

Abstract

This study assessed the extent to which some Jamaican seventh and eight graders from urban and rural traditional high, comprehensive high and all-age schools could read and comprehend *Exploring Our world*, a textbook written by Jamaican teachers for grade 7 all-age students who are reading below their grade level. There were 163 grade 7 students (90 boys and 73 girls) and 134 grade 8 students (78 boys and 56 girls) in the sample, whose ages ranged from 11 to 14. Data were collected using five Fry's readability graphs, Cloze, cartoon, comprehension, technical and non-technical vocabulary tests.

The Fry's readability graphs showed that the textbook had a reading level of grade 5 and a reading age of 10. Even though the Fry's graph indicated that the reading level of the textbook was grade 5, as the textbook's authors claim, more than 50% of the students were reading the textbook at the frustration level and less than 15% were reading at the independent level. The poor performance of the students meant that they were reading the text below the grade 5 level at which it was written.

Traditional high school, non- ROSE and students of professionals significantly outperformed their comprehensive, all-age, ROSE and students of non-professionals peers, on all the tests.