops to share how they can support students at home.</p>
Teacher Learning Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response Volunteers and teachers had trouble navigating TLI. The number of hours received varied by campus. 	<p>PCRVs, DEC counterparts, and principals should work collaboratively to prepare online TLI course ensuring teachers earn a fair number of hours.</p> <p>PCRVs and school leaders need more comprehensive training on the TLI.</p>

STEAM Project

Overview

While STEAM initiatives exist across some schools in Belize, a formal STEAM education framework is still emerging at the Ministerial level. To contribute to the development of a foundation for STEAM education in Belize, MoEST's Science and Technology Unit launched collaboration with the Peace Corps this academic year. Together, MoEST officials, school leaders, and teachers collaborated with Peace Corps Response to advance progress on the following initiatives:

1. Develop the 501 STEAM Project;
2. Assist in the implementation and development of GLOBE model classrooms in partnership with NASA's GLOBE Initiative in secondary schools; and
3. Align Science and Technology Curriculum to the NASA GLOBE Initiative and CODE.org project.

In the sections below, we are pleased to profile successes achieved in each target initiative, followed by an overview of potential opportunities to strengthen or reinforce STEAM programming in future years.

Successes

Over the course of the year, the STEAM PCRV provided coaching sessions for teachers in NASA GLOBE implementation; supported teachers in CPD trainings through the Science and Technology Unit, the Special Education Unit, and NICH; served as an expert consultant within the Belizean educational sector; and conducted school and coaching visits.

STRATEGIC SUPPORT	TOTAL #
Coaching sessions delivered / co-delivered by PCRV	33 Sessions
Teachers supported by PCRV (with CPDs)	225 Teachers Engaged
Consulting conversations in partnership with PC-BZ	7 Expert Consulting Sessions
School visits	23 School Visits

Target Initiative #1: 501STEAM Project

In partnership with the Science and Technology Unit Director, the STEAM PCRV supported the collaborative ideation, research, and development of the 501STEAM Project: a 5-year, BZD3 million (\$1.5 million) national strategic STEAM Education plan aligned to the mission of MoEST "To ensure that all Belizeans are given an opportunity to acquire those knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for their own personal development and for full and active participation in the development of the nation" (MoEST, 2025). The 501STEAM Project was developed to include the following key initiatives:

1. Create and launch a 501STEAM Hub as an accessory online resource within the 501Academy to support best practices in STEAM education for educators of all levels of students across the country;

2. Establish a 501STEAM Teacher Fellowship to train 500+ expert and master teacher Fellows and establish a robust peer-to-peer network of 15% of the total workforce over five years;
3. Lead and curate the development of 2,000+ 501STEAM Education Resources, developed by teachers for teachers, that are aligned to the national curriculum and support STEAM education for students across the country; and
4. Partner with the Projects Unit to support the development of five new Maker Space Lab Schools across Belize.

One critical piece of the ideation of the 501STEAM Project was developing a presentation of the concept strategy for MoEST leadership. The Director of the Science and Technology Unit with the STEAM PCRV presented this strategy to the Minister of Education, the Chief Executive Officer, The Chief of Education, and the Deputy Chief of Education to discuss the potential adoption and implementation of the 501STEAM Project. The strategy received positive feedback upon its initial presentation, and the Science and Technology Unit will be able to refine, adjust, and leverage this strategy to meet the MoEST needs as they continue to advance STEAM education across the country.

Target Initiative #2: NASA GLOBE Model Development & Engagement

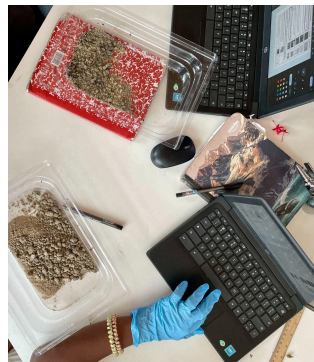
The role of the teacher and the support of school leadership is critical to the success of any national partnership. The STEAM PCRV collaborated with the Science and Technology Unit, Eden SDA High School and Itz'at STEAM Academy, to serve as a thought partner, instructional coach, and to model protocol implementation in classrooms under the NASA GLOBE partnership.

“GLOBE participants can investigate and study Earth system science through their own research projects and those led by scientists and researchers worldwide. This research can focus on specific GLOBE measurement protocols to examine community-based or global questions” (GLOBE.gov).

The STEAM PCRV supported three teachers at Eden SDA High School with eight school visits and two teachers at Itz'at STEAM Academy with 15 school visits over the course of the academic year. The STEAM PCRV collaborated with both first and second form teachers at Itz'at to curate impactful learning experiences for approximately 120 students at both grade levels to support learning objectives through NASA GLOBE protocols—as profiled in the images below—and worked with the second form teacher to write a GLOBE Stars Story about the impact of GLOBE with her students.



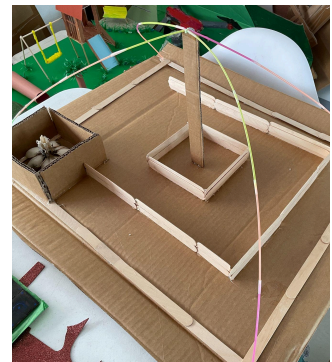
Supported First and Second Form teachers and 120+ students in "Get to Know GLOBE" through a case study analysis, webquest, and Water Temperature Protocol.



First Form science students worked with their science teacher and the STEAM PCRV to engage in a GLOBE Soil Characterization Protocol.



Co-leading Second Form students in a flora observation, Surface Temperature Protocol, & Cloud Observation Protocol.



Second Form students in their Sustainable Development Projects class incorporating aquaponics into their community garden prototype as inspired by a GLOBE case study.

Target Initiative #3: Align Curriculum to STEAM Initiatives

One of the needs that emerged this academic year was the alignment of current programmatic initiatives such as CODE.org and NASA GLOBE to the existing Science and Technology curriculum guides. In collaboration with the Science and Technology Unit's STEAM Coordinator, the STEAM PCRV supported the ideation and development of robust curriculum alignment guides for strategic classroom support for educators across the nation. Curriculum guides that were developed include the following:

- GLOBE Protocols for Environmental Development and Climate Change Awareness - Belizean Studies: Infant 1 through Fourth Form;
- Primary & Secondary Level GLOBE Protocol Climate Change Activity Menus;
- Standards 2-6 Science and Technology GLOBE and CODE.org Integration to Support Learning Outcomes; and
- Third and Fourth Form Biology GLOBE and CODE.org Integration to Support Learning Outcomes.

Target Initiative #4: Support Other Key Events & Initiatives

The Science and Technology Unit, with PCRV support, engaged students, teachers, and community partners in targeted engagement events including:

- Key Events: Access501 Launch; CODE.org's Hour of Code with students from seven primary schools from Belize City; interactive coding experiences for primary and secondary students at NICH's Archaeology Day; MicroBit distribution to primary schools across Belize with the ongoing partnership with CODE.org; and USpace launches.
- The STEAM PCRV also collaborated with school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders on the topics of Compass Points Leadership Training, Artificial Intelligence to Support Inclusion, and Instructional Coaching as profiled in the graphics below.

HOUR OF CODE



Engaging 100+ students from seven primary schools across Belize City in the Hour of Code event with CODE.org at Itz'at STEAM Academy.

ARCHAEOLOGY DAY



Co-facilitating an interactive coding experience with the Science & Tech Unit for students attending NICH's Archaeology Day event in Belize City.

AI to SUPPORT INCLUSION



Teachers across Belize explored ChatGPT, Khanmigo, and MagicSchoolAI with practical, hands-on engagement in partnership with the SPED Unit and Science & Tech Unit.

Observations & Opportunities

High-Quality STEAM Educational Instructional Programming

Currently adopted instructional programs championed by the Science and Technology Unit, such as NASA GLOBE and CODE.org, deepen science learning, environmental literacy, and inquiry-based pedagogy in classrooms. High-quality engagement between counterparts and the STEAM PCRV will benefit in the future from early and often engagement in the co-construction of planning and implementation, a spirit of openness to try new or emerging STEAM programming, and employing a wide variety of support methods.

Due to limitations in class time and resource availability, teachers often have limited opportunity to strategize and apply lessons from promising STEAM training efforts. To support application of training and deepen impact at the school level, streamlining initiatives and training(s) could create greater time and opportunity to apply learning in the classroom.

STEAM PCRVs and counterparts thrive with regular in-classroom support, one-on-one instructional coaching, modeling STEAM pedagogy approaches, engaging with formal and informal professional learning communities, utilizing co-teaching practices, and learning with constructivist approaches in peer-to-peer observations. (See [Appendix E](#) for more information on implementing high-quality STEAM instructional programming.)

Many promising pilot programs and short-term projects launch with dedicated enthusiasm and internal and external funding can stagnate without sustained investment and ongoing technical guidance. Even with limited support personnel at the MoEST level, successful STEAM programming will benefit from strategic and consistent monitoring, evaluation, and resource allocation to prevent a loss of momentum and to sustain achievement gains in student engagement and teacher capacity. This may include planning for follow-on care from the initiation of new STEAM education efforts such as the development of peer-to-peer networks, scheduled virtual support engagements, targeted resource sharing on a common platform such as the 501Academy, and ongoing data collection to support implementation plans.

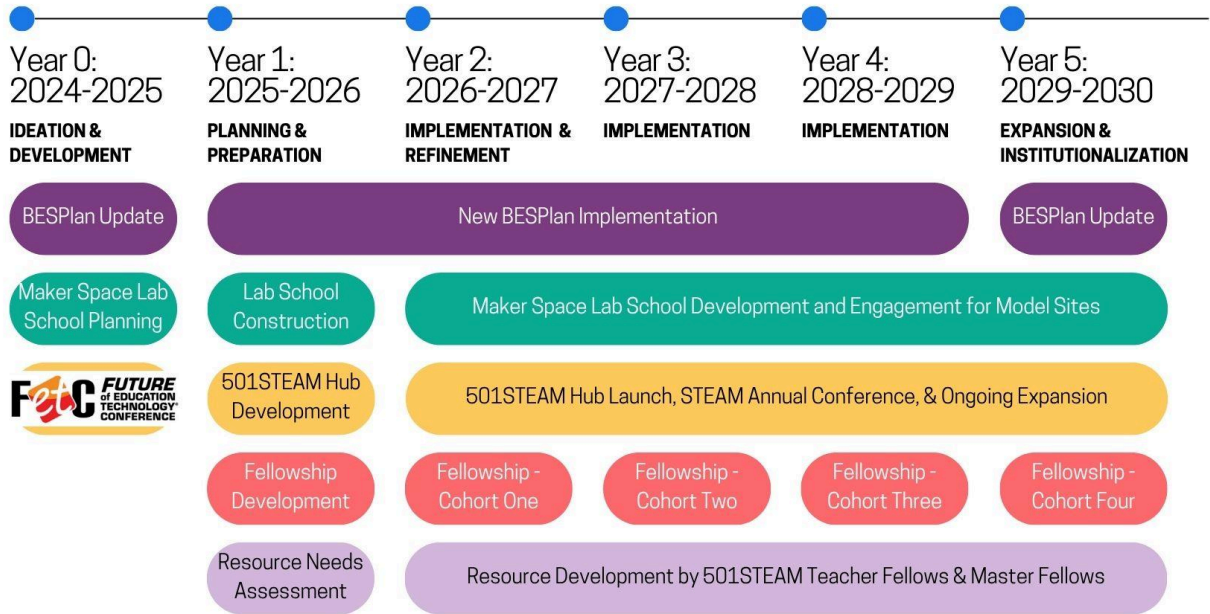
STEAM Instructional Programming

Topic	Observations	Identified Opportunities
Identification & Adoption of STEAM Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum framework alignment is needed to ensure efficacy of STEAM programming initiative use once adopted. School leadership support is a critical lever for implementation success. 	<p>Align efforts to school leadership vision and utilize pilot tests, focus groups, and reflective feedback loops for potential programs prior to wide-scale adoption.</p>
Sustainability & Fidelity of STEAM Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple instructional programs can create competing priorities. Limited material or technical resources can hinder effective programmatic use. Student and teacher background knowledge and readiness to implement STEAM programming initiatives varies across schools. 	<p>Create a longitudinal, systematic implementation plan to ensure instructional programming is sustainable from adoption to training to ongoing learning and support.</p>
Increased Teacher Engagement & Promoting Effective STEAM Pedagogical Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow on care and support for pedagogical development and application can be difficult to implement with small support teams. Some schools have structured time for Professional Learning Communities while others do not. 	<p>Provide key, structured educator support through Professional Learning Communities and high-quality trainings that are aligned to targeted STEAM education infrastructure efforts.</p>

National STEAM Education Strategy to Prepare Students for the Future

There is an increasing desire to focus on STEAM pedagogies in classrooms at all levels. A final critical challenge in the national vision and guiding strategy for STEAM education along with effective cross-unit collaboration and high-quality instructional programming is the need for a clearly articulated operational and implementation plan. In the absence of a unified direction, stakeholders across different sectors—including education authorities, schools, NGOs, and private sector partners—can unintentionally find themselves working in isolation or at cross purposes. This lack of cohesion can lead to duplicated efforts, gaps in service delivery, or an uneven distribution of resources and opportunities across regions.

With the growing focus on STEAM education, MoEST has a unique opportunity to leverage the strategic rollout of the 501STEAM Project (briefly illustrated below) to advance STEAM education in Belize by aligning targeted initiatives, providing key stakeholder support, investing in teacher professional learning, and developing professional learning communities across Belize. With strong vision, intentional design, and reflective leadership, the 501STEAM Project holds transformative potential for teachers, students, and the broader Belizean education ecosystem to unite Belizean STEAM Education with a strategic focus on sustainability, equity, and collaborative innovation.

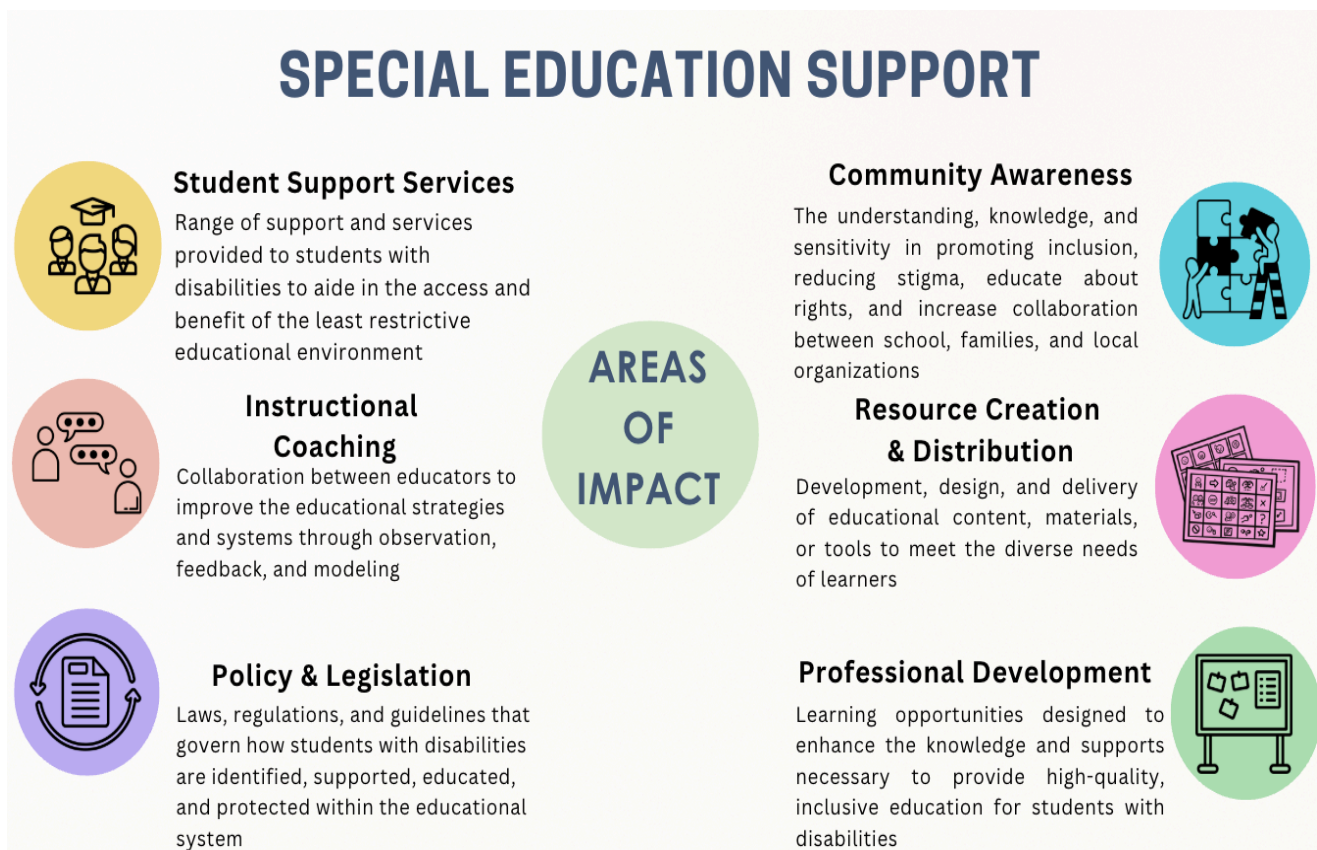


SPED Project

Overview

Belize is actively working to include students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. According to the Belize Education Sector Plan, an estimated 10–15% of children in Belize live with a disability, representing over 15,000 students nationwide who require specialized support, accommodations, and individualized instruction to reach their full potential. Quality special education teacher programs are limited; there is still a need for preparing future educators with research-based practices to support students with disabilities. The MoEST and Special Education Unit have made significant strides in creating and offering special education services and supports. The Unit continues to engage both special education teachers and general classroom teachers who support students with disabilities. Each DEC has a designated officer responsible for training and supporting educators in special education practices.

Through the SPED Project partnership, PCR and the Ministry collaborated, with a focus on Corozal District and national resource development, to achieve impact in the areas presented in the graphic below.



Successes

Through our work targeting these areas of impact, MoEST and Peace Corps helped to promote acceptance and understanding of students with special education needs while improving the quality and accessibility of education for students with disabilities. The dedicated efforts of teachers, SPED officers, and the Ministry's SPED unit advanced inclusive education services in schools. After launching this ambitious project, through consultation with Ministry, District, and school-based partners, we elected to focus our efforts through direct coaching, the development of programs and interventions, diagnostic and learning support services, modeling effective support systems, and active community outreach. These efforts were directly correlated with the SPED areas of impact.

Special Education in Schools

Special education classrooms, commonly referred to as *Special classrooms*, typically served 6–8 students with high support needs, while general education classrooms had approximately 25 students, including 5–6 who required varying high support levels. Some students had formal diagnoses and received special education services, while others were supported based on suspected diagnoses or need. More and more, schools in Belize are practicing and embracing inclusion. The Inclusion corner on 501Academy states, "Inclusion means taking everyone along....it means that we encourage and support others, and that we are open to learning about others' differences."

Leadership encompassing a culture of advocacy and inclusion by supporting Special Education teachers' efforts to raise community awareness and implement developmentally appropriate accommodations for their students matters. Administration that actively promotes inclusive practices through informal walk-throughs, conducts frequent teacher check-ins, and reinforce the belief that every student is a valued member of society is an exemplar for fellow schools and principals to model after. This strong leadership was met in Corozal district, allowing for the opportunity to create an open, trusting, and flourishing partnership.

The SPED PCRV collaborated with the Special Education Unit to provide strategic support, including professional development, consultations, coaching, and school visits.

STRATEGIC SUPPORT	TOTAL #
PD sessions delivered / co-delivered by PCRV	9 Sessions
Teachers supported by PCRV (virtual CPD)	90 Teachers engaged
Stakeholders supported (in collaboration with SPED Officer)	60 stakeholders
Behavioral consultations (with SPED Officer)	4 Consulting Sessions
School coaching visits	44 Coaching Visits
Teachers supported by PCRV (in-person)	8 Teachers supported
School visits	69 school visits

The development of impact from one academic year of special education support work is presented in the sections as subheaders below.

Student Support Services

Collaborative partnership efforts supported classroom-based referrals to the District Special Education Unit by facilitating coordination between educators and school teams. Pedagogical and behavioral consultations were provided to teachers and families to address student needs and support effective classroom strategies. Participation in behavioral consultation meetings and referral requests at the District Education Center contributed to student-specific support planning.

School-based Coaching in Special Education

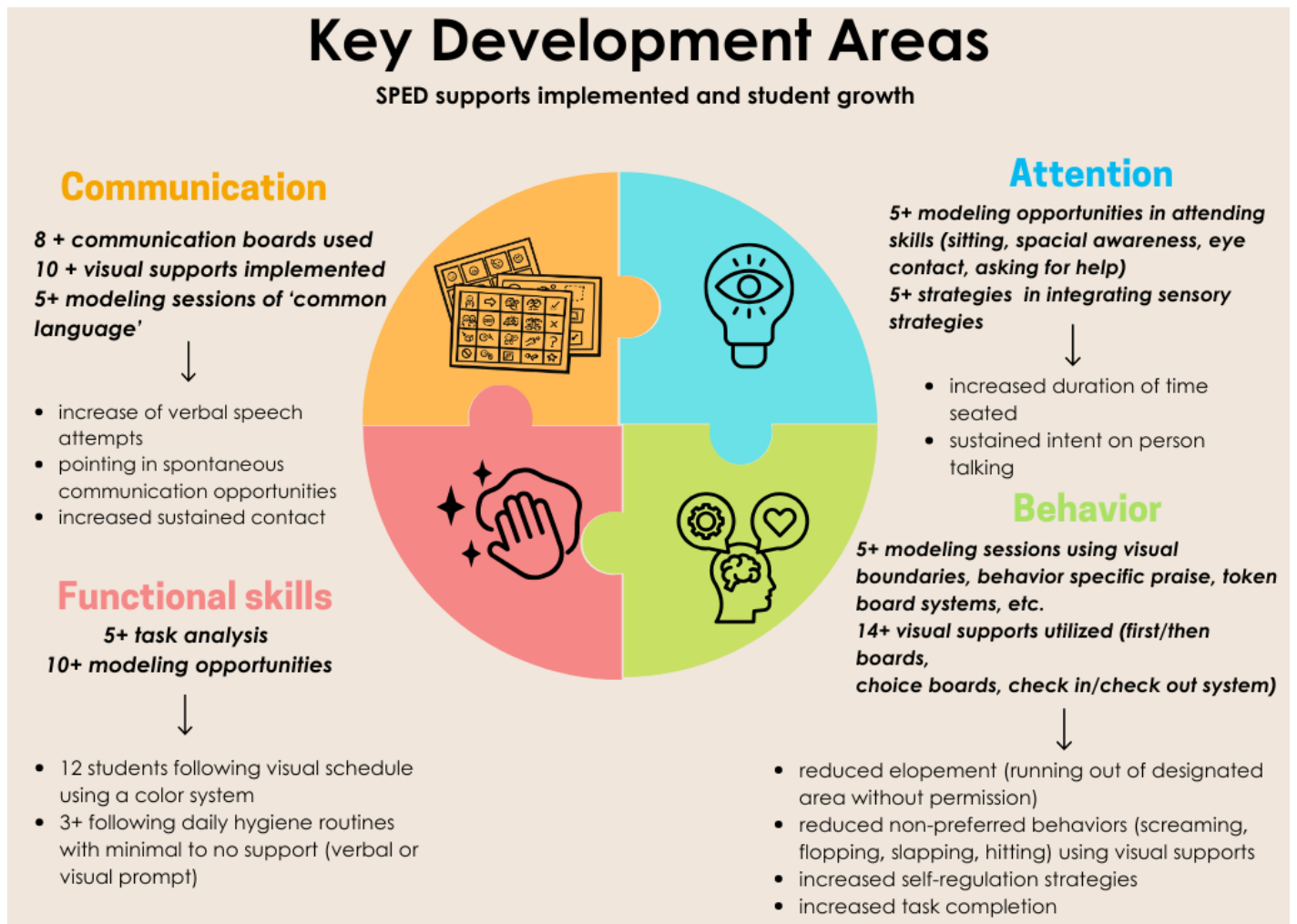
A cornerstone of the success, growth, and improvement of Special Education practices through partnership was school-based coaching. Through this specialized approach, teachers collaboratively worked with the SPED PCRV to improve instructional practices for students with disabilities inside the classroom. School-based coaching was warmly welcomed at one primary school and one preschool in Corozal district. SPED support was also provided on occasion at local surrounding schools. Following an inclusion model at the preschool level, teachers supported by the PCRV implemented a structured setting for students with high support needs for a part of the instructional day. Of the 30 students enrolled, six received specialized instruction through this model. This was the first time teachers attempted to create a restructuring of their classroom environment to support all learners. This demonstrated their strong commitment to inclusion.

Coaching focused on:

- **Instructional differentiation:** tailoring instruction to meet the needs, learning styles, and interests;
- **Behavior systems:** modeling and co-implementing approaches to teach, reinforce, and support positive behavior to create safe, predictable, and supportive learning environment;
- **Individualized Education Plans (IEPs):** co-developing and understanding documents for students with disabilities who qualify for special education services ;
- **Visual supports:** implementing the use of images, symbols, text, or other visual elements to help students understand, communicate, and navigate their environment;
- **Classroom and behavioral strategies:** modeling strategies aiming to provide structure, foster engagement, improve behavior, and ensure access to education in all settings;
- **Data collection and documentation:** guiding essential practices used to monitor student progress, inform instruction, and decision-making for individualized supports;
- **Parent communication:** providing strategies in creating trust with families via communication logs, parental input, and student update; and
- **Structures and routines:** modeling and co-creating systems (daily schedule, classroom routines, environmental structures) to establish predictability and understanding during transition times during the school day.

For additional context on common SPED terminology, see [Appendix F](#).

Details on the outputs of this work are presented in the graphic below.



Policy & Legislation

The DEC Officer counterpart supported the facilitation and dissemination of information on the Disability Bill of Rights that was passed in December of 2024. The SPED PCRV co-collaborated on the participation of community members in activity engagement.

Community Awareness

District and national inclusion efforts were further reflected as District Officers passionately promoted community participation in national awareness campaigns and events such as Disability Awareness Week, National Special Olympics games, World Down Syndrome Awareness Month, and Autism Awareness Month. The DEC Officer served as the lead champion for their respective district, disseminating information supported by the SPED PCRV, and leading parents in community field trips.

Resource Creation & Distribution

Through the DEC partnership and trust, the SPED PCRV supported the creation, development of resources such as visual supports, behavior supports, communication boards, schedule pieces, instructional labels, differentiated learning plan examples, adapted lesson plan examples, and IEP resources. The ministry openly welcomed materials, digital resources, and relevant resource websites to be shared with teachers, ministry partners, and families. Resources and materials have been shared with the Special Education Unit and will be shared nationally through the 501 Academy's Inclusion Corner.

Professional Development

Close collaboration with the SPED officers to develop and deliver a series of presentations aimed at supporting staff development and promoting effective special education practices. These collaborative efforts provided valuable professional learning opportunities for staff and contributed to a deeper understanding of strategies for supporting students with diverse needs. Areas of professional development included developing and implementing effective individualized education plans, classroom strategies, behavior supports, disability bill of rights, and disability information, and sensory friendly strategies.

Take-aways

After launching this ambitious project, when given a poll, teachers in the community said: "I believe in myself," "I spoke to his Dad this afternoon, and his Dad is content with what we are doing at school. It feels good", "It works", "It was very beneficial to me because I was guided on how to control certain behaviors and how to help them learn using different activities". When asked what topics teachers would like more support in, the common responses included: IEPs, behavior management techniques, communication supports, resource support, and transition (community employment) planning support.

Observations & Opportunities

Presented below are observations from the implementation of the SPED Project this academic year, as well as potential opportunities to reinforce best practices in the following areas: Special Education Teaching Practices, Social Stigma and Community Awareness, Leadership and Special Education Personnel, and Special Education Supports. Each area has specific topics, observations, and identified opportunities outlined.

Special Education Teaching Practices

Topic	Observation	Identified Opportunities
Individualized Education Plans & Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents, general teachers, specialists may not all be informed on the students' strengths and needs. There is a need for more IEP training, understanding, and implementation of IEPs. 	<p>Provide annual training of IEP (preferably towards the beginning of school year).</p> <p>Provide IEP snapshot and IEP form to all teachers who have students with high support need.</p> <p>SPED officer provide sample IEP to teacher.</p>
Progress Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent systems for tracking student growth or progress for students with high support needs are still in progress. Students may or may not have measurable annual goals. 	<p>Teachers complete beginning of cycle assessment, preference assessment, and communication scener.</p> <p>All teachers have 1 annual goal for each student with a high need/disability.</p>
Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is inconsistent implementation and effective differentiation and collaboration between teachers and staff. 	<p>Involve the entire school in inclusion efforts.</p>

Social Stigma & Community Awareness

Topic	Observation	Identified Opportunities
Community Participation & Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stereotypes and negative perceptions may still remain at the school and community level. There are students with disabilities who are not enrolled in school. 	<p>Gearing Disability Awareness and community awareness days for all students and school wide.</p> <p>SPED officers provide leadership and teachers with monthly topic video or info sheet to share a lesson with students regarding inclusion.</p>
Family Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misunderstanding and/or denial may prevent family participation and disempowerment. 	<p>Phone family once a week.</p> <p>Incorporate daily log in student folder.</p> <p>Create school parent advocacy groups.</p>
Social Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents, teachers, and community members may use language that is not people first (ex: The autistic boy, the girl with the lazy eye, they are special need, the special need girl, our special needs children). 	<p>Encourage 'People first language' in all contexts (ex: The boy <i>has</i> autism, She <i>has</i> down syndrome, They <i>have</i> high support needs, Our children with disabilities)</p>

Leadership and Special Education Personnel

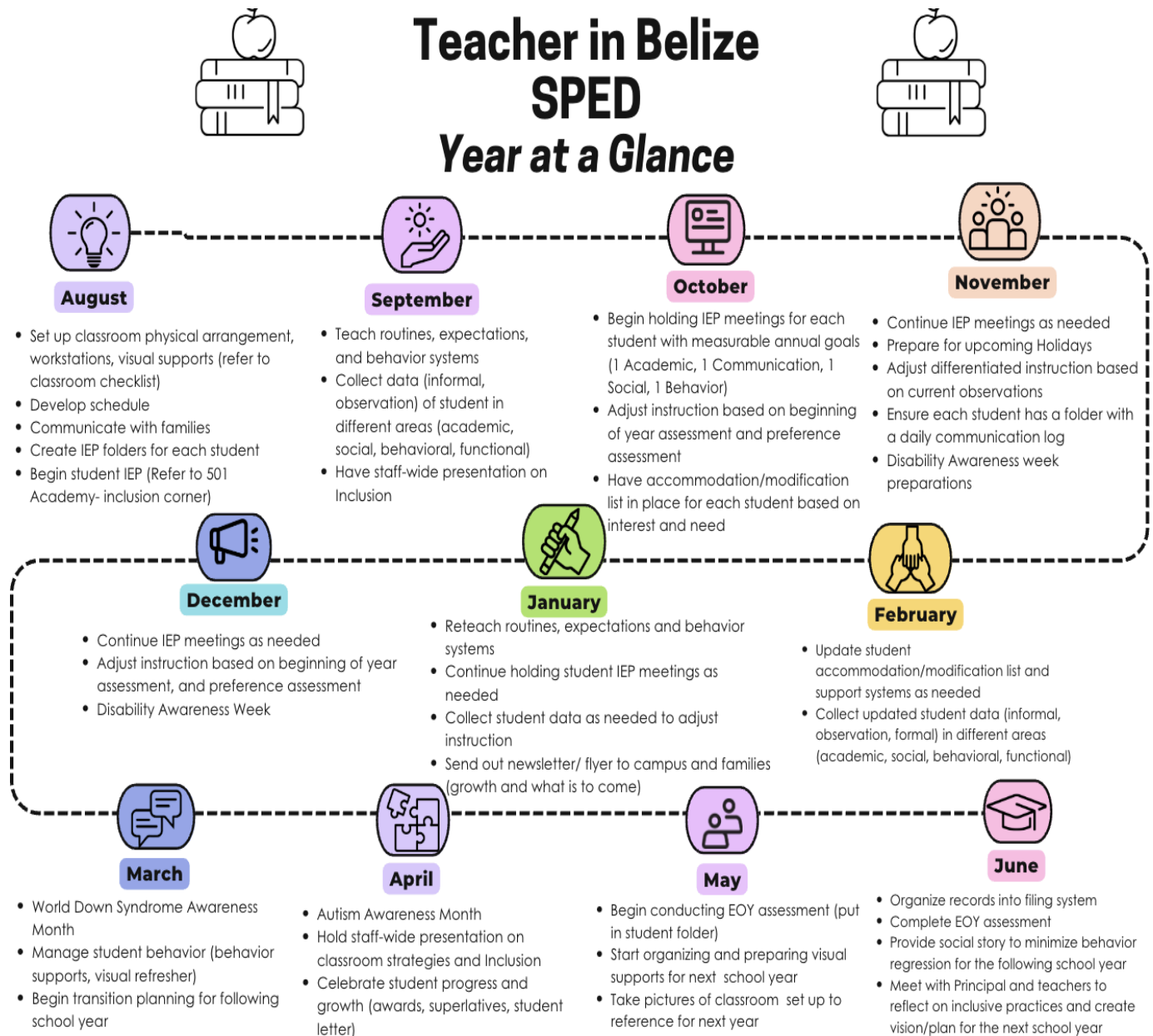
Topic	Observation	Identified Opportunities
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPED officer caseloads are high. Some principals have more SPED inclusion buy-in than others. • Teachers have limited materials and strategies. At times, teachers plan and work without other SPED teachers. 	<p>Build in more Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) among teachers (monthly meeting, monthly zoom meeting, meet and share at DEC).</p> <p>Create a mentor system where "Mentor teachers" are the go-to for questions, lesson plan design (new teachers with experienced teachers).</p>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More specific professional development and special education support strategies are wanted from teachers. • Teachers are more receptive to hands-on support than informational sessions. 	<p>Facilitate specific trainings based on teacher voice/need.</p> <p>Send out a poll/survey asking teachers what topics would be helpful to them.</p> <p>Encourage teachers to use resources on 501 Academy-Inclusion Corner as a central find.</p>
Morale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers feel inconsistencies in support, feeling high work load, and feel the emotional toll. Themes of isolation and lack of resources are found within schools and special classrooms. 	<p>Continue providing visible, consistent support from principals and district leaders who understand special education need.</p> <p>Continue providing check-ins, presence in parent meetings, and advocating for resources.</p>

Special Education Supports

Topic	Observations	Identified Opportunities
Instructional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At this time, there is not a curriculum for Special Education. • Lesson plan design did not lend itself for differentiating instruction based on student need. 	<p>Create student work plan with an IEP to meet specific student need.</p> <p>Use multiple data sources to track student performance and behavior (observations, informal assessments, parent/student input).</p> <p>Post general accommodation list in classroom and refer to it.</p>
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The physical arrangement of the classroom may not always include clearly defined workstations. • Pathways for mobility and boundaries for structure are not consistently present in the classroom. 	<p>Use SPED classroom checklist at the beginning of the school year and refer to it during the school year.</p> <p>Each teacher should have a break zone/safe space/calm corner in their classroom.</p> <p>Integrate more structure in classrooms with workstations and clearly labeled defined areas.</p>
Behavioral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to challenging student behavior are frequently negative ("stop", "don't do that") • Limited positive behavior systems are in place. 	<p>Use 'Common Language' to increase communication.</p> <p>Establish routines and post predictable schedules using visual supports.</p> <p>Collect behavioral data and create behavior support plan.</p>

SPED Considerations & Practices Across the School Year

Below is an example roadmap for teachers and staff supporting students with diverse needs. These are opportunities to intentionally integrate special education best practices across the school year. Keep in mind that every classroom, teacher, and student is unique.



The heart of Special Education reform lies in sustained collaboration, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to inclusion. The partnership between the Ministry and the Peace Corps Special Education Support Specialist has displayed that high impact and care in collaboration is valuable. With highly equipped and passionate SPED Officers, Principals, and teachers leading the way, inclusion efforts will continue to evolve, ensuring that all learners are supported in their classrooms, communities, and futures.

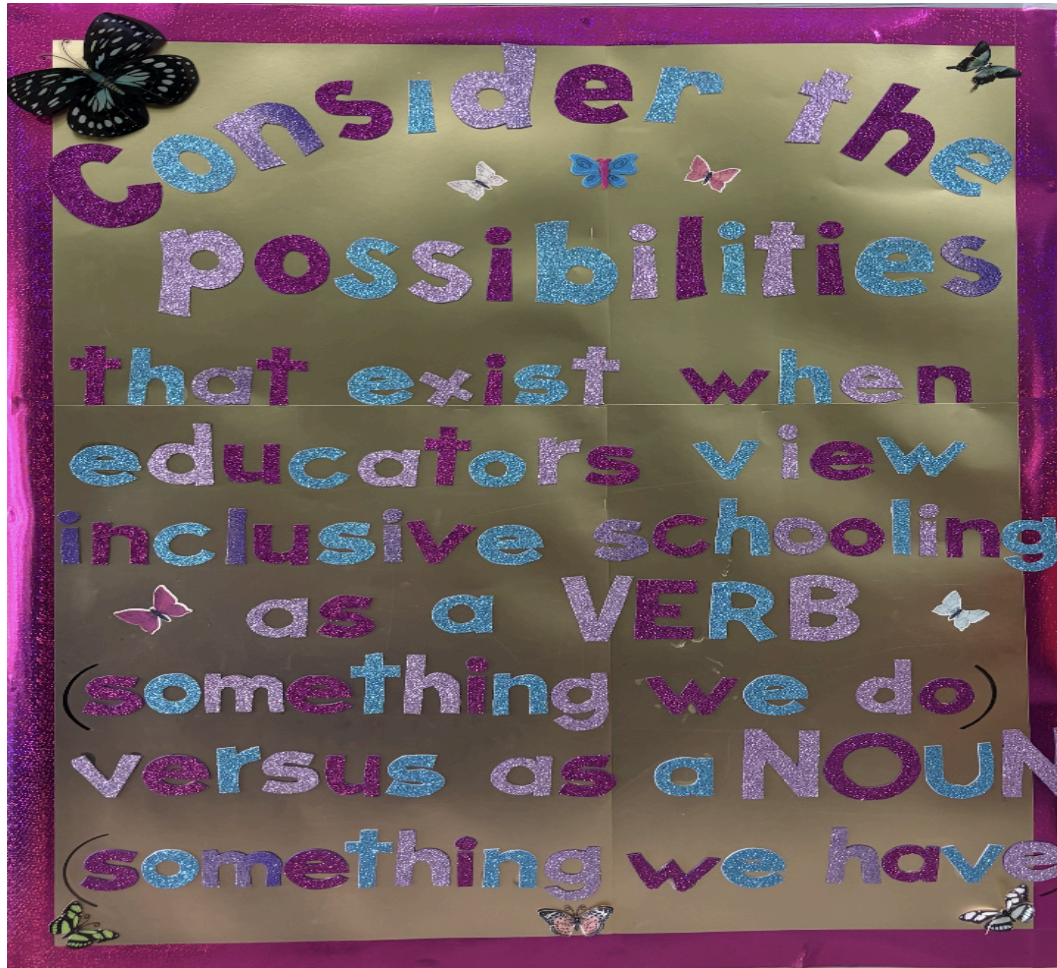


Photo was taken at the Special Education Unit building in Belize City.

Preschool Pilot Project

Overview

Research consistently supports play-based learning as the most effective method for fostering both academic and social-emotional development in young children. It not only supports children's readiness for primary school but also encourages long-term educational engagement and emotional well-being. Belize's National Curriculum Framework recognizes this as does the BES Plan, but in practice, preschool instruction and curriculum remain heavily reliant on rote learning and teacher-directed activities. Recognizing the need for more play-based practices, the General Manager of Government Schools invited Peace Corps Response to support implementation of developmentally-appropriate best practices and alignment with the Framework's vision through a pilot program involving coaching, modeling, and collaborative planning with local educators.

This project began its planning phase in October 2024 and transitioned into a pilot initiative implemented from January through April 2025. During this time, a Peace Corps Response Volunteer worked closely with teachers and the principal at Santa Cruz Government School to co-develop classroom environments that support meaningful interaction, critical thinking, and contextualized learning. Weekly coaching sessions and workshops focused on foundational elements of play-based education including classroom design, environmental print, teacher-child interaction, and integrating academic objectives into play. Teachers engaged in professional development, observed modeled lessons, and implemented new strategies with support and feedback. The pilot phase of this Peace Corps project also involved meeting with key stakeholders to plan sustainable development of the initiative, gauging current challenges and opportunities within Belizean early education, and building interest in the project amongst Belizean educators and potential volunteers.

Successes

This pilot project laid critical groundwork for the future of play-based early childhood education in Belize. A key success was the establishment of a strong, collaborative relationship between teachers, school leadership, Ministry officials, and Peace Corps Response. These partnerships allowed for mutual learning, consistent reflection, and shared ownership of the project's goals and implementation which will be critical in reforming early education and supporting sustainable local expertise.

Teachers and administrators from additional schools have expressed enthusiasm for continuing this work and have demonstrated an interest in designing learning environments that support play. The project also generated wider interest across the educational ecosystem within the Ministry of Education.

The Santa Cruz preschool team demonstrated professional growth in integrating play-based practices through the pilot's model of workshops and in-classroom coaching. Their progress offers valuable insight into the conditions necessary for scalable change and the feasibility of building a network of teacher-leaders to champion play-based learning across Belize.

Observations & Opportunities

The table below outlines suggestions for future PCRVs and counterparts to further support early childhood education. These observations and opportunities are centered on in-classroom experiences and feedback from partners.

Topic	Observation	Identified Opportunities
Global Developmental Delays	Preschool aged children often enter school presenting language, cognitive, and behavioral delays	Creation of programs that support families and caregivers' interactions with babies and toddlers in order to stimulate brain development
Teaching Practices	Common teaching practices such as rote memorization, low-level questioning, and reliance on worksheets do not reflect current research-based best practices to support early learning	Providing teachers more opportunities to learn about developmentally appropriate practices including teacher/ child interactions and supporting meaningful play
Materials	Access to high-quality materials can be limited	Professional development in supporting play-based learning in low resource contexts; allocation of resources to buy open-ended high-quality materials
Curriculum	Misalignment between National Education Framework and Preschool Curriculum lesson plans	MoEST may consider reviewing and revising curriculum to support best practices along with experts in early education methodologies and Belizean educators with local context

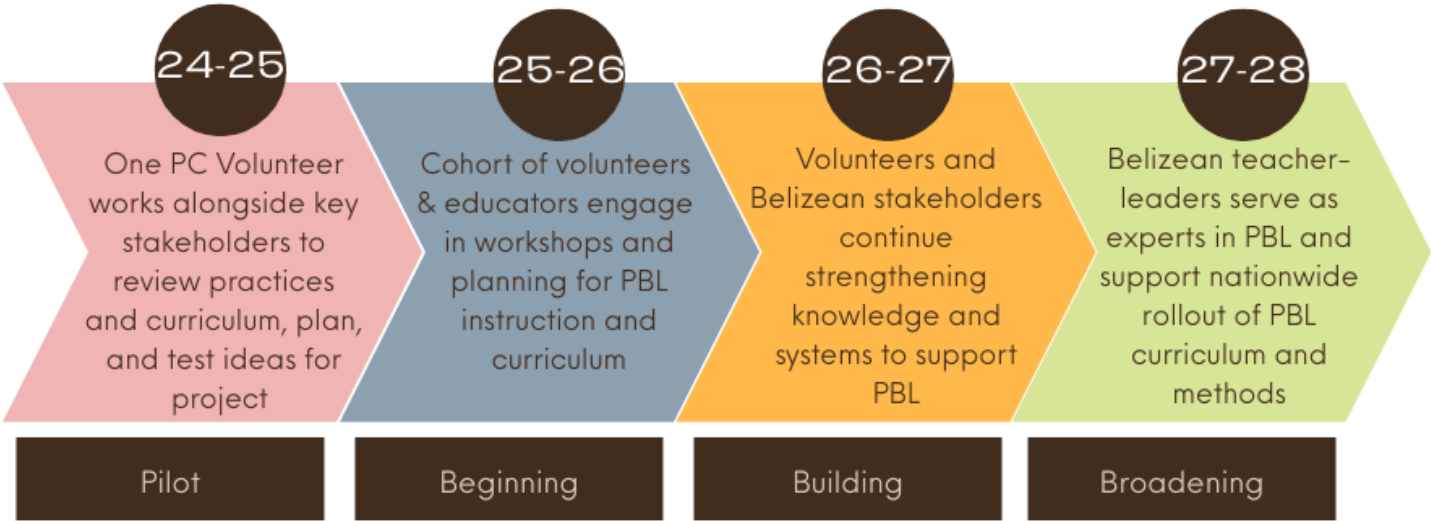
Next Steps

As this Play-Based Preschool Project expands, additional highly-skilled volunteers will partner with schools and local counterparts in the Central Region to scale this project. A critical aspect of coaching under the project would include supporting teachers in developing their ability to create engaging, developmentally appropriate lesson and unit plans aligned with established learning outcomes. Building a sustainable, scalable model for play-based early childhood education means centering the voices of Belizean educators who understand the

local context, while also drawing from global research and successful models of play-based education. The Santa Cruz pilot has demonstrated that change is both possible and welcome. Teachers, principals, and policymakers alike are eager for reform that empowers educators and supports children in becoming active, curious, and competent learners.

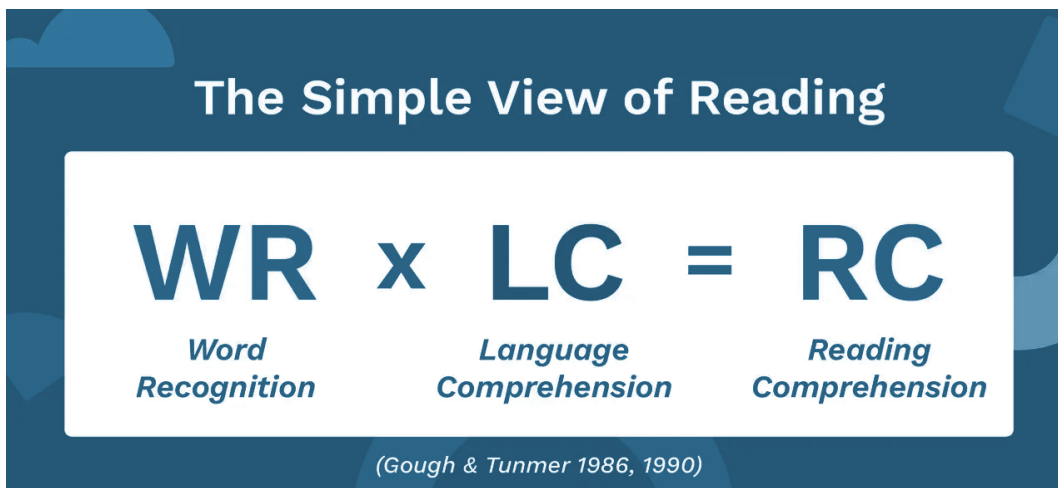
Beyond the current scope of this project, Peace Corps Response hopes to partner with additional counterparts to address the developmental needs of babies, toddlers, and their families before entering preschool and lower division schooling. This may include supporting the creation of storytimes, mommy and me classes, and other community practices which build bonds and strengthen developmental skills. With the right structures, resources, and partnerships in place, Belize can build early childhood classrooms that serve as a foundation for a nation of high academic achievers and well-rounded citizens.

Play-Based Learning Initiative Timeline

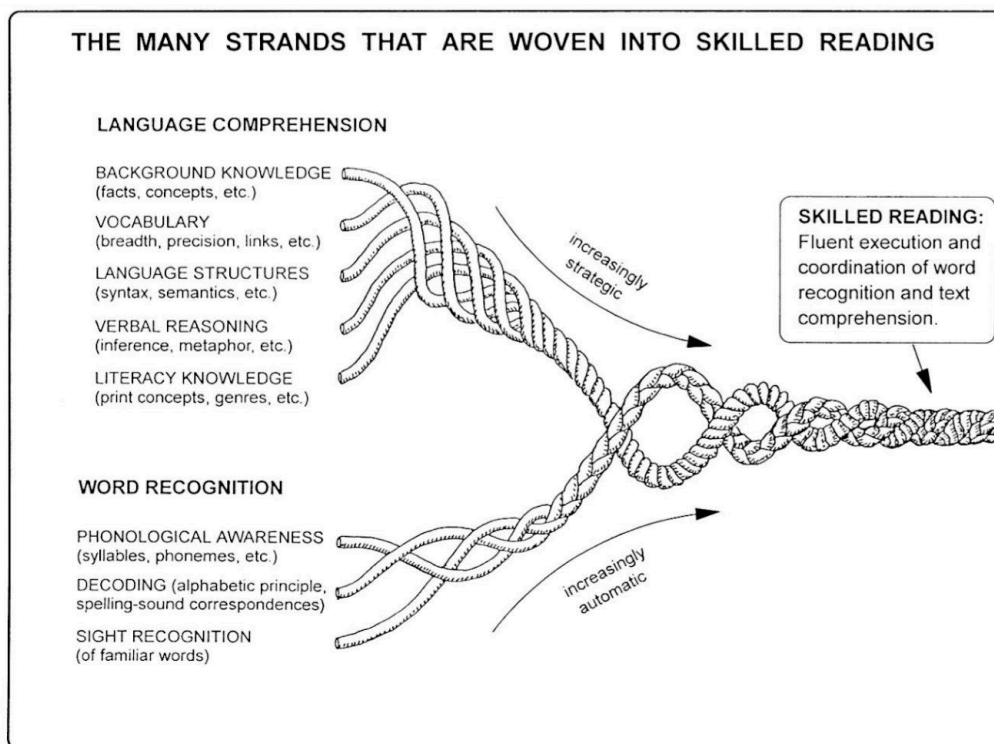


Appendices

Appendix A - The Science of Reading



([Reading Universe | What Is Word Recognition?](#))



Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. Neuman & D. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook for research in early literacy* (pp. 97-110). New York: Guilford Press.

([The Rope Model of Reading | Download Scientific Diagram](#))

Appendix B - Phonemic Awareness Assessments

Infant 1 Baseline Phonemic Awareness Assessment

Rhyming

Directions: Words that rhyme have the same middle and ending sounds. I will say two words that rhyme and you tell me another that rhymes. If I said "goat, boat," you could say "note". They all rhyme, listen, "goat, boat, note". Now you try, what is a word that rhymes with, "head, bed"?

Student correct response: Yes! _____ rhymes. " _____, head, bed". (Accept any word that rhymes with head - including nonsense words.) Let's do some more. (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: How about "red?" Listen, these words all rhyme: "head, bed, red." Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
pop, hop	word ending in /op/	
bake, lake	word ending in /ake/	
wing, king	word ending in /ing/	
can, pan	word ending in /an/	
hen, pen	word ending in /en/	

Number Correct _____/5

Initial Sounds

Directions: I will say a word, and I want you to listen for the first sound in the word. If I said "map" the first sound in the word "map" is /m/. Now you try, what is the first sound in the word "dog"?

Student correct response: Yes! The first sound in the word "dog" is /d/. Let's do some more. (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: The first sound we hear in "dog" is /d/. Say it with me "dog /d/." Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
pin	/p/	
sun	/s/	
fish	/f/	
bat	/b/	
top	/t/	

Number Correct _____/5

Final Sounds

Directions: I will say a word and I want you to listen for the last sound at the end of the word. If I said "cat" the last sound in the word "cat" is /t/. Now you try, what is the last sound in the word "pin"?

Student correct response: Yes! The last sound in the word 'pin' is /n/. Let's do some more (begin assessment)

Student incorrect response: "The last sound we hear in 'pin' is /n/. Say it with me 'pin' /n/. Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
bug	/g/	
leaf	/f/	
sad	/d/	
pick	/k/	
bell	/l/	

Number Correct _____/5

Blending Phonemes

Directions: I will say two sounds and listen to how I put them together into a word. /ĕ/ /g/ - egg. When I blend /ĕ/ /g/, I make the word "egg." Now, you try - /ĭ/ /t/.

Student correct response: Yes! When I blend /ĭ/ /t/, I make the word "it". (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: When I blend /ĭ/ /t/, I make the word "it." Say it with me, "/ĭ/ /t/ - it." Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Phonemes	Correct Response	Correct?
/s/ /ē/	see	
/ă/ /d/	add	
/p/ /ā/	pay	
/ŭ/ /p/	up	
/aw/ /n/	on	

Number Correct _____/5

Segmenting Phonemes

Directions: I will say a word and I want you to break the word up into two sounds. If I said “pie” you would say “/p/ /ī/”. Now you try, what are the sounds in the word if?

Student correct response: Yes! We can break the word “if” into the sounds /ī/ /f/. Let’s do some more (begin assessment)

Student incorrect response: We can break the word “if” into the sounds /ī/ /f/. Try it with me, if, /ī/ /f/. Let’s try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
no	/n/ /ō/	
it	/ī/ /t/	
at	/ă/ /t/	
me	/m/ /ē/	
us	/ŭ/ /s/	

Number Correct _____/5

Infant 2 Baseline Phonemic Awareness Assessment

Rhyming

Directions: Words that rhyme have the same middle and ending sounds. I will say a word, and you tell me a word that rhymes. If I said "goat," you could say "note or boat". They all rhyme, listen, "goat, boat, note". Now you try, What is a word that rhymes with "head"?

Student correct response: Yes! _____ rhymes with head. " _____, head". (Accept any word that rhymes with head - including nonsense words.) Let's do some more. (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: How about "red?" Listen, these words rhyme: "head, red." Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
pop	word ending in /op/	
bake	word ending in /ake/	
wing	word ending in /ing/	
can	word ending in /an/	
hen	word ending in /en/	

Number Correct _____/5

Initial Sounds

Directions: I will say a word, and I want you to listen for the first sound in the word. If I said, "map" the first sound in the word "map" is /m/. Now you try, what is the first sound in the word "dog"?

Student correct response: Yes! The first sound in the word "dog" is /d/. Let's do some more. (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: The first sound we hear in "dog" is /d/. Say it with me "dog /d/." Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
park	/p/	
sing	/s/	
fish	/f/	
boy	/b/	
chop	/ch/	

Number Correct _____/5

Final Sounds

Directions: I will say a word and I want you to listen for the last sound at the end of the word. If I said, "cat" the last sound in the word "cat" is /t/. Now you try, what is the last sound in the word "pin"?

Student correct response: Yes! The last sound in the word 'pin' is /n/. Let's do some more (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: "The last sound we hear in 'pin' is /n/. Say it with me 'pin' /n/. Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
bus	/s/	
lean	/n/	
had	/d/	
not	/t/	
some	/m/	

Number Correct _____/5

Blending Phonemes

Directions: I will say two sounds, listen to how I put them together into a word. /ě/ /g/ - egg. When I blend /ě/ /g/, I make the word "egg." Now, you try - /i/ /t/.

Student correct response: Yes! When I blend /i/ /t/, I make the word "it". (begin assessment)

Student incorrect response: When I blend /i/ /t/, I make the word "it." Say it with me, "/i/ /t/ - it." Let's try another one (begin assessment)

Phonemes	Correct Response	Correct?
/b/ /ē/	be	
/ă/ /t/	at	
/d/ /ā/	day	
/ŭ/ /p/	up	
/aw/ /f/	off	

Number Correct _____/5

Segmenting Phonemes

Directions: I will say a word, and I want you to break the word up into two sounds. If I said "pie" you would say "/p/ /ī/". Now you try, what sounds are in the word "if"?

Student correct response: Yes! We can break the word if into the sounds /i/ /f/. Let's do some more. (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: We can break the word if into the sounds /ī/ /f/. Try it with me, if, /ī/ /f/. Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
go	/g/ /ō/	
in	/i/ /n/	
add	/ă/ /d/	
he	/h/ /ē/	
us	/ŭ/ /s/	

Number Correct _____/5

Scoring Guide (Baseline)

	Emerging	Developing	Achieving
Rhyme Production	0-2 Correct	3-4 Correct	5 Correct
Initial Sounds	0-2 Correct	3-4 Correct	5 Correct
Ending Sounds	0-2 Correct	3-4 Correct	5 Correct
Blending	0-2 Correct	3-4 Correct	5 Correct
Segmenting	0-2 Correct	3-4 Correct	5 Correct

Infant 1 End of Year Phonemic Awareness Assessment

Rhyming

Directions: Words that rhyme have the same middle and ending sounds. I will say two words that rhyme and you tell me another word that rhymes. If I said "goat, boat," you could say "note". They all rhyme, listen, "goat, boat, note". Now you try. What is a word that rhymes with, "head, bed"?

Student correct response: Yes! _____ rhymes. " _____, head, bed". (Accept any word that rhymes with head - including nonsense words.) Let's do some more. (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: How about "red?" Listen, these words all rhyme: "head, bed, red." Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
map, sap	word ending in /ap/	
rock, sock	word ending in /ock/	
bone, loan	word ending in /oan/	
wide, slide	word ending in /ide/	
run, sun	word ending in /un/	

Number Correct _____/5

Initial Sounds

Directions: I will say a word; listen for the first sound in the word. If I said "map" the first sound in the word "map" is /m/. Now you try, what is the first sound in the word "dog"?

Student correct response: Yes! The first sound in the word "dog" is /d/. Let's do some more. (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: The first sound we hear in "dog" is /d/. Say it with me "dog /d/." Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
sock	/s/	
milk	/m/	
gum	/g/	
wash	/w/	
lick	/l/	

Number Correct _____/5

Final Sounds

Directions: I will say a word; listen for the last sound at the end of the word. If I said “cat” the last sound in the word “cat” is /t/. Now you try, what is the last sound in the word “pin”?

Student correct response: Yes! The last sound in the word ‘pin’ is /n/. Let’s do some more (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: “The last sound we hear in ‘pin’ is /n/. Say it with me ‘pin’ /n/. Let’s try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
bun	/n/	
mix	/x/	
glad	/d/	
not	/t/	
cup	/p/	

Number Correct _____/5

Blending Phonemes

Directions: I will say some sounds; listen to how I put them together into a word. /l/ /ě/ /g/ - leg. When I blend /l/ /ě/ /g/, I make the word “leg.” Now, you try - /s/ /ĩ/ /t/.

Student correct response: Yes! When I blend /s/ /ĩ/ /t/, I make the word “sit.” (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: When I blend /s/ /ĩ/ /t/, I make the word “sit.” Say it with me, “/s/ /ĩ/ /t/ - sit.” Let’s try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Phonemes	Correct Response	Correct?
/b/ /ě/ /d/	bed	
/ă/ /n/ /t/	ant	
/d/ /ā/	day	
/t/ /ē/ /m/	team	
/ī/ /n/	in	

Number Correct _____/5

Segmenting Phonemes

Directions: I will say a word, and I want you to break the word up into its sounds. If I said "pine" you would say "/p/ /ī/ /n/". Now you try. What sounds are in the word "wig"?

Student correct response: Yes! We can break the word "wig" into the sounds /w/ /ī/ /g/. Let's do some more. (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: We can break the word "wig" into the sounds /w/ /ī/ /g/. Try it with me, if, /w/ /ī/ /g/. Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
got	/g/ /ō/ /t/	
ink	/ī/ /n/ /k/	
pad	/p/ /ă/ /d/	
see	/s/ /ē/	
cup	/c/ /ŭ/ /p/	

Number Correct _____/5

Infant 2 End of Year Phonemic Awareness Assessment

Rhyming

Directions: Words that rhyme have the same middle and ending sounds. I will say a word and you tell me another that rhymes. If I said "goat," a word that rhymes with goat is boat. Now you try, "rock." What is a word that rhymes with "rock?"

Student correct response: Yes, good job! "_____" rhymes with "rock". (Accept any word that rhymes with rock - including nonsense words.) Let's do some more. (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: How about "sock"? Listen "rock - sock." They rhyme. Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
cave	word ending in /ave/	
hole	word ending in /ole/	
meat	word ending in /eat/	
lick	word ending in /ick/	
four	word ending in /ore/	

Number Correct _____/5

Initial Sounds

Directions: I will say a word, and I want you to listen for the first sound in the word. If I said "map" the first sound in the word "map" is /m/. Now you try. What is the first sound in the word "dog"?

Student correct response: Yes! The first sound in the word "dog" is /d/. Let's do some more. (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: The first sound we hear in "dog" is /d/. Say it with me "dog /d/." Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
baker	/b/	
ship	/sh/	
king	/k/	
hammer	/h/	
check	/ch/	

Number Correct _____/5

Final Sounds

Directions: I will say a word and I want you to listen for the last sound at the end of the word. If I said "cat" the last sound in the word "cat" is /t/. Now you try. What is the last sound in the word "pin"?

Student correct response: Yes! The last sound in the word 'pin' is /n/. Let's do some more. (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: "The last sound we hear in 'pin' is /n/. Say it with me 'pin' /n/. Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Word	Response	Correct?
bush	/sh/	
leave	/v/	
glad	/d/	
coconut	/t/	
mango	/ō/	

Number Correct _____/5

Blending Phonemes

Directions: I will say some sounds; listen to how I put them together into a word. /l/ /ě/ /g/ - leg. When I blend /l/ /ě/ /g/, I make the word "leg." Now, you try - /s/ /ĩ/ /t/.

Student correct response: Yes! When I blend /s/ /ĩ/ /t/, I make the word "sit". (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: When I blend /s/ /ī/ /t/, I make the word "sit." Say it with me, "/s/ /ī/ /t/ - sit." Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

Phonemes	Correct Response	Correct?
/b/ /ē/ /d/	bed	
/h/ /ă/ /t/	hat	
/l/ /ā/ /k/	lake	
/f/ /ē/ /t/	feet	
/s/ /p/ /ī/ /n/	spin	

Number Correct _____/5

Segmenting Phonemes

Directions: I will say a word and I want you to break the word up into its sounds. If I said "pine" you would say "/p/ /ī/ /n/". Now you try. What sounds are in the word "soup"?

Student correct response: Yes! We can break the word "soup" into the sounds

/s/ /oŏ/ /p/. Let's do some more. (Begin assessment.)

Student incorrect response: We can break the word "soup" into the sounds /s/ /oŏ/ /p/. Try it with me, "soup", /s/ /oŏ/ /p/. Let's try another one. (Begin assessment.)

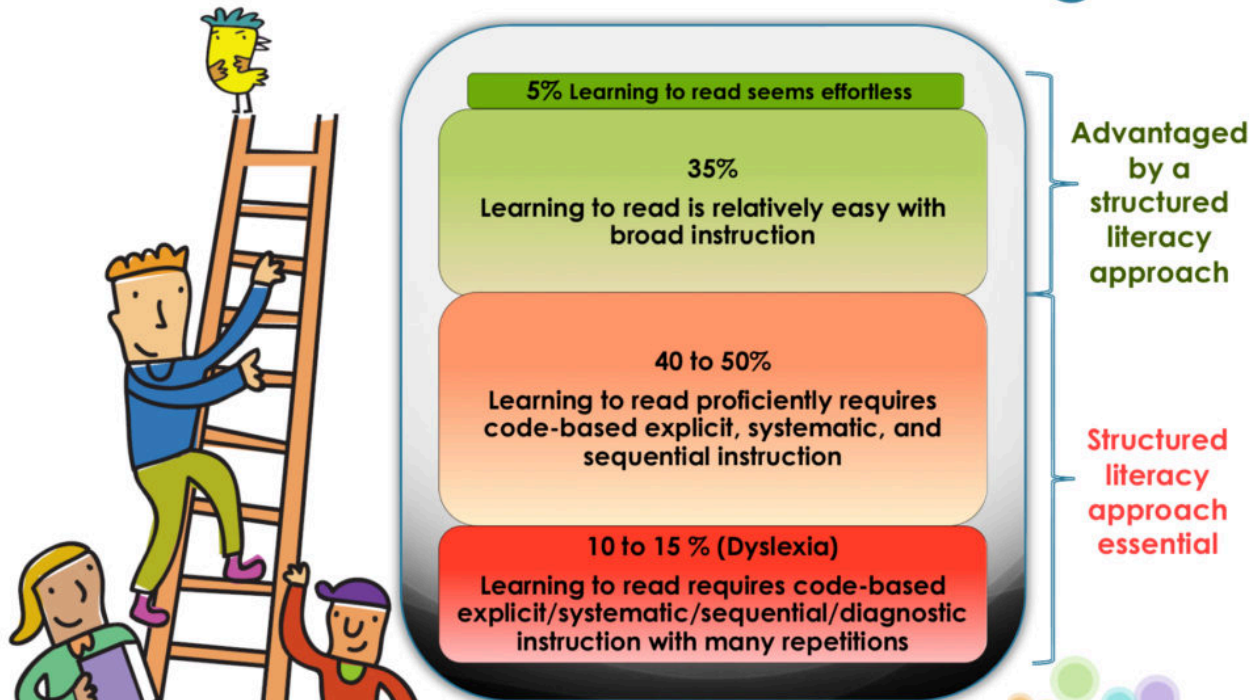
Word	Response	Correct?
goat	/g/ /ō/ /t/	
went	/w/ /ē/ /n/ /t/	
lamb	/l/ /ă/ /m/	
green	/g/ /r/ /ē/ /n/	
cup	/c/ /ŭ/ /p/	

Number Correct _____/5

Scoring Guide (End of Year)

	Emerging	Developing	Achieving
Rhyme Production	0-3 Correct	4 Correct	5 Correct
Initial Sounds	0-3 Correct	4 Correct	5 Correct
Ending Sounds	0-3 Correct	4 Correct	5 Correct
Blending	0-3 Correct	4 Correct	5 Correct
Segmenting	0-3 Correct	4 Correct	5 Correct

The Ladder of Reading



© N. Young, 2012 (updated 2017)

Artwork by Dean Stanton

(Lyon, 1998; NRP, 2000; IDA, 2015; Hemenstall, 2016)

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([Ladder of Reading & Writing](#)© Infographic - International Dyslexia Association)

Appendix D - Professional Learning Communities

Professional Learning Communities are grounded in collaboration, community, and reflection that are essential to sustained long-term growth. Throughout each project, the PCRVs recognized that building empowerment for Belizean educators and elevating the teacher voice is a critical lever that can be prioritized across educational sectors.



([Professional Learning Communities | AISA | Association of International Schools in Africa](#))

Successful PLCs are peer-led groups that focus on:

- Content knowledge, student learning, and effective classroom management techniques;
- Based in collaborative culture;
- Results oriented and improvement focused; and
- Utilize inquiry and action research to center collective improvement efforts.

Appendix E - STEAM Instructional Programming

Implementing High-Quality STEAM Instructional Programming

The following resources are a collection of practical and research-based guides to implementing high-quality STEAM Instructional Programming within Belize's educational context:

Resources to Support Critical Pedagogical Approaches for Effective STEAM Education:

[NGSS Science and Engineering Practices](#): While developed primarily in the United States, NGSS Practices have had a global influence on science education reform. The NGSS framework focuses on three-dimensional learning, which integrates scientific practices, crosscutting concepts, and disciplinary core ideas and is recognized internationally as a valuable approach to science education.

[Project-Based Learning \(PBL\) Guide – Buck Institute for Education \(PBLWorks\)](#): Frameworks, rubrics, and examples for interdisciplinary and real-world STEAM projects.

[National Science Teaching Association \(NSTA\) – STEM Resources](#): NSTA is a US-based, global organization dedicated to science education and provides a plethora of resources offering teaching strategies aligned with inquiry-based learning and cross-curricular design to support an interdisciplinary approach to teaching science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), integrating key concepts between two or more disciplines as students apply the practices of science and engineering to real-world problems.

[Institution for Arts Integration and STEAM](#): The Institute for Arts Integration and STEAM is the world's largest online professional development provider for teachers and leaders using arts-integrated approaches.

[STEM Learning Ecosystems Resource Library](#): STEM Ecosystems are community-based collaborations that transform how students learn and connect to future opportunities. The resource library provides case studies and models of STEAM in real-world and community-connected settings to bring together cross-sector partners—schools, afterschool programs, colleges, businesses, community organizations, and government agencies—to create powerful STEM learning experiences.

"[Mindset: The New Psychology of Success](#)" by Carol Dweck is a seminal resource that encourages a growth mindset in both educators and students, which is foundational to STEAM learning.

"[Making Thinking Visible](#)" by Harvard Project Zero is a flexible and systematic research-based conceptual framework, which aims to integrate the development of students' thinking with content learning across subject matters.

[Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\) Guidelines](#): CAST created the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework that encourages educators to think flexibly and design lessons to meet the needs of all learners so that all learning experiences in school, the workplace, and life are thoughtfully designed to elevate strengths and eliminate barriers.

Appendix F - SPED Terminology

Frequently Used SPED Terminology List

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD): A condition marked by inattention, distractibility, and sometimes hyperactivity.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): A neurodevelopmental disorder involving inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): A developmental disorder affecting communication and behavior.

Assistive Technology (AT): Devices or services that help students with disabilities access the curriculum.

Behavior Consultation: involves observing behavior, analyzing data, identifying the function of behaviors, and developing strategies or interventions to support a student's success across environments (e.g., classroom, home, community).

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): A plan that outlines strategies to address problem behavior.

Behavior Support Plan (BSP): Similar to a BIP; used to reinforce positive behaviors.

Choice Boards: System that allows students to select from options using images.

Developmental Delay (DD): A delay in one or more areas of development.

DSM-5 – Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th Edition): Used to diagnose disabilities.

Emotional Disturbance (ED): A condition affecting emotional functioning that impacts education.

Functional Skills: practical, everyday skills that help individuals with disabilities live as independently and successfully as possible in their home, school, work, and community environments.

First/Then Board: visual support tool commonly used in special education to help students understand and follow a sequence of activities or tasks, especially those who benefit from structured routines and visual cues

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA): Evaluation to determine the cause of challenging behavior.

Hearing Impairment (HI): Includes both partial and total hearing loss.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): Federal law governing special education.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A legal document outlining services for a student with disabilities.

Learning Disability (LD): A disorder in one or more basic psychological processes affecting learning.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): Educating students with disabilities with non-disabled peers to the greatest extent appropriate.

Multiple Disabilities (MD): A combination of impairments requiring special education.

Other Health Impairment (OHI): A category for conditions like ADHD that limit alertness or vitality.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): A proactive approach to improving behavior.

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP): Baseline data in an IEP.

Physical Therapy (PT): Supports students in developing gross motor skills.

Response to Intervention (RTI): A multi-tiered approach to early identification and support.

Related Services Only Plan (ROP): For students who require only support services, not specialized instruction.

Special Education (SE): Instruction designed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND): children or young people who have a disability and who may require special educational provision that is additional or different from what is typically provided in mainstream schools

Specific Learning Disability (SLD): Includes disorders in reading, math, or writing.

Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP): Works with students on communication and speech skills.

Significant Support Needs (SSN): Term used for students with extensive disabilities (varies by region).

Token Board: visual behavior management tool used to reinforce positive behavior in students.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI): An acquired injury to the brain affecting educational performance.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Curriculum design to accommodate all learners.

Visual Impairment (VI): Partial or total loss of sight.

References

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – U.S. Department of Education
<https://sites.ed.gov/idea>

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) – Terminology and professional standards
<https://exceptionalchildren.org>

IRIS Center at Vanderbilt University – Modules and glossaries for SPED professionals
<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY) – Archived glossary and SPED resources

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) – U.S. Department of Education
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html>