

ABSTRACT

Performance on the NAP tests of a cohort of Jamaican students: The need for early remediation

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The research was based on the hypothesis that the education gap started as early as Grade One and that programmes should be put in place from that time to help children “at risk” for failure and not wait until the students reached junior high schools before any form of remedial help is offered. The 124 participants in this research were drawn from students in St. Catherine whose scores on the GSAT 2004 were 1SD and below relative to the national mean on each subset of the GSAT. Each student’s performance, where possible, was tracked backward to Grade 1 and forward to Grade 9 based on the NAP examination results. Tests (VMI, DISE) were administered to 19 students from 6 schools who were still enrolled at Grade 9, to establish present academic functioning levels. Findings indicated that students showed a pattern of failure beginning in Grade 1 and lasting through to Grade 9. Interviews with students, parents, teachers, and principals revealed that few of the failing students received minimum intervention; the remedial programmes at the primary and junior high school levels did not necessarily bring about remediation; and the use of resource rooms in schools are relatively ineffectual. Results are discussed in terms of the need to track children from the time they enter school and to review the use of resource rooms and remedial programmes in terms of accountability.

Key words: NAP tests; special education; resource rooms; Jamaican educational system; chronically failing students. Stephanie W. A. Nelson-McFarlane