



Question and Answer Sheet

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Please note that questions of particular importance have been underlined.

Question 1: What is the Literacy Diagnostic Assessment and Early Intervention Centre?

The Literacy Diagnostic Assessment and Early Intervention Centre is an arm of the Erdiston Teachers' Training College. Its existence, as clearly articulated in its mission statement, is to "*provide high-quality diagnostic testing services and prescribed intervention programmes that allow struggling students to experience literacy success and become lifelong learners who can contribute meaningfully to their own development and that of their society*". LDAEIC Erdiston was officially opened on 8th September 2020 on the grounds of the Erdiston Teacher's Training College.

Question 2: Why is the establishment of LDAEIC Erdiston critical?

Research findings show that societal and national development are directly threatened by any noticeable increase in literacy deficits at the level of the 'emerging generations' of a country. Moreover, a key general finding of several longitudinal studies is that children who still struggle with the reading process by the age of 7 rarely acquire average reading skills by the end of primary school unless consistent, substantial remediation is used (LDAEIC Terms of Reference, 2020, p. 1). While Barbados has a good education system, there is a growing need to provide research-grounded diagnostic assessment and intervention services at the national level to safeguard the quality of our human resources for the future. Therefore, the promotion of early remediation is a valid one since Brooks (as cited in LDAEIC Terms of Reference, 2020, p. 1) advised that the critical elements of effective teaching approaches for those who struggle in literacy include early intervention, one-to-one and/or small group support and personalization.

Question 3: What did the preparatory phase of LDAEIC Erdiston involve?

The conceptualization of the Centre evolved over 15 years in response to growing calls from teachers for formal diagnostic and intervention procedures to effectively address children's literacy deficits. It was also propelled by the number of students who leave the school system yearly with inadequate literacy skills that prohibit them from functioning effectively in society. It remains the foremost mandate of the College, as the island's lone teacher training facility, to respond to these valid concerns in a carefully coordinated manner. Following the informal longitudinal collection of anecdotal data from teachers across the island, the first significant step towards making the Centre a reality was taken. The College invited interested persons to apply for training in the area of diagnostic literacy assessment. Initially, plans were made for the training of ten (10) assessors to support the work of the Centre. However, ninety (90) persons applied for the training.

This overwhelming response forced the College to increase the available spaces for training from ten (10) to twenty (20). Professor Emerita Hazel Simmonds-McDonald, a renowned Caribbean expert in the area of literacy testing, conducted the training over four weeks. In addition to the training, the College procured a variety of relevant teaching materials and manipulatives to be used to train teachers as to how to design and implement their intervention programmes. Additionally, a room in the Dorothy King Teaching Complex on the Erdiston College Campus was designated as the location for the Literacy Centre. Moreover, the formal mission statement, guiding objectives, terms of reference document, and an official logo were prepared. LDAEIC Erdiston was officially opened on International Literacy Day, 8th September 2020.

Question 4: What does the administrative structure of LDAEIC Erdiston look like?

The Centre is headed by an Administrator who has oversight of all activities. The Administrator confirms all diagnostic reports created by the assessors before they are sent to teachers and parents, organizes training for teachers and parents and interfaces with the Assistant Administrator. The Assistant Administrator is employed by the College on a contractual basis, works on selected days and operates from the Literacy Centre. One of the key duties of the Assistant Administrator is to follow strict contact protocols when connecting with members of the team of Trained Assessors for scheduled diagnostic and testing events at the Centre. The Trained Assessors are literacy teachers who were purposefully selected to undergo a period of intense training in the administration of a battery of tests.

Question 5: What are the specific duties of the Assistant Administrator?

The Assistant Administrator is critical to the successful management of the weekly assessment procedures of the Centre. As such, the Assistant Administrator receives and acts upon the guidance provided by the Administrator; communicates with the Administrator, parents, teachers, principals and assessors to schedule testing appointments for students; prepares testing materials and the physical space for scheduled testing events; provides support and encouragement for the students to be tested; manages the inventory of materials in the centre; processes, stores and retrieves the results of tests, student profiles, and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in seamless alignment with the principle of confidentiality. The Assistant Administrator also assists with the implementation of research into the impact of the use of intervention programmes to support the diagnosis of students and performs any other related duties assigned by the Principal.

Question 6: How will the process at LDAEIC Erdiston work?

There are formal, easy-to-follow referral, testing, diagnostic and intervention procedures at LDAEIC Erdiston:

Referral Procedures

Outgoing Referral Steps (**for Schools**)

In-coming Referral Steps (**at Centre**)

Referral Confirmation Steps (**for Schools**)

Testing and Diagnostic Procedures (**at Centre**):

Intervention Procedures (**at Schools**):

**Please refer to the “LDAEIC Erdiston Step-by-Step Procedural Document” for specific details.*

Question 7: Which tests will be used during the testing procedures?

A battery of internationally recognised and utilised literacy tests were purposefully selected to be used in the testing procedures at LDAEIC Erdiston:

The Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Achievement

The Ekwall-Shanker Reading Inventory (ESRI)

Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills

Test of Phonological Awareness (TOPA)

MICO Diagnostic Reading Test

The literacy tests presented above were specifically selected by noted Caribbean literacy experts Professor Emerita Hazel Simmonds McDonald and Dr Patricia Saul. The Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Achievement, the Ekwall-Shanker Reading Inventory (ESRI), the Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills and the Test of Phonological Awareness (TOPA) were identified as preferred reading

assessment instruments because of their proven empirical rigour in identifying specific weaknesses in readers and non-readers. The MICO Diagnostic Reading Test was chosen because it was developed in the Caribbean. As discoveries in literacy research expand, and as empirically directed consultations with local, regional and international partners in literacy continue, the range of tests used by LDAEIC Erdiston will be appropriately modified over time to establish seamless alignment with the latest empirically grounded best practices.

**For more information on the tests listed above, see the LDAEIC Erdiston Brochure entitled “Diagnostic and Early Intervention Centre”.*

Question 8: How many students can be tested during each testing day at LDAEIC Erdiston?

The existing physical constraints of the Centre make it possible to test ONE (1) child only during each testing event. Additionally, each testing event will last approximately ONE (1) hour. The impact of these challenges has been diminished in the following ways:

- a. Tuesdays and Thursdays will be allocated for testing procedures at the Centre from 9 am to 3 pm. Therefore, FIVE (5) hours will be allocated for testing on each day, with ONE (1) hour reserved for lunch.
- b. A room immediately adjacent to the Centre will be reserved as a temporary testing site on the days mentioned in (a) above. A formal request to use the room as a temporary testing site shall be made to the Principal of the College TWO (2) weeks in advance so that appropriate arrangements can be made. With the use of this additional space, TWO (2) students will be tested every hour on testing days.

Question 9: Is there a fee attached to each testing session?

The College is aware that diagnostic testing in Barbados is very expensive and might be a bit foreboding for many parents whose children are most in need of such a service. It is against this background that the centre has been conceptualized as an outreach to the public. Therefore, **any student who is referred to the Centre through the school which he/she attends will be tested free of charge.** However, a fee of **\$250** is attached to diagnostic testing services delivered to students who have been referred to the Centre privately.

Question 10: How will LDAEIC Erdiston complement Erdiston College's existing literacy programme?

Erdiston Teachers' Training College has always had a strong focus on developmental literacy as evidenced in all of the language programmes delivered by the College at the primary level. While these programmes teach rudimentary diagnostic approaches such as running records and miscue analysis that help teachers to gain insights into the reading strategies being used by students, the use of formal standardised tests will enhance teachers' skills in diagnosing and designing appropriate interventions for struggling readers.

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