



**JAMAICA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION  
97B CHURCH STREET  
KINGSTON**

**VIRTUAL MEETING OF CENTRAL EXECUTIVE  
FRIDAY, MAY 22, 2020**

## **SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

I wish to extend a very warm welcome to this the second virtual meeting of Central Executive. The fact that we are living through and trying our best to adjust to the new normal occasioned by COVID-19 is enough to be thankful for. As I bid you welcome, I must also commend the teachers of Jamaica who, despite the many challenges, personal and professional, have kept the education system alive through distant teaching. We are aware of the many challenges and personal sacrifices that our colleagues experience but despite these our teachers continue to prove that they are among the best anywhere. We must applaud one such Mr. Keron King, Principal of Little Bay Primary School, Westmoreland, who has been going the extra mile on the back of a bike to reach his students.

Congratulations are in order for Immediate Past President, Dr. Garth Anderson, who has assumed the Presidency of the Caribbean Union of Teachers. Dr. Anderson will serve as Interim President until the matter is

decided at the next meeting of the CUT Executive. We wish Dr. Anderson all the best and we know he will do well.

We pause to pay homage to one of our Past Presidents and Trustee, Mr. Sherlock Allen. Mr. Allen who passed on Tuesday, May 19, 2020 was the 30<sup>th</sup> President of the Jamaica Teachers' Association who served during the 1994 – 1995 Conference Year. Those of us who were fortunate to be active during his Presidency, will remember his year as one of the strident and fierce defence of the rights of the teacher. He was fearless, articulate and visible nationally. He can be remembered as the President who strategically organized "*load shedding*" and had the nation guessing what would be the next move or which area would experience work stoppage. To say that the teachers loved Mr. Allen is an understatement. Perhaps an indication of this might be borne out when for a number of years, even though he was not a candidate in the President Elect Election, teachers would write his name on the ballot paper and vote for him.

Mr. Allen will also be remembered for his over twenty years of continuous service to the Finance Committee, most of which were as chairman.

We express our condolences to his wife Elaine, son Norman, himself a Past President and the rest of his family. May his soul rest in peace and light perpetually shine on him.

We pray that the lives of those who served will inspire us to keep the torch burning.

Again, welcome and we look forward to your contribution in this meeting.

Colleagues, despite the fact that “*school is out*”, we were able to re-calibrate and organize some of our activities virtually. I wish to commend our President and members of the Administrative Staff in particular for ensuring that we did not lie down and play dead.

## **2.0 EDUCATION WEEK 2020**

Education Week 2020 was celebrated May 3-8, under the theme *Promoting Digital Transformation and Positive Values & Attitudes: Imperatives for Redefining 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education*. The week began with a Virtual Church Service on Sunday, May 3. The Service was hosted by the Church of God of Prophecy, 47G Old Hope Road, Kingston 5. In attendance were our President Owen Speid; Honourable Alando Terrelonge, Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information who represented the Ministry; the Secretary General, Mr. Byron Farquharson; Mr. Leao Nash, Public Relations and Communication Officer; Miss Tanya Lynch, President of the St. Andrew Parish Association, who read the scripture lesson and Miss Jenieve Nash, teacher who led in the singing. The sermon was preached by Rev. Dr. Timur Waugh, Associate Pastor. He was excellent in his delivery. The service was broadcast live on Love 101 FM and via Facebook. We thank all those who organized the activity. Special thanks to Dr. Charmaine Gooden Monteith, Mrs. Georgia Waugh Richards and Mr. Leao Nash.

### **3.0 READ ACROSS JAMAICA DAY**

We are pleased to report that we had a Virtual Read Across Jamaica Day. From the reports and feedback received, it was a success. I was pleased to hear our Prime Minister reporting that he read to some children in a Children's Home on that day. At the JTA's Head Office, our President and members of staff read via Facebook. Thanks to all who participated.

### **4.0 TEACHERS' DAY**

This was celebrated nationally on Wednesday, May 6 despite the fact that teachers were at home. We were impressed by the many creative ways that were used to celebrate our teachers but the demonstration by parents of St. Richards Primary School, St. Andrew stood out and was appreciated.

I am pleased to inform you that the tokens are now in the office. We will have to organize to get them out to our members in short order.

### **5.0 HELEN STILLS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAY – THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2020**

We are pleased, satisfied and happy that the Professional Advancement and Teacher Welfare Committee (PAC) shared the vision of a Virtual Professional Development Day activity. This activity went well. Dr. Leachim Semaj was the keynote speaker while Mrs. Bhagya Malladi, Lasco Teacher of the Year, gave a video presentation. We had some challenges with capacity as well as with the internet but we are happy that it turned out to be a success. We commend Dr. Margaret Chin, Mrs.

Shernette Powell, Mr. Leاون Nash and the other persons who made it happened.

## **6.0 PRIMARY EXIT PROFILE (PEP)**

The Ministry of Education has announced that there will not be any further sitting of the PEP for Grade Six for this year. They will use the following to determine placement in Secondary Schools:

- The results of the 2018 Grade 4 Literacy and Numeracy Examination
- The 2019 Grade 5 Performance Tasks
- The results of the Ability Test (administered in February 2020)

They have also indicated that the results will be published on Friday, June 26, 2020.

## **7.0 GRADE NINE ACHIEVEMENT TEST (GNAT)**

The Ministry has informed that there will not be a formal sitting of the Grade Nine Achievement Test this year. The students will be manually placed in Secondary Schools across the island. It was also observed that there were not many students in this cohort.

## **8.0 RESEARCH GRANT**

We have been reporting that the Ministry of Education has not honoured the due amount of \$3M to the Tertiary institutions. The Ministry of Education has written to us to inform that not all of our Tertiary institutions have complied with the accountability requirement of the Ministry hence the outstanding amount will not be paid to the institutions

that are non-compliant. We have responded by requesting the protocols that govern this grant because, based on the Heads of Agreement, we do not have any stated conditionalities.

The Ministry of Finance has advised that they have no objection for this grant to be an annual feature of the education system so long as the Ministry of Education provides the funding.

## **9.0 TABLETS FOR TEACHERS**

There seem to be a lot of misinformation in circulation pertaining to Tablets for Teachers. The information regarding the distribution is that they will be rolled out around June 8-12, 2020.

## **10.0 CSEC/CAPE**

It is now public knowledge that students across the region will be sitting CSEC/CAPE beginning July 27, 2020. Classes will resume in Secondary Schools as of June 2020 until July 2020. There is much discussion about the pros and cons surrounding this decision. The Association wishes to state that our primary concern at this time has to do with the protocols surrounding the holding of these examinations. The health of our students and teachers must be paramount at this time.

## **11.0 MR. AND MISS JTA**

The committee has informed that this event will be staged virtually on August 1, 2020. You will be kept informed as time unfolds.

## **12.0 MEMBERS INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS RALLY**

This activity will take place virtually on Thursday, May, 28, 2020 beginning at 9:30 a.m. An interesting programme is lined up and the day promises to be a rich and rewarding experience for all participants.

We will be able to accommodate one thousand participants.

## **13.0 CRITICAL ILLNESS TRUST FUND**

A virtual meeting of the Trustees of the Fund is scheduled for Wednesday, May 27, 2020. It is anticipated that by June's General Council meeting, we will be in a better position to offer more information on this matter.

## **14.0 PRESIDENT ELECT ELECTION**

Efforts are being made to gather information on alternate ways to hold the election. The reality, however, is pointing to a postponement of the election. We intend to convene a Special Virtual General Council meeting on Wednesday, June 3, 2020 to deal with the issue.

## **15.0 PARISH AND DISTRICT ASSOCIATION AGM**

The Association is encouraging Parish and District Associations to use Zoom technology to hold their Annual General Meetings. This is important because your delegates to conference and representatives on General Council will be necessary going forward.

## **16.0 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

Our Annual Conference is scheduled to be held August 17-19, 2020. We are not yet in a position to say how this activity will be carried out. What is sure, is that we will do what is required to ensure the smooth transition of the Presidency.

## **17.0 OPERATIONS OF THE OFFICES OF THE ASSOCIATION**

The offices of the Association have been opened since Tuesday, May 5, 2020. They are opened Monday to Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Each employee with the exception of the Security Guards is required to report for work two days per week. This position remains under constant review.

There are certain protocols that must be observed before one can enter the offices. These include: temperature check, sanitizing of hands and physical distancing.

It must be noted that despite the reduced operations of the Association, committees have been meeting and plans are being made for the rest of the Conference Year.

## **18.0 CONCLUSION**

The realities of our times demand that we adjust/change the way we do things. COVID-19 reminds us that the only constant is change if we are going to survive and remain relevant. The usual way of thinking and doing business must give way to innovation and transformation. Technology will be at the forefront of the changes that must come.



The Jamaica Teachers' Association owes it to its members and our founding fathers that it is prepared to redefine itself. We owe it to our members to provide the kind of leadership and support at critical times like these, that allows them to feel that we care and understand their needs. Leadership that is strident, bold and informed.

We commend our President for visibility on the media landscape. Not afraid to express his views, even if he is the only voice crying in the wilderness. The members are listening and are appreciative of his efforts. We acknowledge the role of support from our President Elect and Immediate Past President and the many hard working and creative volunteers as well as the hardworking and supportive and Administrative Staff at all levels.

The Association is stronger and better off because of our collective efforts. It is my prayer that we will never falter nor fail as we continue to *Unite and Serve*.

**Submitted by: Byron Farquharson  
Secretary General**