



Liberia Education Administrative Regulations

Liberian Education
Administrative and
Management Policies

LEAG Volume 4



Ministry of Education

Liberian Education Administrative Guides Listing

Volume 1: Evaluation Guidelines:
Suggestions for Good Evaluation
Practices (June, 2011)

Volume 2: County Monitoring Manual:
Recommendations for Monitoring
Practices (June, 2011)

Volume 3: Monitoring Framework:
Institutionalization of Monitoring for
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(June, 2011)

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Volume 5: Policies for Reform
(September, 2011)

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Liberian Education Administrative Regulations (LEAR)

Preface

The Liberian Education Administrative Regulations (LEAR) is a sub-component of the Liberian Education Administrative Guides (LEAG) and is a critical component in the Ministry's strategic framework for the implementation of a shared national vision for the education sector: 'To Ensure Quality Basic, Secondary, and Tertiary Education for all residing in the Republic of Liberia.' This is a comprehensive administrative manual that specifies the current regulations for the educational activities of the 15 Counties and MCSS. It covers a variety of topics, setting the stage for the development of needed guidance and strategies. In essence, the document intends to bolster the capacity and readiness of the

newly decentralized education system. It establishes operational parameters and holds both the student and school administrators accountable for ensuring that the learning environment is conducive to the task in the midst of a multicultural setting. Also, it broadens and widens the scope for educational opportunity, emphasizes students' development, and encourages an appreciation for diversity.

The manual communicates the Ministry's education policies and defining administrative procedures, where applicable. The publication of the manual ensures that the Counties, Districts, and Schools will not set separate goals and strategies for their operations. Therefore, it provides the organizing framework under which schools in the country manage and maintain levels of standardization and equivalence in their programs. In order for the guidance to be effective, the policies have to be thought of as strategic props supporting the main goal of improving student achievement through quality teaching and learning. Hence, it underscores the school's core activity as raising student outcomes and developing a good and

contributing member of society, and the County and District organizational entities mandate as supporting the quest for student learning and development.

The National Education Consultative Conference (February 3-5, 2011) established the reality that few educators know the range of policies of the past and the operational ones for the current system. The turmoil faced by the system over these past decades has not been conducive to organization or rational development. Thus, in the new reform, there is the need for a manual that provides cross-fertilization for the Counties, as well as greater standardization and compliance across the system. The topics covered by the manual, although not exhaustive are treated alphabetically.

Some information about the details of education structure, requirements at each level of schooling, and some information on particular positions are not included in this manual. Reference to the Reform Act is important if some question arises that is not easily resolved within the manual information.

This is the fourth (4th) volume to provide guidance for the decentralization approach. Three (3) previous volumes covered Monitoring and Evaluation information for the County Education Systems to guide initial monitoring activities. This volume provides the regulations that relate or govern activities in the County Education Systems and the MCSS.

Introduction

The Liberian Education system was intended (the 1847 constitution and its 1985 revision, as well as the public school law of 1939) to be structured under the premise that it would reflect the hopes and aspirations of “all” the Liberian people, facilitate the production of the skilled manpower required for sustained development, institute strategies to develop responsible citizenship, appreciation and understanding of the cultural diversity of Liberia, and satisfy the varying needs of the Liberian students in different social, economic, and geographic settings. Fourteen years of civil war and many other years of chaos and uncertainty undermined development efforts and wrecked the capacity and capability of the system developed over the prior years.

Against this backdrop and other post conflict development, the present Government opted to revisit the Education Law, policies, and operations of the past in the formulation of a new direction aimed at ensuring the provision of Quality, Basic, Secondary, and Tertiary Education to all. Specifically, the Liberian

Educational Administrative Regulations Manual is a product of a series of consultations and aims to harmonize operations as implicated in the Education Reform Act of 2011, the policies emanating from the National Education Consultative Conference, and the plans and programs contained in the Education Sector Plan. It is very important that all participants in the sector, officials of the Ministry of Education, the Donor Community, the owners and operators of Faith Based and Private Schools, the County School Boards and the council of the Monrovia Consolidated Schools System, as well as parents and students understand the context and basis of the Law, Policies, and Regulations and fully participate in their implementation.

Use of the Manual

The use of this manual is essential for the systematic implementation of the law, policies, and program required for the transformation of the Education sector because it:

- Facilitates understanding of the new direction for education and training in the country ensuring participatory implementation;

- Defines the basis for the formulation of county, district and school regulations that are intended to be uniform across the country;
- Builds on the law, policies, and operational plans of the past and charts a pathway for the future;
- Ensures consistencies and uniformity in the implementation of education policies and regulations throughout the country.
- Guarantees equity, access, and quality of opportunity through the country; and
- Strengthens the drive to reach and teach all children across the country with the same level of commitment.

Who will Use the Manual

The manual should serve as the basis for the development of rules and regulation for the operation of individual schools throughout the country irrespective of geography, socio-economic environment, and management. This document is classless. It should be used by:

All policy makers and planners within the education sector;

- Directors, Heads of Institutions, etc. who require information on rules and regulations governing the operations of schools, the transfer of students, equity, discipline, curriculum, accreditation, accountability, assessment, dress code, etc.
- The School Boards, local councils, or other committee and advisory bodies, needing clarification on the roles, responsibilities, and other inter-connections in the system;
- The teacher who needs to understand the rules and regulations, policies, procedures and institutional processes impacting his/her profession; and
- The donor community which needs to understand certain procedures and regulations governing the sector before intervention and/or participation in the system to ensure adherence to guidelines.

Alphabetized Regulation Briefs

Accreditation for Basic Education Institutions

At the basic education level, accreditation is fundamentally a school improvement program. The extension of the standards and procedures to the private sector may help the public understand and recognize quality programs. The National Education Consultative Conference suggested some factors for consideration: qualitative description of school and classes, policy considerations, indicators for quality (e.g., class size, pupil/teacher ratio, disability friendliness, curriculum, multi-age capacity, accessibility, girls' education, community participation). These are largely input variables and indicate readiness of a program to be accredited. Accreditation focuses on outcomes and some areas recommended are literacy, numeracy, basic life skills, academic skills, technical-vocational skills, and civic education. The purpose of accreditation at the basic education level is to ascertain the effectiveness of the school or program to meet its mission, so that the public is assured that

students attending that institution are getting the education intended.

Accreditation Services

Accreditation is the recognition of an institution as meeting the minimum standard (its Mission) of learning prescribed for a specific level of the education system. It is through this process that the quality of the personnel, structure of the physical facilities, and the delivery system within an institution are assured. The Center for Certification and Accreditation will accordingly develop and promulgate criteria for the accreditation of schools operating within the country covered by the Education Reform Act of 2011. All schools existing and proposed will be assessed within the framework of the proposed criteria. This will facilitate the centralization of the process for the issuance of permits and certificates for the operation of schools. It will also make it easier for the classification of schools in accordance with the Reform Act.

The teacher certification program will be setup in line with current provisions and practices, and adjusted as required for the reform.

The newly established accreditation process will include:

- Requirements and procedures for self-assessment;
- Establishment of Quality Assurance teams to assist the self-assessments;
- Establishment of Accreditation teams who provide external review of the self-assessments and institutional improvement plans; and
- Setup of an accreditation review process for the award of accreditation.

Accountability

The County Education Officer is the most senior education officer in the County and as such serves as the Executive Officer and Secretary to the County School Board. All District Education Officers and School Principals within a given county are accountable to him/her for the performance of their duties and school teachers are accountable to the Principal for the progress of their students. The County Education Officer through the County School Board is accountable to the Ministry of Education for the

implementation of policies and the performance of their respective counties.

Principals, in collaboration with school staff are required to:

- Undertake school planning processes that include the development of a School Improvement Plan (SIP), encompassing the school's operations and administrative procedures in terms of needed improvements in teaching and learning;
- Publish annually a School Report that describes the school's performance and report on legislative and designated policy and program requirements;
- Participate in and actively respond to school review processes including Standards Reviews and Accreditation Processes.

Achievement Gaps

The Ministry of Education is committed to closing access and achievement gaps to ensure that each child is performing at high levels and achieving proficiency. Specifically, the Ministry

is devoted to closing the access and achievement gaps that exist among students of various

- Races, ethnicities and Geographic settings;
- Educational programs (regular education, special education and programs for refugees);
- Socio-economic and cultural backgrounds; and
- Gender.

Furthermore, every member of the Ministry's community – students, parents, teachers, principals, central and school staff, partners, Ministry personnel, and others – is expected to share:

- An awareness of these gaps;
- A belief that these gaps can be closed; and
- A personal commitment to closing them.

Advertising in Schools

The Ministry of Education asserts that product advertising and/or endorsement should be discouraged in schools and on school property.

The Ministry has an obligation to ensure that students are not subjected to commercial messages that distract from the educational mission. However, the Ministry recognizes that in some instances, exposure to product names, logos, or similar trademarks and services may be acceptable when the programming, equipment, or services clearly can be shown to be of significant benefit to the school program when weighed against the nature of the exposure. Therefore:

- Commercial advertising in the schools is not permitted. Any exception to this policy must have prior approval of the County Education Officer.
- All vendors must have prior approval of the County Education Officer.

Alternative Programs

Occasionally, there may be the need for alternative programs to meet the needs of students who cannot or have not participated in the formal schooling system. These programs will be presented by the Ministry in consultation with the County Education Systems and MCSS. Every effort will be made to enhance and enrich

the formal system and the use of alternative programs will be an enhancement option. These programs are likely to be essential to out-of-school youth, adults, etc.

Alternative Scheduling

Schools may opt for alternative scheduling when aiming to reduce over-crowding, provide educational benefits, and cut costs. Accordingly, the school could: (i) compress advanced courses; (ii) allot in-school independent work areas, (iii) adopt partial block or six-day rotational scheduling; (iv) hold after-school classes; (v) hold double-shift classes (morning and afternoon sessions); (vi) hold Saturday school; and (vii) hold vacation school.

Appointments of County Education Officers

The County Education Officers, County Education Officers, are appointed by the Minister and serve as his representatives in the region. They are recommended by the County Education Boards and they remain directly accountable to those Boards and ultimately to the Minister of Education. They are civil

servants and represent the extension of the Ministry in the local region.

Arts in the Curriculum

The Ministry of Education believes that the arts provide a powerful platform for students to express their creativity, find success, and share their talents and abilities through performance. Therefore, every school will encompass a wide range of subject areas and disciplines for students to partake in, including: Music, Dance, Drama, Arts and Crafts, and Design. The subject areas referred to above must reflect local culture and must be required for all students irrespective of county of origin and/or socio-economic background.

Assessment

The Ministry of Education believes assessment that is used effectively in managing and supporting the learning of each student is essential in ensuring that each student develops to his/her full potential. Furthermore, schools need a common standard on which they can compare their students' achievements with

similar schools, and understand areas for improvement and strengths.

Effective assessment should:

- Provide feedback for students and teachers to revise/advance performance, learning, and teaching;
- Be formative, summative, and demonstrate what students know, understand, and are able to apply;
- Use reflection as an essential and integral part of self, peer, teacher, and parent assessment;
- Show awareness of learning style, cultural, gender, linguistic, and racial differences;
- Be anchored in authentic tasks, when possible;
- Provide evidence of progress along a continuum of criteria that are clearly known and understood in advance;

The Ministry will assess performance and progress in each of the following subject areas: English language arts, math, science, social studies, physical education, art, music, technology and information, social skills, and

work habits. Other assessment tools could be developed and used.

The administration of the regional West African Examination Council (WAEC) is the major form of national assessment (9th and 12th grade), and is a pre-requisite for college admission.

Types of assessments that can be administered include: pre-assessment, formative (assessment for learning; ongoing), summative (assessment of learning; end of learning period), and standardized norm referenced. Assessment strategies could include: observations, skills assessment, open-ended assessment, quizzes/ tests, etc. When applicable, assessment tools (such as rubrics and exemplars) should be used to guide students.

At-Risk and Dropout Students

It is generally believed that children who drop out of school prematurely often experience high rates of unemployment, incarceration, drug use, and teenage-births; thus, the problem of dropouts extols a large cost to individuals and society at large. This situation may apply to a large extent to the developed society. The

Ministry of Education shall, however, exert every effort to address the needs of disconnected youth by administering a number of targeted programs in collaboration with the relevant agencies of the government and the donor community. These programs would include the Accelerated Learning Program for the over age at the lower basic education level and the development of an advance program for the upper basic and secondary using best practices in other countries. The new model could also feature models for the advancement of below high school graduates within the school system. Skills training could also form an integral part of this approach.

Basic Education

Basic Education is defined in Liberia as all education providing the foundation for lifelong and continuous learning. It is a universal human right and shall be available to all Liberians. It shall cover Primary Education and Junior High School Education. As per the Reform Act, Basic Education covers ages six (6) to twelve (12), constituting grades 1-6 in primary or lower

basic, and ages thirteen (13) to fifteen (15) in grades 7-9 in junior secondary or upper basic.

Career Education

Every school will incorporate an intentional, integrated, and comprehensive career-education program, featuring: a planned program of learning experiences in education, training, and work settings. Specifically, the program should include areas such as business education, technology education, and career pathways.

Career education should also include preparing students for interviews, and work ethics. In this way, the school will provide opportunities for students to develop the requisite skills and knowledge-base that expand and enhance their ability to make informed decisions about their life, study, and/or work options, and enable them to participate effectively in working life.

This process should start as early as possible (in early secondary school) to help students discern their interests in college and careers.

Furthermore, career education should cater to the diversity of students' special needs, abilities/disabilities, diverse cultural

backgrounds and values, geographical location and other variables in each school community.

Categories of Schools and Programs

The Liberian Education System comprises both regular and intermediate institutions of learning, and programs that educate or train, and consists of the following categories:

- Early Childhood Education;
- Basic Education, comprising primary and junior secondary schools;
- Senior Secondary Schools, comprising academic and technical schools;
- Junior Colleges and other post-secondary education institutions;
- Colleges and Universities; and
- Others:
 - Teacher Training Institutions;
 - Adult Education;
 - Vocational Training;
 - Literacy Programs;
 - Non-Degree Theological Seminaries; and
 - Seminars, workshops, and conferences.

Character Development

Character development is an integral part of the learning environment. This is an inclusive endeavor that considers the participation of students, teachers, school administrators, and others. Character development should be embedded in the teaching and learning of students. It addresses the student as a learner, an individual, and an engaged citizen.

School administrators in line with the County School System and the MCSS must develop strategic programs and activities that teach and inform students about their moral obligation to country, and duty to families, communities as well as their school colleagues. Such programs must consider integrity building, virtues, honesty, the dignity of labor, and the values of hard work, respectability, and traditional and cultural values. County School Systems must ensure that teaching of civics in every school is mandatory.

Cheating

The Ministry is cognizant of the fact that education is based on learning specific skills,

forming lifelong work habits, and developing mature coping skills according to each student's unique abilities; and that cheating is inconsistent with character development and academic growth. Therefore it is expected that each student will demonstrate a commitment to integrity, character building, and honesty during the administration of quizzes, exams, and other classroom related forms of assessment. Parents are to play a meaningful role in the academic achievement of their child for their long term success in life. Teachers as well as other school administrators are therefore urged to encourage their students to exhibit responsible attitudes and refrain from any fraudulent means during the administration of assessment quizzes, tests or exams.

The Ministry of Education therefore considers the following as cheating (though the list is not exhaustive):

- Giving or receiving answers during quizzes, tests or exams;
- Communicating with other students while a test or exam is taking place;
- Referencing notes while a test or exam is taking place;

- Taking someone else's assignment and presenting it as though it was one's own;
- Presenting the work of tutors, sibling or parents as though it was one's own and
- Paying "flexibility fees".

Child Abuse and Neglect

Public School educators are required to report suspected child abuse and neglect to the appropriate legal authorities. Any child less than 18 years of age who is believed to have had physical injury or injuries inflicted upon him or her, other than by accidental means, by a parent or guardian or has been sexually assaulted shall be turned over to the nearest legal authority for protection and investigation.

The school principal or his designee with the support of the teacher who actually knows the learner shall be considered the appropriate personnel to make reports of suspected child abuse and neglect to the nearest justice system. This person shall be the school liaison between the school system and the appropriate legal authorities, with respect to the child's school adjustment and performance, and shall take

individual investigative steps before finally reporting suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to the county's legal authority.

In order to meet legal responsibilities, reports of suspected child abuse and neglect are to be made in good faith, and the education of school system personnel in the identification of child abuse and neglect shall rest with the system and be coordinated by the school counselor. This reporting is legal and does not constitute a violation so long as the following factors are taken into account.

- The seriousness of the threat to the child's health and safety;
- The information is reliable and accurate;
- The need for the information from the child's education records to protect the child's health or safety; and
- Whether the information is being disclosed to persons who are in a position to deal with the emergency.

Classification of Schools

The Center for Certification and Accreditation created under the Reform Act has the authority

to monitor, evaluate and classify all schools operating under the jurisdiction of the Ministry using the following criteria:

Class-A Schools

Class-A schools shall be those schools meeting the following requirements:

1. Adequate seating facilities for all students and teachers, including armchairs with backrest, desks, chairs, benches, and tables.
2. Spacious and serviceable libraries or reading rooms for students and teachers equipped with state of the art technology, fully supplied with books, current periodicals, other reading aids, and instructional materials.
3. Operative science laboratory with an adequate supply of equipment and consumables.
4. Effective language laboratory.
5. Spacious kitchen, adequate food storage, eating and food preparation utensils, and dining room facilities.
6. Relevant teaching aids or materials that include copies of Ministry of Education

- Curriculum for all administrators and faculty, textbooks, computers, copy and printing facilities, etc.
7. Adequate supply of clean water for drinking and for washing.
 8. Clean, conducive, and sanitary environment.
 9. Sports and Athletics facilities that include a football field, basketball/volleyball court, etc.
 10. Spacious auditorium.
 11. Spacious and well-ventilated classrooms.
 12. Well-lighted classrooms.

No school shall be certified as a Class-A school that does not meet the requirements, and whose administrators do not hold a minimum Bachelors' Degree in Education or its equivalent.

Class-A Schools must have at least ninety percent (90%) of its students pass the West African Examination Council (WAEC) exams at the first sitting. Additionally, 20% of the students must pass in levels one and two. Failure to acquire this level would result in a probation level A classification.

Class-B Schools

Schools missing any two of the non-curriculum related items listed above shall be classified as Class-B Schools. Additionally 80% or above of the students sitting the West African Examination Council exams must pass at the first sitting.

Class-C Schools

Schools missing any three (3) of the non-curriculum related items listed above shall be automatically designated Class-C. Additionally, 70% of its students must pass the West African Examination Council exams at the first sitting.

Class-D Schools

Any school missing any four (4) of the non-curriculum related items listed above are automatically designated Class D. Additionally, at least 60% of the students must pass the WAEC exams at the first sitting. Class-D schools are required to remain in this category for a period not to exceed one academic year before being demoted to Class-E if the school

administration is unable to comply with the requirements set forth by the Ministry.

Class-E Schools

Schools that are missing five of the non-curriculum related items listed above are automatically classified as Class-E schools. Schools in this category will be given a probation period of twelve (12) months to remedy the defects and improve performance before the withdrawal of the permit to operate or immediate closure.

Class-F Schools

Schools missing six of the non-curriculum related items listed above are classified as Class F schools. These schools shall be automatically closed down if operated by the government or have their permit to operate withdrawn if operated by private individuals or by a faith based institution.

Classroom Climate

Classroom Climate generally refers to the synthesis of policies, procedures, activities,

programs, and facilities, both informal and formal, within a school infrastructure. These attributes should support an overall positive learning environment for all members of the school community – students, teachers, staff, parents, and visitors; furthermore, a positive climate should be maintained in order to facilitate academic scholarship, personal development, positive and interpersonal relationships, psychological wellness, and security among all those who inhabit the school’s space. In this capacity, the school must promote: (i) meaningful student participation; (ii) peer-facilitated activities within a democratically managed environment; (iii) educational extra-curricular activities; (iv) vocational partnerships; (v) positive behavioral conduct codes and conflict mediation tools; (vi) physical amenities that are accessible to all and meet basic safety standards and regulations; and (vii) access to continuous professional development for teachers and other staff.

Class Size

Class sizes for all levels will be established and enforced under the guidelines and policies of

the Ministry in accordance with the provision of this Act. These will be based on a pupil-teacher ratio determined for each level. Some preliminary recommendations as guides: Lower Basic Education (Primary) class sizes for all Public, Private, and Faith Based schools will not exceed the ratio of 44:1 to facilitate effective teaching or other such level established by the Ministry; Upper Basic Education (Junior Secondary) class sizes for all Public, Private, and Faith Based schools will not exceed the ratio of 40:1 to facilitate effective teaching or other such level established by the Ministry; and Senior Secondary class sizes will not exceed the ratio of 30:1 or other such level established by the Ministry to facilitate effective teaching. The Minister has the authority to make such downward adjustments of the PTR as may be deemed necessary for the enhancement and quality output of students.

Community Involvement

Community Involvement aims to provide a platform for the breadth of interests and values across the community to be heard and considered by the school, as well as the larger

districts and counties. It is a vital component for ensuring school accountability, and it leverages the collective insights and experiences of the community to proactively anticipate and deal with the school's trajectory. Increasing community involvement also contributes towards making the local area into a more attractive and fulfilling place to live and work.

In principle, community involvement should be flexible, address local needs, and build the family's capacity to improve their child's achievement. Thus, every school should identify barriers or factors that may inhibit meaningful interaction between the community and the school, and make efforts to minimize the effects of these areas (for example, introducing a local language or adjusting the scheduled time to meet families). Additionally, every school should also develop an M&E structure that ensures effective implementation of family and community involvement policies.

The County School Board and the MCSS council are expected to play a meaningful and collaborative role in maintaining a vibrant and involved education community. A variety of programs could be incorporated into the school

programs to enhance community involvement, including: parent orientations, a family resource center (housed at the school), establishing an official community involvement coordinator and/or a parent teacher association, increasing parental access to student information, expanding volunteer opportunities in school and community functions, creating an advisory committee, emphasizing consensual decision-making, home-visits, and maintaining on-going communication through newsletters and other mediums.

Conduct of Pupils

1. All schools within the country will prescribe rules consistent with law or with the rules prescribed by the County School Board and the MCSS council for the governance and discipline of the schools under its jurisdiction.
2. Each school operating a Basic Education and or a Secondary Education program will notify the parent or guardian of all students registered in the school about the availability of rules and regulations pertaining to student discipline.

3. Each public, private and or faith based school may, at its discretion, adopt rules and regulations on school discipline applicable to the school provided such rules and regulations are consistent with those provided by the Ministry.
4. For schools that choose to adopt rules pursuant to this policy, the school discipline rules and procedures will be consistent with any applicable policies adopted by the governing board and the relevant section of this policy governing school discipline. In developing these rules and procedures, each school will solicit the participation, views, and advice of one representative selected by each of the following groups:
 - a. Parents and Guardians.
 - b. Teachers.
 - c. School administrators.
 - d. School security personnel, if any.
 - e. For Upper Basic (junior secondary schools) and senior secondary schools, pupils enrolled in the school.
5. Meetings for the development of the rules and procedures should be

developed and held within the school's existing resources, during non-classroom hours, and on normal schooldays.

6. The final version of the rules and procedures on school discipline with attendant regulations may be adopted by a panel comprised of the principal of the school, or his or her designee, and a representative selected by classroom teachers employed at the school.
7. It will be the duty of each employee of the school to enforce the rules and procedures on school discipline adopted under this section.
 - a. The governing board of each school district may prescribe procedures to provide written notice to continuing pupils at the beginning of each school year and to transfer pupils at the time of their enrollment in the school and to their parents or guardians regarding the school discipline rules and procedures adopted in this Act and in the policies of the Ministry.

- b. Each school will file a copy of its school discipline rules and regulations with the County School Board or the MCSS council.
- c. The board will review, at an open meeting, the approved school discipline, rules and regulations for consistency with its policies and procedures.

County Education Officers

Details are found in the Reform Act about appointment, tenure, and establishment of the County Education Offices.

County School Boards

County School Boards are created to advise the County system on the needs and conditions of the County and to offer local policy assistance and consent to ensure the wide compliance of representatives in the County, including the District Offices and the Schools and their respective Boards. The procedures for the activities of the Boards will be guided by those of the MCSS and developed further through

discussion and experience in the particular regions. Details on the County School Boards are specified in the Reform Act.

Curriculum Design, Leadership, Adjustment, and Approval Processes

A curriculum specifies what is to be taught and encompasses:

- The learning environment;
- Resources (including syllabuses);
- Pedagogy (teaching styles and methods);
- Assessment methods and procedures;
- The values and ethos of the school; and
- The relationships and behaviors among students and teachers.

The Center for Curriculum and Textbook Development, in consultation with the Ministry of Education, will develop and compile a list of pre-approved curricula for each school. The Center will supervise the Early Childhood Programs, as well as Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science Programs. Furthermore, the Center will incorporate the

recommendations of professional associations representing educators in a specific subject field. Holistically, the curriculum will:

- Promote high standards of learning for all students;
- Prescribed minimum standards for each level;
- Serve as a guided plan for teaching and learning;
- Be based on and aligned with the Ministry's goals;
- Provide for the continuous growth and development of each student throughout his/her school experience;
- Require a process of continuous improvement, evaluation, and revision to ensure that the curriculum is vibrant and meets contemporary emerging needs; and
- Accommodate adjustments for students with special needs.

Discipline

The Ministry of Education operates on the philosophy that all students will be provided equal access to quality education irrespective of

gender, creed, religion or political affiliation. Additionally, the Ministry believes that students shall be responsible for their behavior, shall be in attendance and on time for school/classes, shall participate fully in the learning process; and shall recognize and respect the rights of other students and adults. To do so, each student must be in a school climate that is satisfying and productive, one that is without disruptive behavior by any student infringing upon the rights of others.

The County School Board or the MCSS council shall approve annually the school codes of conduct which include rules and procedures based on national laws and policies. The student disciplinary rules and procedures shall be developed by the administration with input where appropriate from students and parents. These rules shall be age appropriate, shall delineate standards of behavior, and shall provide for progressive dispositions where appropriate. The code of conduct shall be distributed to each student upon enrollment, to parents/guardians through the best means available given the grade level of the student,

and shall be available in each school and classroom.

To promote better discipline, school personnel are encouraged to use preventive measures such as, but not limited to, conferences, counseling, and other referrals. Misbehavior governed by the code may occur during school hours, outside school hours, on school grounds or campus, off school grounds or campus, while wearing school uniform, at school-sponsored activities whether on or off school grounds/campus, and/or on school-sponsored transportation. School administrators must require a student and his/her parent(s) to sign a behavior contract as a prerequisite for enrollment.

Disciplinary action taken is intended to show the student how/he/she has ownership of the problem, to help the student formulate ways to prevent the problem from recurring, and to inform the parents of the misconduct. The administration is authorized to use a variety of corrective measures including, but not limited to, student and/or parent conferences, mediation, detention of the student with a teacher or administrator, in-school suspension, Saturday work, or out-of-school suspension to

provide for a safe learning environment. Serious behavior problems, which could result in long-term suspension or expulsion, require a hearing before the Disciplinary Committee, unless the student and parent voluntarily accept consequences prescribed by the school by signing a waiver. This means that the Board/council would require each school to set up a well constituted disciplinary commission with guidelines developed in consonance with MOE policies.

District Education Officer

Details are found in the Reform Act about appointment, tenure, and setup of the District Offices.

Dress Code

The Ministry of Education is directly concerned with the dress code of students. The Ministry believes that the right dress code contributes to the learning environment in a positive way and that all teachers and students will adhere to the common practice of neat and responsible dressing. Therefore, it is expected the County School Board or the MCSS council, will decide

on the appropriate dress for teachers and the requisite uniform for the public schools within the county school system. Each school board must institute and enforce a mandatory school uniform policy for all schools within the county established or operating under the Education reform Act of 2011. Notwithstanding, students are expected to adhere to the following dress code:

- Male students should have their trousers placed on their waist.
- No student shall be allowed to sag or hang his/her trouser or skirt below his/her waist.
- Female students wear skirts below their knees.
- All students should have their uniform shirts and blouse firmly tucked in their trousers or skirts.
- No student should be allowed to wear a shirt or a blouse that is sleeveless.

Students failing to comply with this dress code may be sent home and may be subject to disciplinary actions as deemed appropriate by the principal and discipline code of the school.

The Ministry of Education also believes that in order to have an enabling learning environment, school administrators must be neatly dressed. No teacher, principal or other school administrator shall be restricted from wearing any clothing that depicts his/her cultural or religious values or beliefs. Notwithstanding, teachers and school administrators should refrain from wearing clothing with inscriptions that depict negativity, violence, and/or vulgar language.

Early Childhood Education

The Ministry of Education places special priority on the development of our youngest learners and their level of school-readiness; research indicates that early intervention increases their chance for success in school and life. Thus, the Ministry will strive to ensure universal access to and affordability of pre-kindergarten programs for all three (3) to five (5) year-old children, contingent upon funding; otherwise, priority shall be given to disadvantaged families. Healthy, safe, and quality education programs geared towards developing school-ready

learners should share the following the attributes:

- A well-rounded curriculum that enhances the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional domains of each child's development.
- Clear early learning guidelines.
- Small class sizes and favorable teacher-child ratios.
- Caring teachers and administrators who are well-versed in early childhood development practices and pedagogy.
- Continuous training and evaluation of providers.
- Active participation of families and the community.
- Address child health, nutrition, and other family needs as part of a comprehensive service network.
- An accommodating schedule that caters to the needs of working families.
- Professionally licensed, accredited, and certified.
- A pathway that ensures a smooth transition to Basic Education.

Education Day

The last Friday in September each year will be set aside to be celebrated and observed as a working holiday to highlight the importance of education in Liberia. Appropriate programs that underscore the importance of education in Liberia will be planned and executed on Education Day.

Education Reform Act of 2011

The Education Reform Act of 2011 was approved on August 8, 2011. It replaces the Education Law of 2001, approved January 8, 2002. It constitutes Title 10 of the Liberian Code of Laws Revised. It applies to all schools and education institutions with the exceptions of Military Training Centers and Police and Security Training Institutions. This document references many policies and regulations that are derived from the Reform Act, and the statements and details of the Act prevail in any confusion or dispute about the policies or regulations.

Equal Access

The Ministry of Education believes that all students are entitled to equal opportunities for a quality education, and that this concept embraces the idea that a greater effort may be necessary for those who are educationally disadvantaged. To ensure that textbooks, library resources, and other instructional materials and supplies are available on a fair basis, the County School Board or the MCSS council, will allot all national, local and non-categorical funds, system-wide, on a per pupil basis, at each of the various organizational grouping (e.g., basic and secondary school), in such a manner that low-income schools will receive per pupil amounts equal to or greater than those in other schools. To ensure transparency, such distribution shall be based on a well-developed and approved formula with a focus on equity. The County School Board or the MCSS council will make appropriate adjustments in the allotments at least once during the school year, in accordance with changes in the active pupil enrollment.

Equity

Educational equity means raising the achievement of all students while (1) narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students and (2) eliminating the socio-economic status, gender, or ability predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories. Thus, the concept of educational equity extends beyond the realm of formal equality -- where all students are treated the same -- to fostering a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of their socio-economic barriers, gender, or ability have the opportunity to benefit equally from the gains of educational resources.

Therefore, to achieve educational equity, the Ministry of Education will provide additional and differentiated resources to support the success of all students, including:

- Equitable access to high quality and culturally-sensitive relevant instruction, curriculum, support, facilities, and other educational resources.

- Creating multiple pathways to success in order to meet the needs of our diverse student population, and shall actively encourage, support, and expect high academic achievement for all students.
- The recruitment, support, and retention of ethnically and gender diverse and culturally competent administrative, instructional, and support personnel; the Ministry shall actively strive to have our staff reflect the diversity of the student body.
- Remedying practices, including assessment, that lead to the over-representation of disadvantaged students in areas such as special education and discipline, and the under-representation in programs such as talented and gifted programs.
- Welcoming and empowering families, including underrepresented families, as essential partners in their student's education, school planning and District decision-making.
- Furthermore, the Ministry will establish partnerships with other partners who have demonstrated culturally-specific

expertise – including government agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and the community in general -- in meeting our educational outcomes.

This policy applies to all persons employed with the Ministry of Education, consultants or contractors, students, parents, volunteers, and any others who may operate within the government school system from time to time. Furthermore, the successful development and implementation of an Equity Policy is dependent upon the support, dedication, and commitment of all the partners in education. Any citizen who feels he/she has been the victim of discriminatory treatment in violation of this policy should report this concern to the appropriate education authority.

Educator Political Activity

Political Activity is strictly prohibited during educator compensated time (with the exception of vacation, personal, or furlough days), under the premise that it presents a conflict of interest.

Specifically, educators are barred from the following political activities:

- Hosting or participating in any kind of political event;
- Soliciting contributions or votes on behalf of a candidate on school premises;
- Planning, conducting, or participating in public opinion polls or surveys of voters or candidate questionnaires;
- Assisting at the polls on election days or in any recount or challenge to elections;
- Participating in any activity related to campaigning for any elective office, including wearing any political paraphernalia (i.e. t-shirts or buttons), displaying posters in work space;
- Campaigning or working for or against a referendum question;
- Serving as a delegate, alternate, or proxy to a political party convention;
- Misappropriating any government property or resources (such as photocopiers, official email addresses, etc.) for any prohibited political activity.

Furthermore, the school administration is prohibited from:

- Denying or depriving any person of employment or tenure solely because he or she is a member or an officer of a political committee, a political party or a political organization or an interest group.
- Requiring any employee to participate in any political activity in consideration for any additional compensation, benefit, salary adjustment, bonus, compensatory time off or for continued employment, or award such consideration, as a condition of employment.

Educational Quality

Quality education describes a dynamic and challenging curriculum. A comprehensive curriculum should exist in a supportive environment enabling each student to achieve their full potential. It is characterized by:

- A challenging learning program which includes: well-defined goals and

objectives, critical thinking skills, and the social and emotional development of students.

- A well-defined statement of policies and guidelines for consistent implementation.
- A process which provides for the effective participation and communication among students, parents, and the community.
- Strong leadership in management and instruction.
- High expectations of students and staff.
- Effective instructional methods.
- Effective monitoring, evaluating, and improvement procedures for program reform, staff evaluation, and student assessment.
- Ongoing professional development for all staff.
- A cooperative atmosphere which fosters high student and staff morale.
- Expectations for appropriate student behavior.
- Sufficient staff and resources used efficiently and appropriately.

- Attractive, properly maintained, and clean schools.
- A well-informed community that supports and participates in the school's activities.

Establishment of Schools

Details on the establishment of schools are found in the Reform Act.

Feedback Responsibility

County Education Systems and the MCSS are expected to manage all central policies and strategies. Within these policies and strategies, CESs and the MCSS are expected to develop and implement tactics for their realization in the local context. Tactics are specific directions and guides to action and they are modified as required in terms of feedback and adjustment for effectiveness. This is part of the management process. Monitoring of policies and strategies are functions of the County/city, working with the districts and schools and their communities. Based on this information specific approaches are managed within the County/city with

information passed on as feedback on the general policy or strategy.

Girls' Education

Girls' Education is regulated by the policy guidelines prescribed and available from the Ministry of Education.

Goals for Instruction

The Ministry of Education is committed to a rigorous educational program with high expectations for all students. Recognizing that children have differing learning needs that must be addressed through an array of instructional practices, guided by district and national curricular standards, schools shall:

- Establish high academic standards and instructional programs in all subjects;
- Provide students with a solid foundation in reading, writing, problem-solving, and communications;
- Provide an inclusive curriculum for a gender, ethnically, and culturally diverse student population;
- Provide a positive learner-centered environment that fosters academic

excellence, creativity, lifelong learning, and essential life skills necessary to succeed in the world of work, as members of families, and as responsible citizens;

- Provide students opportunities to learn, think, reason, and utilize technology as an effective resource;
- Develop in students a respect for the dignity, the rights, and the worth of all individuals.
- Improve staff collaboration and develop mentoring and peer coaching programs for teachers new to the school or district;
- Effectively teach and model violence prevention policy and curriculum that address early intervention alternatives, issues of harassment, and teach nonviolent alternatives for conflict resolution; and
- Provide teachers and other members of site-based management teams with appropriate management and financial management skills.
- Districts, Counties, and cities will establish specific and measurable goals

and objectives that are applicable to the educational setting and will be evaluated annually.

Health and Wellness

The Ministry of Education is committed to providing school environments that promote and protect children's health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. Therefore, it is the policy of the Ministry that:

- The county/city will engage students, parents, teachers, food service professionals, health professionals, and other interested community members in developing, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing county wide nutrition and physical activity policies.
- The county/city will foster the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle for all staff.
- All students in grades K-12 will have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.

- Foods and beverages sold or served at school will meet the nutrition recommendations of the Ministry of Health.
- Qualified child nutrition professionals will provide students with access to a variety of affordable, nutritious, and appealing foods that meet the health and nutrition needs of students; will accommodate the religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the student body in meal planning; and will provide clean, safe, and pleasant settings and adequate time for students to eat.
- To the maximum extent practicable, all schools in the county will participate in available government school feeding programs.
- Schools will provide nutrition education and physical education to foster lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity, and will establish linkages between health education and school feeding programs, and with related community services.

- Each school will post a clear sign designating the area to be a “Drug-Free School Zone.”

Schools will offer health education covering the following topics:

- Alcohol, drugs, and tobacco;
- HIV/AIDS and sexuality;
- Nutrition;
- Safety; and
- Physical activity.

Health Requirements

School authorities are expected to enforce the Ministry of Health requirements for student vaccinations and immunizations, tests for hearing and vision, etc. Schools are expected to require their students to be vaccinated against all vaccine preventable diseases before the opening of schools. Where available it shall be mandatory to test the ears and eyes of students before the opening of the school year. The Ministry will collaborate with the Ministry of Health in the implementation of these medical requirements.

Horizontal Efforts for Collaboration and Coordination

Most past policies were established for divisional assignments within the boundaries of a silo departmental organization. This has led to fractionation of activities and decisions. The decoupling is an inefficient management approach that leads to duplication, waste, and less effective implementation. Horizontal policies encourage collaboration and coordination of Ministry efforts. Educational problems are inherently interrelated and complexly organized. The management of complexly organized problems is accomplished through the understanding and attention to these interrelationships, and horizontal policies formalize the inter-office cooperation and shared capacity.

Inclusion

The concept of inclusion is one that promotes increased positive social interaction and learning effects, as has been supported by several studies. Furthermore, inclusion advances equality and participation; it thus leads students to have a

greater sense of belonging and acceptance. In this light, the county school board shall strive to redress any mechanisms, which might exclude children from equal access to, participation in, and outcomes of schooling based on language or culture, gender, physical, intellectual or emotional state or socio-economic status. Hence, every Liberian child shall:

- Have the right to be listened to and treated with respect;
- Have the right to feel pride in their learning;
- Have the right to feel safe and secure in a respectful social environment and safe physical environment;
- Share the responsibility to care for the well-being and learning opportunities of each other;
- Have the right to participate in learning programs both designed as whole class and as individual plans;
- Be supported towards achieving a common set of learning goals and competencies;
- Have the right to contribute their ideas to the curriculum and culture of the

school and to receive advocacy for their needs;

- Have their learning competence and confidence assessed regularly with the view to revising program provisions; families are provided with avenues for additional support if this is likely to improve the well-being of a child.

Resources adequate to the task of ensuring the true implementation of this policy are constantly sought, often from outside agencies.

Accordingly, the full implementation of the policy is contingent on the availability of resources. While full coverage of the entire country is ideal, the implementation of the policy will be based on a gradual approach and as resource permit.

Information Technology

Students and citizens of all ages require both the necessary skills and access to technology tools to take responsibility for their own learning, to be actively involved in critical thinking and problem solving, to collaborate and cooperate, and to develop as productive citizens. Therefore, the Ministry of Education stipulates that

technology, subject to the availability of resources, especially computers, be used to enhance both the academic achievement and the workplace readiness of all students.

Therefore, the County/city education system shall ensure that:

- All students will be provided equal access to technology.
- All students will graduate from public schools with proficiency in basic computer skills subject to the availability of funds to implement the policy.
- The County/city will collaborate with the higher education community to ensure complementary technology initiatives.
- All counties/cities shall have comprehensive technology plans. This would include: computer technology skills in all programs of study, particularly in the areas of career awareness, career exploration, work-based learning, and for use in accessing post-secondary education information.

- Facilities and technology, whenever possible, shall be made available to facilitate distance learning.
- The County/city, in cooperation with schools, shall, to the extent practicable and as funds and other resources are available, provide students (including those enrolled in adult basic education), teachers, parents and citizens access to technology, especially computers, in the public schools during non-school hours.

Languages

The primary language of instruction for all grade levels is English, along with such local language as may be determined by the individual County School Boards and the MCSS council.

The benefits of learning a second language are numerous (especially in the early grades), including: higher academic achievement in other areas, higher standardized test scores, increased cognitive skills, increased creativity and problem-solving skills, and global economic competition. Learning a second language also

inculcates the importance of culture, diversity, and sensitivity towards others.

Thus, a local language will be taught in each county (as determined by the individual County School Board and the MCSS council) beginning at the basic education level; the teaching of French in all schools will be required for all secondary students. Furthermore, as the global demand arises, other international language(s) will also be included.

The Ministry of Education requires each school district to develop a policy outlining how second language requirements shall be met by students. The Ministry recommends the following procedures for students wishing to demonstrate proficiency in a language other than English.

- Complete 3 semesters in the same second language.
- Submit an official transcript in which the instruction was in a language or other languages other than English. The principal shall determine if the transcript meets this policy's requirements.

- Submit minimum proficiency scores on a nationally recognized, standardized instrument for languages, other than English. The principal shall determine if the submitted scores meet this policy's requirement.

A successful foreign language program would share the following characteristics:

- Enjoyable, meaningful, age-appropriate, and authentic language and lesson materials and activities.
- Curriculum based on the international foreign language standards.
- Clear program goals for each grade-level.
- Regular program evaluation.
- Accessibility for all students.
- Communication and coordination across content areas.
- Articulation among all grade-levels, to ensure seamless transition of students.
- Well-qualified teachers who receive regular professional development in teaching of foreign language(s).

Learning Materials and Textbooks

The Ministry of Education believes that quality and consistency in curriculum and instruction can best occur through the use of system-wide based instructional materials for a given subject area or course. Therefore, the Ministry authorizes the County/city education system to establish a procedure for adoption that provides for the orderly and timely selection, procurement, and utilization of high quality textbooks and materials in the public schools.

The selection of instructional materials shall be done cooperatively and shall involve qualified personnel within the school system. The adopted texts and materials may be chosen from the Ministry recommended list or at the discretion of the committee subject to County/city approval. Subject to the approval of the County School Board or the MCSS council, a limited number of copies of texts or basic learning materials may be purchased for pilot purposes. The determining factor governing recommendations shall be the instructional quality of the text and materials. Furthermore, selected materials should always be consistent

with the overall national curriculum strategic plan and action objectives.

A textbook evaluation cycle, operating on an annual schedule, will establish a comprehensive review of all basic and secondary school core academic textbooks. The committee shall consider whether the textbooks and materials for classroom use prepare students for national/regional exams, entrance standards for tertiary institutions, and future employment. Furthermore, the committee should consider: whether the material fulfills the content requirement as mandated by the Ministry of Education for the subject area and grade level; whether the material is comprehensive, detailed, error-free, appropriate for student comprehension, well-organized, appropriate for scope and sequence of the particular subject area; whether the content is free from prejudice based on gender, religion, sex, nationality, class, or single conclusion bias; whether it includes supplementary materials, such as diagnostic tests; whether the material is relevant to the cultural environment of the students, stimulates students to research and study the field widely, stimulates teachers to teach to the best of

his/her ability, has sufficient text-size and illustrations; whether the material promotes an appropriate level of student autonomy; how the material compares to the quality of other materials for the same subject and grade-level.

Every effort shall be made to ensure the process of preparation, production, and distribution of books is done through an open competitive bidding process. Student textbook ratios will also be stipulated if textbooks are provided by the Ministry; technical specifications for paper, printing, and binding shall also be formulated. In distributing materials, committees should opt for the most practical and economical methods, and take into consideration the support for public and school libraries.

Any appeals concerning learning resources can be brought by any County citizen, student, parent or guardian of district students, or district employees. Appeals shall be considered by the Committee during the annual evaluation process.

Learning Organization Model

County Education Systems and the MCSS are expected to encourage teamwork and professionalism, and employ techniques for communication and information exchange that will promote a collegial atmosphere for development and improvement of the County schools. An emphasis is placed on “learning” within the system, as well as learning within the school. CESs and the MCSS must monitor schooling activities, projects, interventions, training, and district and school management to ensure an effective system based upon continuous feedback and professional collaboration.

Liberian Education Administrative Guidance

A priority task for the reform in the central Ministry and its County/city Education Systems is the development of a comprehensive administrative manual to guide the activities and operations of the 15 Counties and MCSS. The monitoring and evaluation manuals and

this document reflect the beginning of that support for the County Offices and the MCSS.

Low-Performance Schools

The Ministry of Education recognizes that not all low-performing schools are the same. Thus, every effort shall be made to help the public and media understand the differences among these schools. The Ministry shall highlight cases where schools have improved and encourage a continued focus on schools still needing assistance. Generally, options to turn-around underperforming schools include: replacing school leadership and some teaching staff, ensuring the availability of the curriculum, reorganizing internally while ensuring that administrative transitions remain smooth. In uncovering key components of successfully run schools, research points to strong instructional leadership, a clear focus on academics, regular measures of academic progress, high-quality teaching, and good community and parent relations. Consistent with the above the Ministry will encourage the introduction of:

- Intensive academic program: failing schools will be encouraged to

implement a program structured by the ministry that would enabled the implementation of the curriculum for the level with measurable goals with staff selected by the MOE focused on the school's areas of weakness; and

- Placement under the direction of a Master whose responsibilities would include administrative as well as technical guidance.

Media Relations

Positive relationships with the media are developed and maintained by providing accurate and helpful information to reporters in a timely manner. To insure that information provided to the media is accurate, comprehensive, and complete, and to insure that reporters have appropriate access to the best sources of information, a protocol for providing information to the media has been established and outlined in this policy. School system employees shall not release information which is private or confidential as identified by law and Board policy or administrative regulation.

Spokespersons

The County Education Officer/the superintendent of MCSS serves as the primary spokesperson for the School system on all matters of system wide interest. The County Education Officer/or the Superintendent of MCSS may designate a district education officer or a principal to serve as primary spokespersons for the county.

Administrative Responsibility

Each building administrator is authorized to keep parents and others informed about a school's programs and activities. News releases that are of concern to only one school, or to an organization of one school, are the responsibility of the principal. Publicity regarding students shall always be evaluated in terms of the effect on the children. All school County/city employees shall notify the County Education Office whenever they are contacted by the media. If the topic is sensitive or significant, the employee will notify the County Education Officer or Superintendent directly and immediately.

Employee Responsibility

County/city employees are encouraged to cooperate with media representatives, yet they will need to direct most inquiries through the appropriate administrative channels. Issues of curriculum, social justice, and items of county-wide/city-wide relevance or implication should be directed to the County Education Officer or the Superintendent of MCSS. When a County/city employee is contacted by a representative of the media for a comment or interview on a subject related to the employee's area of expertise, the employee shall respond in a manner that is accurate and factual. If the employee is not able to respond accurately or the inquiry does not relate to the employee's area of responsibility, the employee shall refer the inquiry to the appropriate administrator.

In all cases, the employee shall:

- Attempt to inform his or her supervisor of the media request prior to releasing information. In the event that it is not possible to reach the supervisor before release of information and to accommodate the media in a timely

manner, the employee shall notify the supervisor immediately following the media contact.

- Make it clear that he/she is expressing a personal viewpoint unless the employee has been designated to speak on behalf of the County/city.
- Nothing in this regulation is intended as a restraint on the expression of personal opinion by any employee of the School System.

Media Access to Schools

The media will have access to all school events to which the public has been invited. Approval from the principal is not required to interview, film, or photograph staff or students at public events such as athletic contests, dramatic productions, music concerts, and graduation ceremonies. When members of the media enter schools to cover events other than public events, they must have the approval of the school system administration before interviewing, filming, or photographing staff or students. Group shots that do not identify individual students by name—either still photos or video—

may be taken in classrooms, hallways, and on the playground with the administration's permission. Before individual students are interviewed, taped, or photographed, the administration shall obtain parental permission. A signed form giving parental/guardian permission for use of the student's image in video, print or broadcast will be kept on file at the school. Parents have the right to request that their child not be interviewed or photographed individually for video, print, or broadcast.

Monitoring County Programs and Schools

Each County or MCSS has a number of programs and many individual schools within the County or MCSS that entail special circumstances and complex contexts. Given capacity constraints as well, the early reform agenda recommends the standardization of approach to M&E, with functions and responsibilities distributed according to skills and proximity to the entity or program being monitored or evaluated. Working with the central Ministry and some folks from the Counties, a set of guidelines (standards but with

some flexibility because situations require all kinds of approaches) are available (3 manuals), a general model or framework adopted, and training provided in the central Ministry and for County M&E personnel. Work on the current development projects and the general reform is the immediate palette for practicing M&E. The M&E drives the modification and development of strategies and policies for the continuing reform. M&E is aimed at *administrative efficiency* by monitoring the connections among inputs and outputs and *strategic positioning* by monitoring the outcomes over time and assessing the functional relationships among policies/strategies and outcomes.

In order to realize the intents of the education program, the County or MCSS is responsible for the monitoring and supervision of the intended activities of its districts and schools in their regular agendas, as well as special attention to development agendas. In decentralization this monitoring function is essential to the coordination and collaboration of resources and assistance for the development of the County/MCSS.

National Education Advisory Board

The NEAB facilitates national participation in the education system. Details are provided in the Reform Act.

Organizational Structure of the County Education Systems

The County Education System will consist of the County Education Board and the County Education Officer for the governance of the local system. The County Education Officer is responsible for the supervision of the district offices, local professional development utilizing the resource center facilities, and coordination and management of school leaders and school improvement at the macro level across the County. The County Education System produces the specific program and development agendas for the County and creates the necessary committees and intervention packages to facilitate the efficient and effective operation of the County system.

Parent Education

Every county shall provide opportunities for the development of parenting skills. This will include training/information regarding appropriate types of parental involvement, which demonstrates techniques to assist parents with the child's learning at home. In this effort, the county shall continue to identify and work toward the elimination of barriers that impede parent involvement. Thus, to the extent practicable, the school will provide information and school reports in an understandable and uniform format, and will include alternative formats upon request, in a language parents understand. Specifically, the school system will provide assistance to parents of children in understanding topics such as the following:

- Liberian academic content standards;
- Liberian student academic achievement standards;
- National and regional academic assessments including alternate assessments;
- Monitoring and improving their child's progress (through literacy training); and

- Child's wellness.

The above topics will be provided through the means of: parent conferences, report cards, parent/family nights, parent workshops, newsletters, technology, and open house events. Program activities and procedures will be planned and operated with meaningful consultation with parents of participating children; in this way, parental organizations will coordinate parent activities and facilitate communication and public notification.

Patriotic Observances in School

1. The Flag of the Republic and the flag of the respective County/city the school is located in will be displayed before each school building within the Republic.
2. The hoisting of the flag and recitation of the pledge of allegiance to the Republic will open each school day.
3. *THE NATIONAL ANTHEM OF LIBERIA* and *The Lone Star Forever* will be sung at every school assembly.

Payroll Authorization and Supervision

County Education Offices, working in concert with their District Education Offices, is responsible for the assignment and supervision of all education professional and support staff in the local system. They must keep records, not location of assignments, and ensure efficient payment schedules, as well as check on the authenticity of those collecting the pay. The elimination of “ghost” teachers and educators is an immediate benefit anticipated by the decentralization governance arrangement, supported by the local Boards that will support supervision through policies and agreements for penalties due to absence or falsification.

Principal

In order to have an effective and enabling academic learning environment, schools must be fully staffed with competent administrators. The Ministry of Education recognizes that the school principal is the highest ranking administrator in a school. As the key ranking administrator, principals are responsible for the management,

maintenance, school policy regarding discipline, coordination of the instructional program and other overall school matters.

In addition to these responsibilities, school principals are also required to lead school reform that would raise student achievement. In order to ensure students' success, principals must develop or create a shared vision for implementation. Such a vision should consider the inputs of teachers, parents and others in community. This responsibility includes working with parents when disciplinary issues arise, when students are not succeeding academically, and when parents have concerns. Principals also interact with parents who serve on school advisory boards such as the parent/teacher associations (PTAs). Principals are also responsible for making sure that their schools' campuses are safe and secure by ensuring that facilities and equipment are safe and in good working order. The principal must supervise the development of overall school discipline policies and the enforcement of those policies, and the assignment of supervisory responsibilities among school personnel. Principals must communicate any constraint or

challenge to the District Education Officer who then will transmit same to the County Education Officer and the County School Board.

Reading Instruction

Reading instruction is a priority activity, especially at the primary school level. The Ministry has recommended that reading be a fundamental skill that must be acquired and developed as much as possible during the early phases of schooling.

School Days

The Minister of Education, with the approval of the President of Liberia, will from year to year prepare a School Calendar for the conduct of schools. The School Calendar for all schools will commence in early September and conclude in late June. The yearly calendar will provide that classes be held not less than five (5) hours daily for five (5) days a week, with exceptions for designated holidays, for a period of no fewer than two hundred (200) teaching days or other such total prescribed the Ministry. Each calendar year is divided into two (2) semesters, each of which is a minimum of one hundred (100) days.

The annual school year consists of six (6) marking periods, a number of tests, and two semester examinations as determined and published by the Ministry of Education. All school days missed by any school system due to climatic conditions or any other reasons will be accounted for by adding such days to the approved school calendar. Failure on the part of any school system to adhere to this requirement will subject the system to fines to be determined in accordance with the policies and guidelines issued by the Ministry governing the operations of schools.

Service Learning

Service-learning means a teaching/learning strategy requiring students to develop and apply knowledge and skills through challenging projects that meet real community needs. It includes activities that are coordinated with the community and institutions of higher education, as appropriate; are helpful in fostering civic responsibility and developing career readiness skills; are integrated into and enhance the academic curriculum of the students enrolled;

and include structured time for students to reflect on the service-learning experience.

The Ministry requires that the County Education Officers develop and implement each county's service learning program with the input of staff, students, parents, community, and higher education input as appropriate. The program shall incorporate age-appropriate activities that promote the development of student skills in the areas of critical thinking, communication, teamwork, civic responsibility, mathematical reasoning, problem solving, public speaking, professional technical skills, the scientific method, research, and analysis in grades K-12. Service learning will also be included as part of the county's graduation requirements.

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to recognize and manage their emotions, demonstrate caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations constructively. Competence in the use

of SEL skills is promoted in the context of safe and supportive school, family, and community learning environments in which children feel valued and respected and connected to and engaged in learning. SEL is fundamental not only to children's social and emotional development but also to their health, ethical development, citizenship, motivation to achieve, and academic learning as well. SEL is especially critical given the context of post-civil-war Liberia and the large numbers of children contending with significant social, emotional, and mental health barriers to their success in school and life. Therefore, each education system is required to develop and implement the county's SEL program with input of staff, students, parents, community, and professionals as appropriate.

Sports, Athletics, and Physical Education

1. Sports, athletics and physical education will constitute an integral part of the school curriculum and program at all levels.

2. All schools will be required to construct as a part of their physical facilities, fields and courts to promote the development of athletes, football players, basketball players, etc. to develop a sound body, promote team building, leadership, discipline, and enhance Liberia's participation in international competitions.
3. Home economics, basic agriculture, and computer literacy will be included in the national curriculum of Liberia as well.

Staff Development

Every school shall develop a staff development committee and site-based staff development committees in order to keep in place staff development outcomes that are consistent with the education goals of the county. The site-based committees are responsible for developing and evaluating site-based goals related to staff development. These committees also must make decisions regarding how School System staff development monies will be used in order to meet educational goals.

Standards Development

Educational standards help teachers ensure their students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful by providing clear goals for student learning. Standards do not tell teachers how to teach, but they do help teachers figure out the knowledge and skills their students should have so that teachers can build the best lessons and environments for their classrooms. Standards also help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success. Standards are a first step – a key building block – in providing our young people with a high-quality education that will prepare them for success in college and work. Although standards cannot single-handedly improve the quality of the education system, they do give educators shared goals and expectations for their students.

Therefore, counties shall adopt high standards for student achievement which challenge all students to reach their full potential and specify what students are expected to know and to be able to do at each grade level and in each area of study. These standards shall reflect the

knowledge and skills needed for students to be adequately prepared for postsecondary education, employment, and responsible citizenship.

The County Education Officer or designee shall provide the county with recommended standards using a process that involves teachers, school site and district administrators, students, parents/guardians, representatives from business/industry and postsecondary institutions, and/or community members. He/she shall ensure the proper articulation of standards between grade levels and the alignment of the standards with the county's vision and goals, graduation requirements, college entrance requirements, and other desired student outcomes. He/she also shall ensure that the standards are easily understandable and measurable, and informed by the progress of other top performing countries to better prepare students to succeed in a global economy.

Standards shall be developed by using the following criteria: (i) rigor; (ii) focus – covering a smaller number of topics in greater depth at every grade-level; (iii) coherence – math and science standards that lay out an orderly

profession of topics that follow the logic of the discipline, allowing thorough and deep coverage of the content (iv) consistency – so that students are not taught to a lower standard because of where they live; (v) realistic – for effective use in the classroom; and (vi) include both content and the application of knowledge through high-order skills.

County curriculum, instruction, student assessments, and evaluations of the instructional programs shall be aligned with national content standards. Teachers and school administrators shall receive ongoing professional development to inform them of changes in the standards and to build their capacity to implement effective standards-based instructional methodologies. The County Education Officer or designee shall annually communicate the applicable standards to students and their parents/guardians to inform them of the expectations for student learning at their grade level. Staff shall continually assess students' progress towards meeting the standards, report each student's progress to the student and his/her parents/guardians, and offer remedial assistance in accordance with Board policy and

administrative regulation. The County Education Officer or designee shall ensure that district standards are regularly reviewed and updated as necessary. At a minimum, county standards shall be reviewed whenever applicable nationwide standards are revised and in response to changing student needs.

Suspension of Students

Each school will have a handbook, which will stipulate the conduct of students and specify those types of misconduct punishable by suspension. The handbook for each school will stipulate the type of conduct that is grave or severe that would warrant the expulsion of the student. The suspension or expulsion of a student will be based upon the result of a hearing conducted in line with the concept of due process.

Teacher Education

Teacher education is provided through pre-service programs at the University of Liberia, Tubman College, and the Rural Teacher Training Institutions (Kakata, Zorzor, and Webbo). Teacher in-service is provided through

special programs, District Education Officer workshops and visitations, and local consultations and professional interactions. There are three planned levels of formal teacher education: post-high-school teacher preparation courses (leading to a “C” Certificate), RTTI degrees (eventually to become AA degrees and leading to the “B” Certificate), and the Bachelor’s degree (leading to the “A” Certificate).

Teacher Quality

Details about teacher qualifications and other policies are found in the Reform Act. Teacher quality, while difficult to measure, shares the following attributes:

- Knowledge of the community and students’ cultures.
- The skills to work with neighborhood children and their families.
- An understanding of the research on effective teaching.
- Classroom organization and management.
- The skills to plan lessons that promote higher-level thinking.

- Positive behavior-management techniques.
- An understanding of students' prior knowledge, cultures, and experiences with school lessons.
- The principles of interactive instruction.
- The skills to improve reading comprehension with culturally diverse literature.
- The ability to analyze personal change and set goals.

Teacher Records and Reports

Each public, private, and faith-based school will keep adequate records of their pupils, including admissions, dropouts, graduation, attendance, tuition, fees, student standing in each subject, and conduct. Records that are not of a confidential nature will be open for inspection by all upon request. Each school is also required to keep a copy of the Education Reform Act of 2011 and other education, regulatory, and guidelines drawn up by the school as well as those from the Ministry.

Textbooks

Specified courses and textbooks prescribed by the Ministry will be used by all schools in the country. Any other course or textbook added by a school to the officially prescribed courses and textbooks will not prejudice compliance or burden the normal advancement of the student.

Tobacco and Drugs in Schools

Use of controlled substances, toxic substances, and alcohol before, during, or after school hours, at school or in any other school location, is prohibited as a general policy. Paraphernalia associated with controlled substances is prohibited. The only two exceptions to this policy are: (i) a physician prescription for the substance that complies with the school Student Medication policy and (ii) appropriate quantities for use in laboratory experiments.

It shall be a further violation of this regulation for any student, teacher, administrator or other school personnel of the School System or person to use tobacco or tobacco-related devices, or electronic cigarettes in a public school. This prohibition extends to all facilities, whether

owned, rented or leased, and all vehicles that a School system owns, leases, rents, contracts for or controls. This prohibition includes all School system property and all off-campus School System-sponsored events.

Every county school system will act to enforce this policy and to discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, school personnel, or member of the public who violates this policy.

Transfer of Pupils

1. The transfer of students in all schools within the Republic will be in accordance with the following:
 - a. No pupil coming from another school will be permitted to enroll in any school within the Republic without first presenting a true and legitimate transfer certificate from the last school attended;
 - b. The transfer certificate must indicate:
 - i. The student's academic standing;
 - ii. The conduct of the student;

- iii. An accounting of fees paid or unpaid, if applicable;
2. The transfer certificate will be endorsed by the principal, an admissions official, or their equivalents;
3. No school administrator will refuse to grant such a transfer certificate to any pupil unless the student is in the senior class;
4. Any school administrator violating the provision of this Section will risk suspension and/or withdrawal of the permit to operate the school or lose his/her license to teach, and/or be subject to an administrative fine.
5. Any parent or guardian who presents a transfer certificate that is deemed to be fraudulent commits a second degree misdemeanor on a first offense, and a first degree misdemeanor on each subsequent offense and will be subject to a fine and imprisonment of not more than 6 months for the first offense; and a fine and imprisonment of not more than one year for each subsequent offense. Students who present fraudulent

transfer certificates will face suspension and/or dismissal from school.

6. Each offense will be subject to appeal to the County School Board.

Tuition

Tuition covers and refers only to school fees.

Understanding by Design

County schools should use a design method like the Understanding by Design (UbD). The design method entails concepts to focus on teaching for meaning and not just memorization. UbD is a framework for improving student achievement. Emphasizing the teacher's critical role as a designer of student learning, UbD works within the standards-driven curriculum to help teachers clarify learning goals, devise revealing assessments of student understanding, and craft effective and engaging learning activities. It is based on the following key ideas:

A primary goal of education should be the development and deepening of student understanding. Students reveal their understanding most effectively when they are provided with complex, authentic opportunities

to explain, interpret, apply, shift perspective, empathize, and self-assess. When applied to complex tasks, these “six facets” provide a conceptual lens through which teachers can better assess student understanding.

Effective curriculum development reflects a systematic design. UbD entails a three-stage design process called “backward design” that delays the planning of classroom activities until goals have been clarified and assessments designed. This process helps to avoid the twin problems of “textbook coverage” and “activity-oriented” teaching, in which no clear priorities and purposes are apparent.

Student and school performance gains are achieved through regular reviews of results (achievement data and student work) followed by targeted adjustments to curriculum and instruction. Teachers become most effective when they seek feedback from students and their peers and use that feedback to adjust approaches to design and teaching. Teachers, schools, and districts benefit by “working smarter” through the collaborative design, sharing, and peer review of units of study.

Violence

The Ministry of Education hereby adopts the policy of zero tolerance for weapons and violence in schools. The policy provides the power for administrators to address potentially dangerous situations. It sets the tone for all to understand that weapons, violence, and drug use is not tolerated, and will not be allowed in any of the public schools. The purpose of the policy is to provide a school environment that is conducive to learning and thus ensure that all children have the right to be educated in a safe and nurturing environment. Therefore, violations of these rights and violations of the atmosphere which supports sound education will not be tolerated. Every school system will act to enforce this policy and to discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, school personnel or member of the public who violates this policy.

Volunteers

A volunteer is defined as an unpaid person assisting under the direction of a licensed teacher or administrator. The Ministry of Education recognizes that volunteers provide

valuable assistance to instructional programs, to school personnel and to students' educational enrichment opportunities. The Ministry encourages volunteer participation by individuals and groups in local schools, district and region-level capacities, and various specialized educational programs of the district. Before volunteering, however, all volunteers must pass a background check (valid for three years). This regulation is not applicable to: (1) adults who visit a school but have no ongoing individualized interaction with a student or students, such as adults who have been invited to speak at a class or assembly; and (2) a parent or legal guardian who is accompanying his or her child's class on a one-day field trip or on another type of occasional extra-curricular activity that does not involve an overnight stay.

Principals will ensure that an orientation session be provided annually. Volunteer orientation will include (but not be limited to):

- Volunteers must sign in and out at a designated location in the school before proceeding to their volunteer sites.
- Volunteers must wear an identifying badge.

- Volunteers shall not be compensated for work done (as a general practice).
- Volunteers will always: use appropriate language; discuss age-appropriate topics; refrain from inappropriately touching students; refrain from disciplining students (behaviors needing discipline should be directed to the appropriate teacher or staff member); and refrain from giving students gifts or rewards and refrain from developing instructional objectives or lesson plans.
- Volunteers will serve as positive role models.
- Volunteers should be prompt and dependable. Should illness or an emergency occur, they should notify the school of a planned absence.
- The dress code for volunteers should be appropriate yet comfortable for any task that may be undertaken.
- Volunteers must keep confidential any information about a student or any school-related incident. If there is a safety concern or an emergency issue, it

must be told to someone in authority immediately. Volunteers are to be held to professional standards for maintaining the confidentiality of student records and will not be given access to student records.

- Volunteers will not be asked to assume responsibility for an entire class in the absence of supervising staff, give medication to students, or use their private vehicle for student transportation.

