

CAPSULE



Coverage receives a C grade, reflecting declines in the post-pandemic years, especially as secondary schools fail to reach all students.

Equity gaps are narrowing, but Jamaican learners from low-income quintiles, rural areas and with disabilities have experienced declines, resulting in a B grade. Education is nearly universal across socioeconomic levels, and the urban–rural divide has shrunk, although learning results differ. Gender parity in education has been maintained, although impoverished Jamaicans are lagging behind in learning. Digital access is influenced by household income, and disabled children continue facing challenges to educational access and accomplishment.

Financing presents inefficiencies that still exist in how public monies are allocated and expended within the education sector, resulting in a B grade. Jamaica's education financing matches international standards, but resource distribution hinders impact. Despite its importance, pre-primary education is underfunded, while tertiary subsidies favour higher-income households. Staff remuneration accounts for most spending, leaving little space for infrastructure investment in overcrowded urban schools. The existing financing approach is inefficient, reinforces school inequities, and requires revision.

Coverage receives a C grade, reflecting declines in the post-pandemic years, especially as secondary schools fail to reach all students. Enrolment trends vary by education level. COVID-19 reduced pre-primary enrolment, but it has rebounded. Primary education is nearing universal access, although statistics differ. At the upper secondary level, enrolment drops rapidly, leaving one in five students out of school. Eight in ten Jamaican 19–24-year-olds are not enrolled in university education. While aggregated enrolment statistics are excellent, coverage gaps require specific interventions.

The 2025 Jamaica Education Report Card evaluates the performance of the education system across eight dimensions: learning outcomes, coverage, staying in school, equity, standards and evaluation, school authority and accountability, the teaching profession, and financing.

The grades awarded in this report reveal a mixed picture.

Standards and evaluation systems have improved, resulting in an A grade, but can be further strengthened by better monitoring and quality assurance processes. The National Standards Curriculum (NSC) covers four main topics; however, resources and capability impede implementation. Standardised tests for grades 1-6 exist, with PEP revealing learning gaps that GSAT missed. Upper secondary curriculum meets regional norms, while sixth form offers further study options. Jamaica's involvement in international examinations is growing, although there are no standardised standards for disabled pupils.

School authority and accountability for results received an A grade, since processes for stakeholder engagement are clearly established, and schools have autonomy; however accountability mechanisms for school boards need improvement. School boards often lack the capacity to provide effective oversight, limiting operational autonomy. While formal associations and mandatory membership encourage stakeholder participation, engagement is limited. The Ministry and its agencies provide technical oversight, but sometimes with limited impact.



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The study recommends five urgent reforms to address these challenges. First, Jamaica should implement a weighted school finance mechanism that prioritises student needs above headcount. Second, an Early Warning Student Support System should detect absence and dropouts in real time and connect vulnerable kids to social services. Third, all educational results will depend on expanding and improving early childhood education. Fourth, a programme should hire and retain experienced, high-quality teachers in underperforming schools, rewarding service where learning disparities are highest. Fifth, an Educational Achievement and Equity Dashboard should be created to centralise student performance data and equity indicators for policymakers, educators, and the public.

With these recommendations, Jamaica can move towards a system that provides equitable, high-quality education at all levels and a future in which all Jamaican children can thrive.

Learning outcomes show performance in most subject areas is stable or increasing, but results in Mathematics and Science subjects have been consistently low, earning a grade of D.

The teaching profession received a grade of C, due to the critical challenges pertaining to compensation and recruitment training. While standards match the NSC, insufficient management of teacher preparation and accreditation gaps in training institutions lower instructional quality. Evaluation and recruiting processes lack merit-based frameworks and enforcement. Low pay contributes to attrition, poor education quality, and sector discontent.

Staying in school shows that completion rates remain weak across the system, resulting in a D grade. Only eight out of ten primary pupils graduate. Lower secondary completion is dropping, whereas upper secondary completion was high in 2022, despite low certification rates and limited statistics. Half of prime working-age people are uncertified. Absenteeism continues to drive dropout, especially among boys and poorer pupils.

Learning outcomes show performance in most subject areas is stable or increasing, but results in Mathematics and Science subjects have been consistently low, earning a grade of D. Jamaican students' foundational numeracy and literacy are improving yet still substandard. The Primary Exit Profile exams show a minor trend towards "Proficient" in Mathematics and Science, although most pupils leave primary school without core abilities. According to CSEC findings, Mathematics and Science have pass rates below 50 percent, whereas Business and Technical courses have pass rates of 70-80 percent. Only 18 percent of students achieve the five-subject criterion for postsecondary entrance. Jamaica has a significant urban-rural split and falls behind other countries in international assessments. The report attributes these outcomes to low early-stage preparation (one-third of pre-primary students below standards), unequal National Standards Curriculum implementation, and inadequate remedial resources.



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Recommendations

1. Adjust School-weighted Formula to Promote Equity.
2. Build an Early Warning Student Support System
3. Expand and Upgrade Early Childhood Education.
4. Introduce a Bonus Incentive Programme to Attract Teachers to Underperforming Schools
5. Create an Educational Achievement and Equity Dashboard.