

PRIMARY & SECONDARY
SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN)

YEAR 2023

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS
PRE-PRIMARY & PRIMARY PUBLIC SCHOOLS - LEARNING
DISABILITIES & DIFFICULTIES
(20.06.2023)

(No. B/785) **Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to students having learning disabilities and difficulties in pre-primary and primary public schools, she will state the number thereof detected to date, indicating the measures taken in relation thereto.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that 55 pupils in 35 pre-primary schools and 2,581 pupils in all primary schools have been identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities.

As at date, there are 71 learners with special education needs attending mainstream primary schools. Furthermore, 11 integrated units set up in primary schools and Special Education Needs Resource Centres are presently accommodating 117 learners with disabilities.

My Ministry has taken significant measures to support children with special needs in pre-primary and primary schools. Our approach is multifaceted and encompasses various aspects, including identification, intervention, early support programme, and teacher training. Allow me to outline some of the key measures that have been implemented –

1. A comprehensive system has been implemented for the early identification of learning difficulties and disabilities at the level of the school. We have the Developmental Learners' Profile at the pre-primary level and the

Primary School Readiness at primary level, which are administered to determine the learning gaps in numeracy and literacy.

2. A multidisciplinary team consisting of speech therapists, educational psychologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapist conduct a screening to determine the best educational placement and accommodation required for each learner.

3. For each student identified with learning difficulties, an Individualized Education Plan or a Personalised Education Plan is developed. The IEP and PEP serve as a roadmap to outline specific goals, accommodations, and modifications tailored to meet the student's unique needs. It ensures that appropriate interventions and support are provided in a personalized manner.

4. Public schools have trained support teachers, teaching assistants and carers who provide targeted support to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The early support teachers and teacher assistants work closely with classroom teachers to implement strategies and interventions outlined in the IEPs and PEPs to facilitate and improve the performance of the pupils.

Additionally, a number of measures have been implemented at the level of my Ministry for the provision of pedagogical facilities for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities as follows –

- Adapted textbooks are provided;
- Provision of braille displays for visually impaired learners;
- Assistance of a reader/writer during examinations;
- Assistance of sign language interpreters;
- Large prints for examinations, and
- Provision of extra time as well, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr, Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether in line with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fourth Edition, which are applied in countries like UK, South Africa and India, to identify learning disabilities and learning difficulties, respectively, she will inform the House how many educators, carers, support teachers in pre-primary and primary schools have been duly trained in Psychometric and Neuropsychology to evaluate our children?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the medical directorate of my Ministry, the Health and Wellness Directorate, has got doctors and we work in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health for that particular purpose. But I must also say that as far as training is concerned, we have been training 464 SEN educators during the past month and the training is still on. We are still having recourse to our resource persons from abroad for that.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister inform the House what measures, if any, are being taken to ensure that Psychometrists and Neuropsychologists have proper and adequate assessment tools to support the system and the concerned children by providing them appropriate and accretive evaluation tools and facilitative educational interventions?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Special Education Needs authority and the SEN Unit of my Ministry are working with the children, their parents and also, as I have stated earlier, with professionals of the health sector to help them do that.

Furthermore, we do have some resource persons who come from Ireland for the neuroscientific development of our children.