

## SIT Graduate Institute/SIT Study Abroad SIT Digital Collections

---

Capstone Collection

SIT Graduate Institute

---

Summer 8-18-2016

# A National Bilingual Education Policy for the Economic and Academic Empowerment of Youth in St. Lucia, West Indies

Gabriella Bellegarde  
*SIT Graduate Institute*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/capstones>

 Part of the [Anthropological Linguistics and Sociolinguistics Commons](#), [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Caribbean Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#), [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), [Education Economics Commons](#), [First and Second Language Acquisition Commons](#), [Latin American Studies Commons](#), [Linguistic Anthropology Commons](#), [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#), [Reading and Language Commons](#), and the [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Bellegarde, Gabriella, "A National Bilingual Education Policy for the Economic and Academic Empowerment of Youth in St. Lucia, West Indies" (2016). *Capstone Collection*. 2928.  
<https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/capstones/2928>

This Thesis (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Graduate Institute at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact [digitalcollections@sit.edu](mailto:digitalcollections@sit.edu).

A National Bilingual Education Policy for Youth Economic and Academic Empowerment in St.

Lucia, West Indies

Gabriella M. Bellegarde

SIT Graduate Institute, Washington D.C.

**Consent to Use of Capstone**

I hereby grant permission for World Learning to publish my capstone on its websites and in any of its digital/electronic collections, and to reproduce and transmit my capstone electronically. I understand that World Learning's websites and digital collections are publicly available via the internet. I agree that World Learning is not responsible for any unauthorized use of my capstone by any third party who might access it on the internet or otherwise.

Gabriella Bellegarde

29<sup>th</sup> July, 2016

*I would like to dedicate this capstone to the people of Anse la Raye village, without whom, none of this research would be possible.*

Table of Contents

**Abstract..... 5**

**Introduction..... 6**

**Concepts.....10**

**Policy Paper.....17**

**Advocacy Plan.....35**

**Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan.....44**

**Communications Plan.....51**

**Policy Brief.....59**

**Assessments and Learning.....63**

**References..... 655**

### Abstract

This campaign portfolio argues the case for a national bilingual education policy on the island of St. Lucia, where youth speak both St Lucian Creole and St. Lucian standard English. The portfolio consists of a policy paper and brief, an advocacy plan, a communications plan, monitoring and evaluation plan. The Bilingual Education Taskforce (BET), made up of teachers, parents and principals, is an advocacy organization that discovered the need for a bilingual education intervention when they observed, assessed and analyzed the written work of struggling readers at their school, the Anse la Raye Infant School on the west coast of St. Lucia. They also analyzed the issues of youth unemployment, youth drop-out rates and low tertiary education enrollment. A pattern began to emerge that illustrated a struggling reader's path through the education system. Consistent low academic achievement in the area of English Language Arts (ELA) was found at each academic level, infant, primary, and secondary. Scores on compulsory national ELA exams upon completion of secondary school consistently showed stagnant progress among secondary youth. Youth must score at least a grade of I, II, or III to be considered for tertiary education and since many did not score well, they were not afforded an opportunity to earn a tertiary level education. The problem with low tertiary enrollments is directly linked to employment opportunities and long term economic prosperity for youth. Without at least a tertiary, associate's education, youth are at a disadvantage, often remaining under- or unemployed. This portfolio policy plan advocates for bilingual education at the primary and secondary level as an intervention for improving learning outcomes of St. Lucian bilingual youth who need early support in language development.

*Keywords:* education policy, bilingualism, bilingual education, Eastern Caribbean, Creole, St. Lucia, linguistics, socio-linguistics, speech, cognition, language acquisition

A National Bilingual Education Policy for Youth Economic and Academic Empowerment in St.  
Lucia, West Indies

This capstone, course-linked to the policy advocacy and analysis track, makes the case for a National Bilingual Education Policy on the island-nation of St. Lucia, a windward island in the Eastern Caribbean. The inspiration that drove this work began five years ago, in Mount Rainier, Maryland where I worked as an educational aide at an after-school, bilingual tutoring program. I worked primarily with elementary school-aged, Spanish-speaking, low to moderate income students, who were academically under-performing in school. However, at the time, the root causes of their low academic achievement had not been investigated or discovered. Despite, my ability to connect, encourage and support the students, it never occurred to me that their bilingualism went unacknowledged in their school settings. In its basic definition, “bilingualism is...the alternate use of two languages by the same individual when the process is not accompanied by loss of the native language (Madriñan, 2014). I was able to help these students because they reminded me of myself when I was their age and experiencing academic setbacks. I also knew that the students and I had bilingualism in common, but had no idea of the impact bilingualism was having on their academic achievement.

I grew up hearing several languages in my household, mostly French and Haitian Creole. My mother always tells me the story of how when I was just shy of three years old, I finally began to express full sentences. Prior to that, I knew and sang whole songs, repeated phrases, and could more or less interact with my pre-school teachers, who were French and English-speaking. However, my mother, a trained multilingual language teacher, often encountered individuals, such as my school teachers and family members, who questioned and criticized her

based on her reaction to me and how little I spoke for a toddler. She knew though, that due to the fact that I was accustomed to hearing multiple languages spoken in my household, speech delay for a child like me, was normal. My mother was right. By the time I had enrolled in kindergarten, I was bilingual in French and English because I attended a private, dual language immersion school that taught subject content in French for about 40% of the time and English for about 60% of the time. Dual language immersion programs “are a type of bilingual education program in which students are taught literacy and academic content in [a native language] and a partner language. Dual language programs aim to help students develop high levels of language proficiency and literacy in both program languages, attain high levels of academic achievement, and develop and appreciation an understanding of multiple cultures” (AIR, 2015).

As a child, I did not appreciate the uniqueness of the approach my school took to implementing bilingual education. Throughout elementary school, I used both French and English regularly and possessed an appropriate lexicon and vocabulary count in either language relative to my grade and age. However, after seventh grade, I transferred to a public school with no dual language immersion programs. From that point on, my French lexicon stayed at the level of a seventh grader or twelve-year-old, and I only had the option of taking a required foreign language course. Theoretically speaking, my languages became “out of balance.” The Balance Theory “suggests that the two languages exist in balance...[reminiscent of] two balloons inside of the head, each one representing a language. A monolingual [only one language] person has only one filled balloon while a bilingual person has two less-filled or half-filled balloons...it states that as one language balloon increases, the other decreases” (Madriñan, 2014). In an English-dominant instructional setting, my English increased, however my French remained at the same level. The imbalance was very disruptive academically. My grades and academic

standing began to plummet. I quickly realized that coping with an English-only medium of instruction would be difficult and so did my parents. They knew I had to catch up to my monolingual peers to get back on track and succeed academically, otherwise, I would fall further and further behind.

My parents found the means to place me in an academic support and tutoring program outside of school that caught me up to speed. It was not a dual language tutoring program, however, it helped me learn to navigate and succeed in an English-only curriculum. As an adult, in retrospect, I know that the intervention of out-of-school academic support was the difference in my life that propelled me to earn an undergraduate degree, join the Peace Corps, and earn my Master's degree. I learned that an academic support intervention is crucial for leveling the playing field so that all students can succeed and have access. An education system becomes unfair when students from a monolingual background receive all of the support they need while a student for a multilingual or bilingual background is deprived of that support. Academic support that is administered out-of-school deserves to be the norm in all academic environments not just for language-majority students but for language-minority students as well.

In 2013, I joined the Peace Corps, where I spent two amazing years as a youth developer and teacher assistant, worked with and mentored over two hundred youth ages 5 through 25, six teachers, and one principal at the Anse la Raye R.C. Infant School. I was tasked with answering the research question: why aren't our students grasping foundational English literacy concepts? I began the journey of collecting baseline data about struggling readers through observations, academic assessments and anecdotal evidence, to determine root causes of illiteracy at the school. One and a half years later, I presented my findings to my incredibly hard working teachers and principal. I explained to them that there seemed to be a correlation between

primarily St. Lucian Creole (SLC) speaking students, their lack of phonemic awareness – or the ability to distinguish and manipulate each phoneme (sound) – and low academic achievement. Based on my data analysis, I concluded that since the majority of our students began Kindergarten with mostly lexicon in SLC, that the teachers, principal and I would need to develop a language support system in the form of English as a Second Language (ESL) or, a two-way dual language immersion program, where 50% of subject content is taught in a native language and the other 50% of subject content is taught in a second or target language. I also spoke to fellow Peace Corps volunteers and asked if they were experiencing similar issues in their schools, and they said yes but did not know what to do about it. For the remainder of my Peace Corps service, I researched various types of bilingual education programs and its application in various contexts because I was determined to make a significant and lasting impact.

Following my Peace Corps service, I felt that my work was still not yet finished and so I became determined to learn more about how to advocate for good bilingual education policy and found inspiration in my three policy advocacy and analysis courses at SIT. Resources that truly helped me narrow and focus my policy issue and were instrumental in the creation of my advocacy campaign include, the Center for Evaluation Innovation's Advocacy Strategy Framework, Harvard Family Research Project's User's Guide to Advocacy Evaluation Planning, The Danish Institute for Human Rights' Guide for Applying a Rights-Based Approach for Civil Society, the Frameworks Institute's Framing Public Issues, and VeneKlasen and Miller's book, *A New Weave of Power*. These resources together informed the direction and content of this campaign portfolio. The portfolio consists of a policy paper, a policy brief, an advocacy plan, communications and monitoring, evaluation, and learning plans, as well as a more in depth

discussion of the concepts and resources I used to design the campaign for a National Bilingual Education Policy in St. Lucia.

### **Concepts**

Over the course of the policy advocacy advanced class, I selected very valuable and knowledge-rich tools to help narrow the focus of and increase specificity around the Taskforce's bilingual education policy proposal. Among the resources used were, the Center for Evaluation Innovation's Advocacy Strategy Framework, Harvard Family Research Project's User's Guide to Advocacy Evaluation Planning, The Danish Institute for Human Rights' Guide for Applying a Rights-Based Approach for Civil Society, the Frameworks Institute's Framing Public Issues, and VeneKlasen and Miller's book, *A New Weave of Power*. In this section, I define and explain each resource and discuss how its application helped to frame and develop a proposal for the adoption of a national Bilingual Education policy.

### **The Center for Evaluation Innovation – Advocacy Strategy Framework**

The Center for Evaluation Innovation's *Advocacy Strategy Framework* resource, authored by Julia Coffman and Tanya Beer, in particular, was helpful in clarifying the policy need and finely tuning the desired policy issue which helped create the theory of change. In a policy advocacy context, "theories of change are illustrations of how change is expected to play out over time and the role that organizations will play in producing that change" (Coffman & Beer, 2015). Theories of change for advocacy also help advocates determine the most effective strategies to implement for making the theory of change a reality. They also "show how strategies will connect to interim outcomes that then set the stage" for the achievement of long-

term policy goals and impact. However, it was important to keep in mind that, for the purpose of the bilingual education policy issue, “theories and their associated strategies may need to shift in response to a variable political context” and have a “plan B” for when “advocacy tactics are not as effective as anticipated” (Coffman & Beer, 2015).

Coffman and Beer’s Advocacy Strategy Framework consists of six questions advocacy organizations can begin to think through to determine the type of change being pursued and the most effective strategies to achieve that change. The framework itself examines the relationship between the various audiences (x-axis) and the changes being pursued (y-axis). The audiences are “the individuals and groups that advocacy strategies target and attempt to influence or persuade” (2015). The audiences are typically made up of the public, influencers – individuals who can carry the policy issue and cause to the decision-makers for adoption (e.g. political advisors and community leaders), and lastly, the decision-makers themselves who have the power to make change permanent, typically via legislation. These changes “are the results an advocacy effort aims for with audiences to progress toward a policy goal” (2015). On this axis and according to Coffman and Beer, change begins with “basic *awareness* or knowledge” (2015), followed by will – the “willingness to take action on an issue,” and lastly action, where “policy efforts actually support or facilitate audience action on an issue” (2015).

Questions two, three, and four were particularly helpful in determining the strategy behind the bilingual education policy issue. Each box below briefly describes how each question was answered to further brainstorming around strategic advocacy planning.

Question	How It Helped
<b>Who specifically is the strategy trying to influence and how?</b>	This question helped the bilingual education taskforce determine, for example, specific audiences that would need to be targeted and influenced to inspire will and action; and, as a

	<p>result, determined that outreach events, in combination with earned media and champion development, would be the most effective strategies in achieving all three parts of the ‘audiences’ continuum: awareness, will, and action among the public – parents of struggling readers.</p>
<p><b>What are the underlying assumptions about how change happens?</b></p>	<p>This question was particularly important to think about because it is easy for advocates to take a given context for granted and fail to address all assumptions associated with the change being pursued. The exposure of and deep-thinking around values and experience as main drivers of underlying assumptions helped to create identity around the advocacy strategic plan. It also helped in thinking through the specific approach that would be employed to achieve the change being pursued.</p>
<p><b>Who else is working on this and how?</b></p>	<p>A particularly interesting question to think about was who else might be fighting for the same exact change in another context. Research around this question led to the discovery of a nearly identical movement for a national bilingual education policy in Jamaica and Martinique. It also led to thinking about the possibility that bilingual education is a regional need, versus a country-specific need.</p>

**Harvard Family Research Project – A User’s Guide to Advocacy Evaluation Planning**

Learning to monitor and evaluate advocacy while, simultaneously defining the appropriate indicators was challenging; however, the User’s Guide to Advocacy Evaluation planning was very helpful in aiding the process of management and clarification of tactics, goals, impacts, interim goals, and measures. It helped the Taskforce embed monitoring, evaluation and learning into the overall strategic advocacy plan and will help define the direction the advocacy plan takes before, during and after implementation.

Julia Coffman, author of the user's guide, begins by stating the importance of identifying who the users of the evaluation will be, their uses for the evaluation and lastly, the specific evaluation or research questions that will be answered throughout the monitoring, evaluating and learning process. Developing evaluation questions in particular, improved thought-processing around effective strategies, but also helped the Taskforce determine if goals and strategies/tactics fit under the SMART description, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. Despite the sometimes tediousness of developing a monitoring, evaluation and learning plan for advocacy, Coffman rightly points out that "evaluation can help to ensure that advocacy strategies are as effective as possible in their efforts to achieve those results...positioned to inform where advocacy strategies are making progress and where midcourse corrections might be needed...[it] can be a critical resource and support during the policy change process" (Coffman, 2009).

### **The Danish Institute for Human Rights – Applying a Rights-Based Approach**

The importance of taking a rights-based approach in advocacy work cannot be overstated. In the St. Lucian context, despite ratifying several human rights conventions from the United Nations (UN), the rights of children and youth are often overlooked. By taking a rights-based approach, the Taskforce is uniquely positioned to affect change in an optimistic and sustainable way. The Danish Institute for Human Rights defines a rights-based approach as being a "framework that integrates the norms, principles, standards and goals of the international human rights system into the plans and processes of development. It is characterized by methods and activities that link the human rights system and its inherent notion of power and struggle with development" (2007). Drawing from the basic premise of the Taskforce's policy issue, equitable access to the English Language Arts and Literature (ELAL) curriculum, a rights-based approach recognizes that the root causes of poverty must first be addressed in order to fully eradicate it.

This approach also recognizes poverty as a human rights violation and therefore, totally unacceptable. “A central dynamic of RBA [rights-based approach] ...[include] empowering rights-holders to claim their rights and enabling duty-bearers to meet their obligations” (Kirkemann & Martin, 2007).

Particularly useful to our advocacy campaign and an integral part of the communications and messaging plan is the distinction between needs and rights. A rights-based approach is rooted in the idea that “human rights go beyond the notion of physical needs and include a more holistic perspective of human beings in terms of their civil, political, social, economic, and cultural roles” and that “people are often expected to be grateful when their needs are met; this is not the case when people’s rights are met. This reminds us not to campaign for ‘the needy; but rather to support marginalized people as equal human beings in their efforts to claim their rights and address the poverty, suffering and injustices in their lives” (Kirkemann & Martin, 2007).

The rights-based approach has been a major point of reference when making the case for equitable access to an education, a civil and human right, for an overwhelming majority of students in St. Lucia who are bilingual. The Taskforce’s advocacy strategy rests heavily on the fact that duty-bearers in government, particularly in the ministry of education, must honor rights-holders and encourage them to proclaim their rights. The Taskforce’s advocacy theory of change relies on the assumption that lack of equitable access to education is one of the root causes of poverty and though we link economic upward mobility of youth to education, there are other factors to consider when approaching the advocacy work in this manner. The list below describes additional expectations checklist that was considered during the planning of the Taskforce’s strategic advocacy framework.

- “Development programs must describe a situation not simply in terms of needs, but in terms of society’s obligations to respond to the rights of individuals.

- Development approaches must be comprehensive and consider the full range of rights. This will form the basis for setting priorities.
- Development should not only target economic improvements, but expand people's choices and their capabilities to exercise their rights and freedoms.
- Development efforts should target problems as they are traced through the local, national and international level' (Kirkemann & Martin, 2007).

### **Frameworks Institute – Framing Public Issues**

The Framing Public Issues resource has been of particular use to the Taskforce because it has allowed for more analysis around the dominant opinions, frames, or points of view on the particular issue of Bilingual Education. Despite having limited data on language attitudes towards St. Lucian Creole as a medium of instruction, the Taskforce successfully analyzed existing research that disproves many myths and studied successful and unsuccessful efforts around the world regarding bilingual education implementation. The psychological aspect to persuasion and framing around an issue had never before been contemplated therefore this resource was very useful and relevant to the development of our communications plan.

Specifically, the difference between thinking as an individual while trying to interpret a policy issue or problem to others is more complicated and calculated than one might expect. The fact that “our judgments about political issues can be influenced by the frame we use to make sense of new situations” means that there are psychological and cognitive processes that occur when advocates educate, persuade, or lobby various types of audiences on an issue. For example, “the public has little daily contact with many issues on the public agenda, yet their opinions greatly influence policymaker priorities and behavior” so, advocates must design effective messages that resonate with various audiences to maximize salience efforts.

Particularly helpful to this process was the identification of the three levels of understanding that would shape the message of the issue, as well as, whether or not the Taskforce would take a thematic or episodic framing approach. The three levels of understanding are

where the Taskforce began to explore ways of reframing the issue. According to *Framing Public Issues*, “reframes are only possible because ideas and issues come in hierarchies. The cognitive sciences teach us that these hierarchies, or levels of thought, track and direct our thinking. Higher-level frames act as primes for lower-level frames, and higher-level frames map their values and reasoning onto the lower-level frames” (2002). The levels of understanding begin with level one, or the big ideas: freedom, justice, community; level two, or the issue-types: environment, education, child-care; and finally, level three or specific issue: rainforests, earned income tax credits (2002). The Taskforce brainstormed about the different values around Creole-language use, identity and academic achievement as a means for economic upward mobility and realized that a more thematic approach to telling “the story” might be more effective as compared to an episodic theme. According to *Framing Public Issues*, “Episodic frames reduce life to a series of disconnected episodes, random events or case studies” while “thematic frames provide details about trends, not just individuals; they identify shortcomings at the community or systems level that have contributed to the problem” (2002). This resource improved the Taskforce’s ability to strategically speak about the policy issue and is now in a better position to frame the issue in a way that best resonates with audience members.

### **Veneklassen and Miller’s, *A New Weave of Power***

*A New Weave Power* has been my favorite resource this past school year. The abundance of workshop materials and the practicality of the book was a tremendous boost to our advocacy planning efforts. The authors have a unique perspective on development and also see power and politics at every stage. Particularly useful and relevant to our advocacy plan was the power mapping exercise. It was not until my Peace Corps service, that I learned to effectively utilize or leverage power when it came to getting development initiatives completed. St. Lucian society is

very high-context and good relationships are at the heart of everything. Veneklassen and Miller describe, throughout the book, how understanding power dynamics within a given context can make or break an advocacy campaign.

## **Policy Paper**

The Bilingual Education Taskforce of District Four wishes to convey to the Minister of Education, Dr. Gale Rigobert, cabinet and legislative members of the United Workers Party, and Prime Minister Allen Chastanet, the importance of Bilingual Integration Education in practice to increase equitable access to education and therefore improve the inclusion of students who might otherwise be shut out from opportunities. The Taskforce hopes that upon reading this white paper, key decision-makers within government become a part of the dual language social movement and adopt a national bilingual education policy for St. Lucia's school youth.

## **The Problem**

In September of 2015, the United Nations officially recognized equitable access to quality education as a human right when it ratified the 2030 Development Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal four of the SDGs aims to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning,” and under goal four, target six aims to “ensure that [by 2030,] all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy” (<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>, 2015). In addition to target six, targets one and four aim to “ensure [by 2030,] that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes” and “substantially increase the number of youth and adults

who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship” (<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>, 2015) respectively.

In the small island nation of St. Lucia, a windward island in the Eastern Caribbean with a population of about 170,000, the sure path to economic prosperity begins with successful navigations and access to the education system; and, establishing one’s self as educated, and therefore employable in society. A majority of youth in St. Lucia are bilingual, able to converse in English for basic communication and in Creole for everything else. Despite students’ bilingualism, they are expected to somehow grasp English literacy concepts in isolation of strengthening their native or first language (L1), though research has demonstrated the need for L1 strengthening for second language (L2) acquisition. This has proven to be problematic for several reasons. The most visible consequence can be found in less than impressive national Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) – English Language Arts and Literature (ELAL) exam scores. The CSEC ELAL exam is one out of two required exams students must take and do well on. Secondary school youth (Forms I – V) who achieve low scores on the CSEC ELAL exam, face the possibility of rejection from tertiary institutions and programs, such as the two year programs at the local community college and the four year programs at the universities, causing an immediate setback and economic insecurity for the individual. Youth who are shut out from having access to tertiary education based on their CSEC scores are often not afforded opportunities to develop specialized and relevant 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in *diverse* sectors of the economy.

Employers often look to tertiary institutions and vocational schools to hire combination-experienced youth. In fact, results from *The Analysis of the St. Lucia Labor Market Needs*

*Assessment Survey* cited that from September to November of 2012, 44% of jobs required completion of tertiary education as a qualification, while 31% of jobs required CSEC exams in five or more subjects. Only 25% of jobs required less than a secondary school certificate (2013). If youth are not provided access to opportunities for combination educational and practical experience, including specialization, then they are less likely to be considered and often end up under- or unemployed. Youth who become unemployed and out of school for a prolonged period of time may give in to negative behavioral patterns and illegal activity.

In District four at the Anse la Raye R.C. Infant School, the Bilingual Education Taskforce (BET) staff, made up of teachers, parents, and principals began the arduous task of preliminary and baseline data collection to gather evidence in support of a bilingual education intervention. Preliminary data collection at the Anse la R.C. Infant School by BET staff attempted to answer the following research questions: What are the root causes of low academic achievement in ELAL among grade two students? How can bilingual education programs help students achieve biliteracy – literacy in two languages – and increase their learning outcomes? The Taskforce took an action research approach and discovered the root cause of low academic achievement among bilingual students was a lack of phonemic awareness – the ability to distinguish phonemes (sounds). In other words, students were not aware of the fact that they knew and spoke two separate languages and it was evident in their school work.

Two assessments were used to measure struggling readers' abilities in phonemic and phonetic awareness, sound recognition, invented word decoding, spelling, reading comprehension, fluency, and writing. The first assessment was the USAID's Early Reading Grade Assessment (ERGA) and the second, the Primary and Elementary Spelling Inventory. The results from these assessments, when analyzed, demonstrated a lack of language awareness,

meaning, students were not decoding words because they recognized individual sounds, but instead, they tended to read words as a whole. The BET concluded that this was likely due to most teachers' tendency at the school to emphasize recognition more than decoding, which might've contributed to poor spelling skills among the students.

For example, the Taskforce found that struggling readers used phonemes found in SLC to decode similar phonemes found in standard St Lucian English (SLE); and so, spelling was particularly challenging. BET researchers found that the St. Lucian accent in both SLE and SLC, pronounces short "i" as "ee" or long "e;" and, pronunciation of short "e" resembled more of an "ay" sound. One can imagine the challenge and confusion a bilingual struggling reader faces when trying to distinguish between "fit" and "feet," and even "feat," when everyone, including teachers and parents in their immediate surroundings, pronounces the middle "i" in this example like "ee." Students were often confused about each sound, or groups of sounds, the difference between them, and the relationships between letters and sounds, hence phonemic awareness.

What are some of the consequences of bilingual youth consistently performing poorly in English literacy? As previously mentioned, low and stagnant CSEC ELAL exam scores is one consequence that is a result of consistent low performance in ELAL throughout a student's academic years. Achieving passing scores on the CSEC ELAL exam is crucial because the exam is inherently biased with psychometrics designed for monolingual or SLE-only speaking students. The current education system "assumes" students who sit for the exam are equipped with fundamental language concepts that are taught, retained and mastered throughout Infant, Primary, and Secondary school. A consequence of low and stagnant CSEC ELAL exam scores among bilingual youth is reflected in reduced enrollment rates at tertiary education and increasing youth drop-out rates. The ultimate impact of this trend can be seen in high youth

unemployment rates. As reflected in *The Analysis of St. Lucia Labor Market Needs Survey*, 60% of unemployed persons from July to September of 2012 on the island had below a secondary school education while just 7% had tertiary education; meanwhile, qualifications for new employees hired from January to August of 2012 consisted of 40% with secondary CSEC exams and 37% with tertiary education. It is evident that employers are seeking the most qualified and educated youth to fill jobs, which emphasizes the point that youth need equitable access to education with language support early on are more likely to succeed in ELAL, score high on the national exam and be accepted at tertiary institutions. Figure 1 illustrates the stagnant ELAL passing rates from 2010 to 2015.

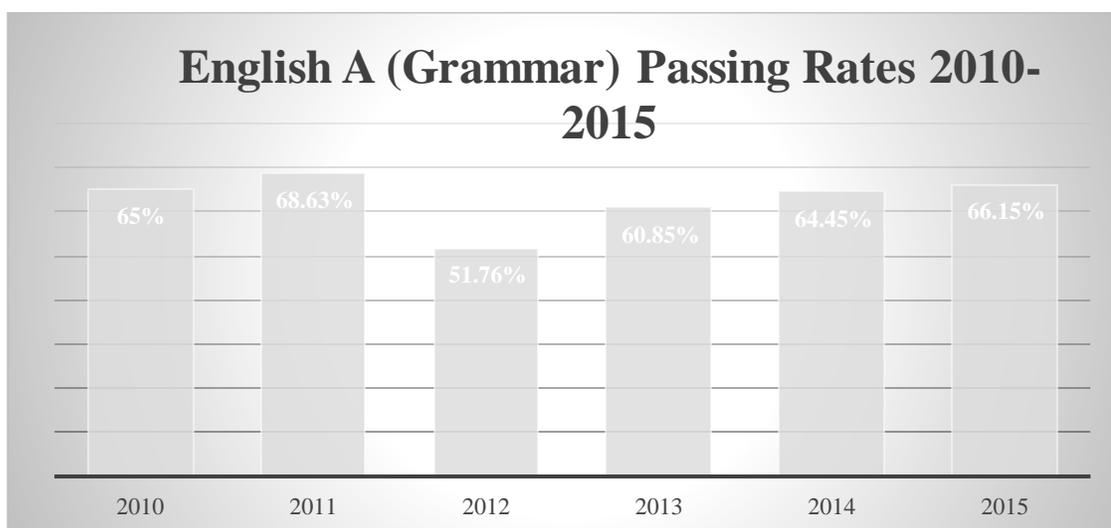


Figure 1 *The Voice St. Lucia*, 2015

ELAL passing rates have not made any radical progress. From 2010 to 2015, passing rates have been stagnant, increasing only incrementally. Still, far too many youth are not achieving sufficient passing scores on one of the most important CSEC exams, hurting their chances of becoming economically secure in their futures.

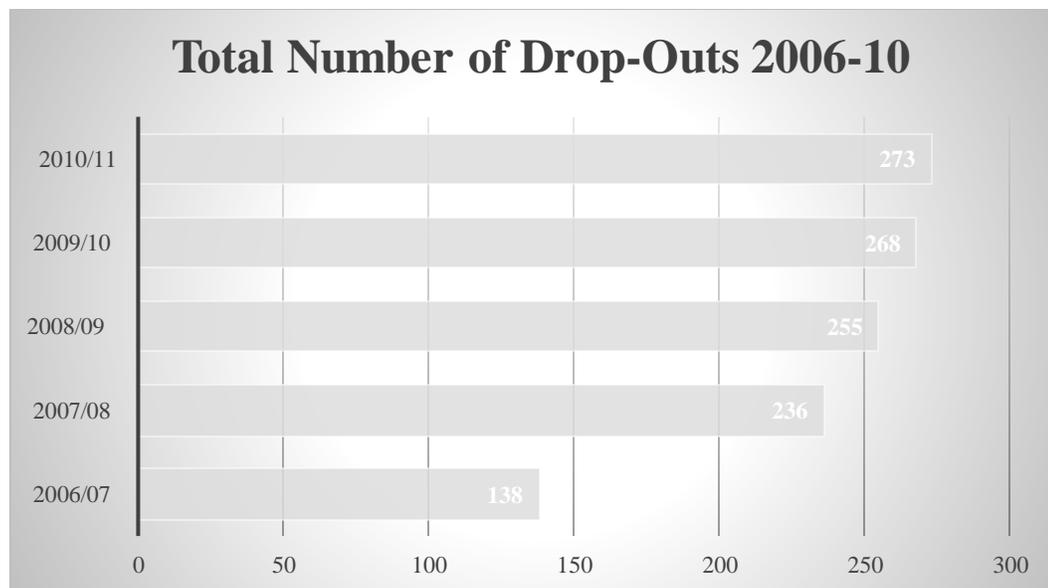


Figure 2 St. Lucian Education Statistical Digest, 2012

The chart above illustrates the gradual increase in secondary school youth drop-out rates. Despite not having data for the last four years, the negative trend seen here indicates that youth are unable to cope with the new levels of academic rigor and quitting school instead, depleting their chances of earning a tertiary education.

### **The Issue – Adoption of a Bilingual Education Policy**

An abundant amount of research defends the use of bilingual education to not only increase socio-cultural awareness but to also improve academic achievement in all subject areas. Cortina et. al. points out the global shift in demographics and the need for adequate language instruction citing that “the global development community is grappling more directly with how to teach children in multilingual environments. As student achievement data have uncovered a learning crisis, the global development community has awakened to critical flaws in post-colonial education systems. Children...are completing up to four years of school without the ability to read” (2015). Cortina et. al. also points out that “research and advocacy efforts point

to the need for systems to accommodate the teaching of early grades in children's home languages to improve reading and learning outcomes" (2015). However, to build enough momentum and inspire a dual language movement in St. Lucia, "the advocacy of parents, teachers, and school leaders who experience the educational and social benefits of [empowerment networks] (Cortina et.al., 2015) is crucial. Empowerment networks, according to Cortina et.al., refers "to the ways in which communities, including parents, community education councils, and the school leadership, mobilize to take part in education decision-making" (2015). As part of the empowerment network strategy, the BET composed the following recommendations for the adoption and implementation of a national bilingual education policy.

- ✓ Secure funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) fund for targeted program implementation as outlined in St. Lucia's Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP).
- ✓ Design, develop, implement, monitor and evaluate a 50/50 (SLC – SLE) dual language immersion pilot program model for Infant and Primary schools that is replicable locally and nationally.
- ✓ Develop a data collection and management system that monitors the academic progress of bilingual struggling readers – literacy, phonemic awareness, invented word decoding – at every school on the island.
- ✓ Allow school principals and district education office leadership to work closely together in developing the dual language immersion program that best fits the needs of the students.
- ✓ Develop intense bilingual/dual language immersion education professional development modules and training programs for pre- and in-service teachers.
- ✓ Acquire and provide adequate resources, including curriculum and teaching materials in French-lexifier, Lesser Antillean Creole in addition to home language surveys.
- ✓ Require parent/guardian notification of students who are assessed and placed into the bilingual program and maintain an open line of communication with parents/guardians in a language they can understand.

- ✓ Lead a successful advocacy campaign for the adoption and implementation of a national bilingual education policy.

### **The Cognitive and Academic Benefits of Dual Language Learning**

Dual Language Immersion is the official name given to the 50/50 model, a type of Bilingual Education Program, where 50% of the school day is taught in an L1 and the other 50% of the school day is taught in an L2. Today, a revived international movement has developed around the push for dual language education as an intervention for inclusion and narrowing of academic achievement gaps among primary and secondary school youth. One example of an ongoing international initiative, The Global Campaign for Education, published their policy brief entitled “Mother Tongue Education: Policy Lessons for Quality and Inclusion,” which spoke to the hesitation on the part of some governments around the adoption of bilingual education policies “...despite the increasingly overwhelming evidence of the value and benefits of early education in mother tongue, too few countries invest in it” and that in order to “begin literacy teaching in mother tongue...” leaders in curriculum development must design a bilingual and/or multilingual curriculum that is “rooted in the child’s known language, culture and environment, with appropriate and locally-developed reading and curriculum materials [that] are crucial for early learning success” (2016).

To appreciate the long-term benefits of bilingualism, it is important to understand how we, as humans, acquire language. Virginia P. Collier, veteran socio-linguistics researcher, developed her widely acclaimed conceptual framework for language acquisition in the mid 1990’s. It consists of four processes or “components: sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive processes...[these components] are interdependent and complex” (1995). The theoretical interaction between the four components can be seen in the diagram below.

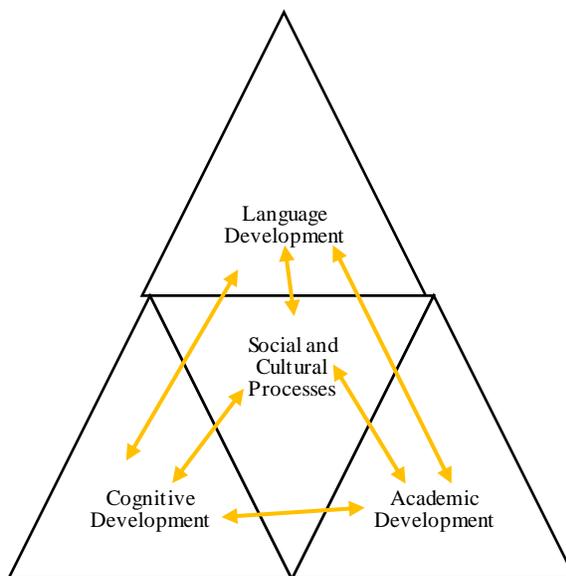


Figure 2 (Collier, 1995)

These four components work together to help bilingual students reach their full potential in terms of language proficiency. Collier also highlights the cognitive processes that occur during simultaneous development of two languages in children from birth. She points out that “studies reveal that children go through a process similar to L1 acquisition, with initial mixing of the two languages followed by a fairly rapid sorting out of the two linguistic systems, between ages 3 and 5; and, preschool children who begin second language acquisition any time between ages 3 and 5 (successive bilinguals) are not at any disadvantage as long as they continue to develop their first language at the same time that they are acquiring the second language” (Collier, 1989).

Madriñan’s study asked whether or not the use of first languages support in a second-language classroom increases understanding in kindergarten students during their first year of school. She highlights some important underlying theories that have influenced bilingual/dual-language instruction programs and informed objectives for proficiency targets. These theories include two that were proposed by socio-linguistics researcher, Jim Cummins, called the *Separate Underlying Proficiency Model* of Bilingualism and the *Common Underlying*

*Proficiency Model*. Madriñan also highlights Vygotsky's theory which "stipulates that the development and learning of a child depends on the presence of mediating agents in the child's interaction with the environment...this interaction develops the zone of proximal development, which is the difference between what a learner can do without help and what [he/she] can do with help" (2014). Madriñan rightly states that "if students do not have effective writing strategies in their mother tongue, they will not have efficient strategies, whether good or deficient, from their first language to the second" (2014).

Jim Cummins, is well known for his interdependence theory. The theory claims "that older students' better L2 performance in academic settings is strongly related to the development of L1 school skills. His interdependence hypothesis predicts that the development of L2 school language is partially dependent upon the prior level of development of L1 school language...Cummins asserts that there is a common underlying proficiency that makes possible the transfer of school skills across a student's two languages" (Collier, 1989).

One of Cummins' famous contributions to socio-linguistics, *The Role of Primary Language Development in Promoting Educational Success for Language Minority Students*, describes the crucial need for language minority students to receive early scholastic support for academic success across subjects. The excerpt below summarizes the basic premise of the role of primary language development.

"One reason why language minority students have often failed to develop high levels of academic skills is because their initial instruction has emphasized context-reduced communication, since instruction has been through English and unrelated to their prior out-of-school experiences...however, another contributing factor to minority students' academic failure...is that many educators have a very confused notion of what it means to be proficient in English...if language minority students manifest proficiencies in some context-embedded aspects of English...they are often regarded as having

sufficient English proficiency both to follow a regular English curriculum and to take psychological and educational tests in English...what is not realized by many educators is that because of language minority students' ESL [English as a second language] background, the regular English curriculum and psychological assessment procedures are considerably more context-reduced [academic] and cognitively demanding than they are for English-background students" (Cummins, 1981).

Jamaican scholar Dennis Craig in his article, *A Bidialectal Education: Creole and Standard in the West Indies*, explained the dominant frame of thinking around Bilingual Education and Creole use in the classroom during the late 1960's and early 1970's in St. Lucia. He highlights the fact that despite international recognition and growing support for, mother tongue education, Creole-speaking island nations' "...fiction, maintained for over a century, that Standard English was the mother tongue of West Indian Creole-Speaking [and] Creole-influenced children could no longer be maintained" (1976). Since 1976, overwhelming evidence has confirmed the cognitive benefits of bilingual education in diverse contexts and dual language learning has emerged as a leading intervention for primary and secondary schools around the world. Craig also believed in creating equitable access to the ELAL curriculum and bridging the academic achievement gaps among youth in St. Lucia via a national bilingual education policy.

Many naysayers of bilingual education argue that learning two languages simultaneously will only confuse children and delay their ability to acquire the dominant language. However, in a recent neurological study conducted by Ramirez et. al. on speech discrimination among 11-month old babies, it was demonstrated that "monolingual infants showed evidence of neural sensitivity to one language, while bilingual infants were sensitive to two languages" (2016). In fact, Ramirez et. al. proved that bilingual children's infant brains are "capable of encoding not only one, but multiple languages simultaneously...that, in general, the same learning mechanisms

that are used to prepare the monolingual infant to attend to a single language are also used to prepare the bilingual infant to attend to two languages, without confusing them” (2016).

### **Applied Bilingual Education in Jamaica**

Jamaica, a Greater Antilles island in the Caribbean has a population of about 2 million and is considered by the Jamaican Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture (MOEYC), to be a bilingual country, the two main languages spoken being Standard Jamaican English (SJE) and Jamaican Creole (JC). Similar to St. Lucia’s own Ministry of Education, the MOEYC of Jamaica, in partnership with the University of West Indies at Mona, realized that struggling readers had a majority of lexicon in JC, and as a result showed “unsatisfactory performance...in language and literacy at all levels of the Jamaican [English] educational system, and its accompanying effects on language competence[,] and on the potential for human development in the wider society” (Ministry of Youth, Education and Culture, 2001). The MOEYC also found that “the fluid nature of language usage between these languages, as well as the peculiar nature of the linguistic relationship they share, creates difficulties for the majority of Creole speakers learning English” (Ministry of Youth, Education and Culture, 2001). To address these concerns, the MOEYC created a national language education policy to provide much-needed academic support to JC-speaking students rooted in good educational policy. The language policy’s key objectives are as follows:

- ✚ The application of a variety of instructional and learning modes relevant to learners’ language needs.
- ✚ Provisions for access to, acquisition and maintenance of Spanish as the official foreign language.
- ✚ Provisions that ensure that the needs of learners with exceptionalities are adequately addressed.
- ✚ Provisions for assessment strategies that are current and appropriate to the learning environment and to strategies employed in language teaching.

- ✚ Provisions for the preparation of teachers to work in a bilingual environment through relevant teacher education and professional development programmes (2001).

Another important aspect the language education policy brings to light is the reality and attitudes towards ethnolinguistic identity and how language has been a symbol that represents much more than academic ability. In fact, “Jamaican Creole, the language of the overwhelming majority of the descendants of slaves, has traditionally had little status, no acceptability in official and formal contexts, and is commonly referred to as Patois, the French term for a low-status dialect” (Ministry of Youth, Education and Culture, 2001). St. Lucians, before independence in 1979, maintained similar attitudes towards Creole-use. Craig describes these general attitudes, highlighting that, like Jamaica, “in the community at large, Creole language has generally been identified historically with slavery, and in more recent times with very low social status and lack of education” (1976).

However, following Jamaican independence in 1962, public perception towards the everyday use of JC began to change. New attitudes towards Jamaican Creole [would reflect JC] as [a] symbol of identity [for] its user, as [a] vehicle of social and cultural expression, and as [a] source of economic benefit. Meanwhile, scholars at the Jamaican Language Unit at the Department of Language, Linguistics & Philosophy at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona established JC as demonstrating the characteristics of a language (Ministry of Youth, Education and Culture, 2001). Although UWI at Mona in Jamaica demonstrated and helped to establish JC as its own language through research, without funding and support from the MOEYC, none of it might have happened. In other words, *good* bilingual integration education policy that is evidence-driven can provide valuable data that can, when analyzed, guide common sense solutions for seemingly complex issues, such as illiteracy. It is therefore, crucial for

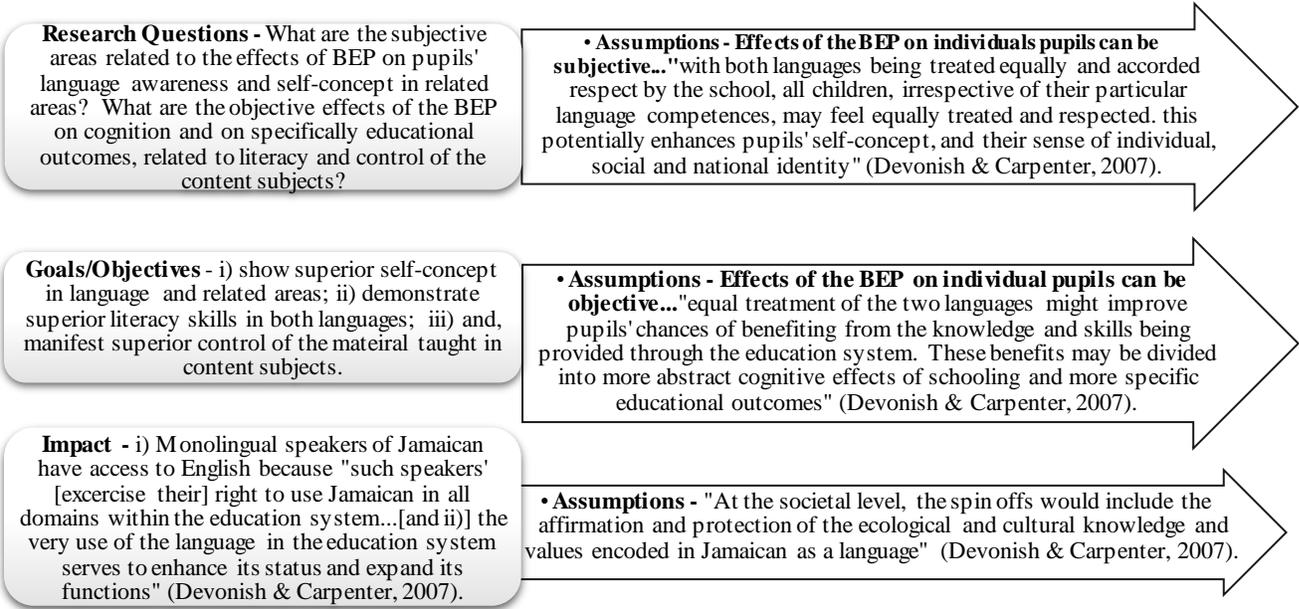
expenditure on education to be sizable and appropriate for funding vital education research that informs good educational policy.

In addition to language attitudes towards JC, MOEYC realized, en par with Cummins' interdependence theory, that "while a few Jamaicans move easily between JC and SJE, the majority speak neither of these in their pure forms, but utilize forms with a mixture of both, moving more closely towards JC or SJE as the occasion demands" (Ministry of Youth, Education and Culture, 2001). The MOEYC cites their biggest challenge in the policy implementation phase as being "the peculiar linguistic relationship shared by JC and SJE. Similarities, such as the vocabulary common to both, significantly mask differences, particularly in structure and idiom, and create, for speakers of JC, major difficulties in learning to speak and write SJE" (MOEYC, 2001).

### **The Jamaican Language Education Policy, 2001**

The Language Education policy was created under the MOEYC and UWI Mona in 2001 and it aims to "[provide] direction for the treatment of language issues in the Jamaican educational context, in order to improve language and literacy competencies" (MOEYC, 2001). This goal was in response to the evident reality of JC-speaking youth in the academic context as illustrated by CSEC ELAL exam scores. In fact, "problems of language deficiency are manifested in the media, at the tertiary level of education, and in the unpreparedness of hundreds of graduates of secondary schools for further skill development and meaningful employment each year" (MOEYC, 2001). The issues defined by the language education policy are similar to the issues discovered by BET at the Anse la Raye R.C. Infant school in St. Lucia. According to the MOEYC, "statistics on performance in language over the years 1998 – 2000 show that many

learners commence primary schooling without achieving the minimum level expected, and continue to perform below expectations throughout primary and secondary school” (MOEYC, 2001). One of the key principle investigators of the Jamaican Bilingual Education Project (BEP), Hubert Devonish, played a crucial role in the development, design and implementation of a bilingual intervention in primary schools in Jamaica. A major difference Devonish discusses in *Towards Full Bilingualism in Education: The Jamaican Bilingual Primary Education Project*, points out the underlying ideology behind the BEP’s approach “...the bilingual nature of Jamaican society [is] an advantage rather than a hindrance. Societal bilingualism...presents the education system with the opportunity to benefit from being fully bilingual, rather than simply developing literacy skills in the first language of children. There is...the chance to give children early opportunities to develop as full bilinguals, rather than diglossics in the two languages widely spoken in their country” (Devonish & Carpenter, 2007). Below is a diagram showing the BEP’s main goals, objectives and its theory of change.



### **What Next**

To help alleviate the burden on teachers who have to teach the ELAL curriculum in a differentiated way, the BET aims to advocate on behalf of teachers, parents, and students so that avenues for teacher and student support are created. So far, the St. Lucian Ministry of Education has attempted to address the need for better resource management so teachers feel empowered to do their jobs well. In response to teachers' pleas for better resource management, in 2006, the Ministry authorized some use of Creole in the classroom, emphasizing that students who primarily speak SLC be given a chance to interact in the classroom in their L1. Despite these efforts, this measure did not go far enough and a formal bilingual education policy needs to be established at all academic levels to close achievement gaps, increase equitable access to education and provide bilingual youth an opportunity to become economically secure, contributing citizens to their society. A top down approach will no longer work and the need for grassroots, evidence-driven educational policy is very apparent. Bilingual education must be placed at the top of the education policy agenda.

The Education Sector Development plan authored by St. Lucia's Ministry of Education already highlights the urgent need for academic interventions that are rooted in research and driven by evidence. However, there are no specific strategies the Ministry recommends to achieve these interventions. The Taskforce believes that it has identified an intervention that is feasible, cost-effective, rooted in evidence and has successfully been demonstrated in other Caribbean islands with similarly identified issues with promising outcomes. The BET will address targets outlined in the EDSP as well as the current political party's platform for education. These targets can be found below.

### **Education Development Sector Plan (EDSP), 2015-2020**

#### **B. Strategic Theme – Learner Achievement**

Priority 1: Learner Achievement and Effective Transitioning throughout the Education System –

Primary/Secondary Education/Special Needs Education Initiatives:

- Develop and implement strategies to enhance literacy and numeracy skills among students.
- Strengthen the capacity of all PE teachers in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Take advantage of PD days to conduct the appropriate workshops.
- Eliminate the practice of grade-based assessments in primary schooling. Train teachers in outcomes-based assessment and use assessments to adjust curriculum.
- Conduct a national review of current pedagogical and assessment practices used at each grade level. Use the results to create national guidelines for developmentally appropriate pedagogy and assessment approaches for each grade level.
- Develop a strategy to enhance the use of varied pedagogical practices in the classroom employing differentiated instructional practices and applying multiple intelligence theory and practice in pedagogy.
- Train and coach teachers in managing transitions at critical levels, Kindergarten, Grade 3 and Form 1 to enhance teachers' understanding of students' needs for adapting to the new demands of schooling.

#### **United Workers Party Manifesto Targets**

##### **III Primary Education (0-8 years old):**

- Introduce at least one foreign language (Spanish and/or French) at every primary school.

##### **IV Secondary Education -**

- Realign the secondary school curriculum to provide emphasis on mastery of key subjects such as Languages, Science, Mathematics, thinking and analytical skills, teamwork with project-oriented multi-tasking, computer literacy and enhanced knowledge of global economic and communication systems. TVET and IT-related studies will be available for further specialization.
- Ensure that every secondary child is made conversant in at least one foreign language.

The importance of evidence-driven education policy cannot be over-stated. In order for valuable research to be used in socially responsible ways, governments must demonstrate that they value equitable access to quality education and take necessary and proactive steps to work towards achieving Goal 4 of the SDG's by 2030. The greatest, most complex global 21<sup>st</sup> century problems are going to require educated, literate, and higher order thinking youth who are a part of or joining the workforce population (ages 15-65). The time is now for real inclusion rooted in the values of human rights and the belief that duty-bearers are responsible for serving, listening

to, and acknowledging rights-holders. The Taskforce will take a page out of the Jamaican BEP model and research framework around language attitudes and behavior, and advocate on behalf of communities of parents and educators around the island of St. Lucia for the adoption of a bilingual education policy, however, the Taskforce requires the support of St. Lucia's Ministry of Education.

Together, the Ministry and the BET can work together to make dual immersion education programs a reality and create equitable avenues and opportunities for bilingual students to succeed and achieve in their schooling. BET's ideology is rooted in the civil right, that primary and secondary school youth deserve evidence-based interventions that are well funded and will improve economic outcomes for youth poised to enter the workforce, so they can lead meaningful and productive lives. We urge the Ministry to join us in our efforts.

## **Advocacy Plan**

### **The Recommended Policy Change**

As members of the Bilingual Education Taskforce we are asking for the adoption of a national bilingual education policy in St. Lucia that addresses equitable access to the English Language Arts and Literature (ELAL) curriculum at the Infant, Primary and Secondary school levels. We believe that increased equitable access to the ELAL curriculum for the majority of youth who are bilingual (St. Lucian Creole and St. Lucian standard English), will increase national Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) assessment scores. The CSEC ELAL exam is one of two required subjects that secondary students must take and receive a passing grade (I, II, or III) to become eligible for tertiary education. Access to tertiary education increases youth's employability and equips them with vital 21<sup>st</sup> century skills needed to compete in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. Youth who complete either a 2-year or 4-year tertiary education program are in a better position to improve their economic well-being and lead productive lives as contributing citizens to their society.

On the contrary, when bilingual youth who do not score well on the CSEC exam get cut off from access to tertiary education, they have the option of attending a vocational or technical school where they learn low-level skills for low-paying jobs. They either end up under-employed or unemployed all together which might also lead to negative behavior patterns and illegal means of generating income. It is our mission as the Bilingual Education Taskforce to rally our members of parliament, minister of education, district education officer, as well as teachers, principals (past and present), the public, and most of all, parents of struggling readers

who ultimately want to see their children succeed in school and in life. We must convince them of the importance of evidence-driven interventions, such as bilingual education, to address the needs of our lowest achieving segments of our youth population and push for inclusive policies that see bilingual youth and their abilities as cultural and linguistic assets. A concise list of policy goals for our advocacy strategy can be seen below.

- I. Bilingual Integration and Education Demonstration Pilot Program –**  
development/design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a three-year demonstration pilot program.
- II. National Bilingual Education Policy –** placement on the policy agenda, policy development, policy adoption, policy implementation, policy monitoring and evaluation, and policy maintenance.
- III. National Bilingual Integration and Education Policy Program – Improved Services and Systems, Positive Social and Physical Conditions** --- reduced youth drop-out rates, increased scores in CSEC ELAL exams, increased tertiary enrollment rates among youth, reduced youth unemployment rates (halved in 10 years’ time).

**Organizational Strengths and Weaknesses**

In the SWOT analyses and charts below, we highlight our key strengths and potential weaknesses as individuals in a taskforce as well as a taskforce organization.

<b>Individual Capacities</b>	<b>Yes = √ No = X Maybe = ?</b>
Ability to carry out policy analysis and research.	√
Ability to develop long-term strategic vision of change.	√
Ability to communicate messages and influence policies.	?
Ability to create and support networks and partnerships.	√

Ability to carry out, monitor and evaluate advocacy.	√
<b>Organizational Capacities</b>	
Ability to ensure sustainable advocacy work.	?
Ability to plan and manage advocacy.	?
Ability to respond to changing policy environment.	?
Ability to involve stakeholders in all stages of advocacy.	√
Ability to mobilize members of public.	√

**Internal/External SWOT Analysis**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>How important for the strategy?</b>
Community credibility, funding base, committed and determined staff, common purpose, common vision, team-orientation, strong ties to the community/community support, leadership, cooperation and collaboration, networks/connections to media and other influential persons, inclusivity and diversity of perspectives and talents, IT resources/Internet access, meeting spaces	<b>All of these attributes are very integral to the overall strategic framework</b>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>How important for the strategy?</b>
Inconsistent distribution of responsibilities, lack of communication/misunderstandings, members’ feelings of under-appreciation or under-valued, community credibility, lack of structural organization, ego/pride/glory issues among some members, internal squabbling	<b>All of these issues need to be remedied for the overall strategy to work.</b>

**Opportunities**

- New political administration in office, new policy initiatives that speak to the taskforce’s mission in the Education Sector Development Plan 2015-2020 and the new administration’s manifesto/platform, international funding that has been allocated for program implementation under the Education Sector Development Plan, growing concern among the education community of practitioners and parents about mediocre and stagnant youth unemployment rates and national assessment scores, particularly in the *required* CSEC ELAL and Mathematics exams.

**Threats**

- Religious or political forces which may go against social change, community persons who are against change in general, cultural views about gender roles and responsibilities, stagnant education expenditure and underfunding of technical resources as well teaching/curriculum materials, competitiveness and undermining of the organization (because it co-exists with other and similar grassroots organizations in the community), negative common myths around bilingual education as an intervention.

**The Policy-Making Process**

The chart below illustrates who our primary and secondary targets are, allied organizations and also highlights possible opponents and champions – who may be sympathetic to our cause.

<b>Primary Targets/Decision-Makers</b>	<b>Influencers/Secondary Targets</b>	<b>Public</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(PM) Prime Minister UWP</b> - Allen Chastanet</li> <li>• <b>PM’s Cabinet</b> [made up of <b>Legislator Senators</b> who may also be <b>Ministers</b> of various departments – (to be appointed)]</li> <li>• <b>Minister of Education</b> – Dr. Gale Rigobert</li> <li>• <b>Member of Parliament (MP) for District 4: Anse la Raye/Canaries</b> – Dominic Fedee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>District 4 Education Officer (DEO)</b> – Mrs. Fiona Mayer</li> <li>• <b>District 4 Council Members</b> - (to be appointed)</li> <li>• <b>Principals (current and former)</b> – Albert Joseph (current), Mary Samuel, Ms. Labadie</li> <li>• <b>Teachers</b> – 5 trained teachers, 1 pre-service teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Parents/Guardians</b> – of struggling readers.</li> <li>• <b>Teachers Union</b> – made up of about 300 teachers.</li> <li>• <b>Community of Education Practitioners</b> – special education teachers, linguistics/language specialists, speech therapists/pathologists</li> <li>• <b>General public</b></li> </ul>

<p><b>Possible Champions</b></p>	<p><b>MP of District 4 – Dominic Fedee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The taskforce has a previous relationship with Fedee. He donated EC\$10,000 to youth-run, youth-led group, Youth on Fire Movement of Anse-la-Raye, to support its youth and community development programs.</li> <li>- He has demonstrated genuine interest in empowering youth economically and academically.</li> <li>- Youth initiatives are of particular interest to him because of his personal upbringing in the village of Canaries and overcoming obstacles through having access to education. He understands how education is a vehicle for economic upward mobility particularly for youth.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Possible Opponents</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Monolingual Enthusiasts</b> – many hold the belief that English, in this case St. Lucian Standard English-only classroom settings increases and accelerates language acquisition and academic achievement in English Language Arts (ELA). Many believe in the common myths (i.e. two languages taught in a 50/50 format only causes more confusion for the child, etc. These myths have been scientifically debunked.</li> <li>- <b>Principals/DEOs/Teachers who do not want to change</b> – many teachers are content with their style and approach to teaching and are not willing to adapt any new strategies/pedagogies or methodologies.</li> <li>- <b>Politicians</b> – these politicians stand to lose something if we succeed in advocating for a bilingual education policy.</li> </ul>	

<p><b>Allied Organizations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Society for Caribbean Linguistics (SCL)</li> <li>- Summer Institutes of Linguistics (SIL)</li> <li>- Folk Research Center of St. Lucia (FRC)</li> <li>- The University of the West Indies (UWI) at Mona, JA – Department of Language, Linguistics, and Philosophy</li> <li>- Media Partnerships/Alliances (The Voice, St. Lucia News Online, etc.)</li> </ul>	
------------------------------------	--	--

Two key influencers, Dominic Fedee, District 4 MP, and Minister of Education, Dr. Gale Rigobert, must be converted into champions in order to influence the rest of legislature and cabinet members of the United Workers Party (UWP) House of Assembly to adopt a national bilingual education policy. To strengthen our argument, we will cite the specific targets (highlighted in bold) for youth economic and academic empowerment and development in the UWP’s manifesto listed below.

**Primary Education (0-8 years old)**

- Introduce at least one foreign language (Spanish and/or French) at every primary school.

**Secondary Education**

- Realign the secondary school curriculum to provide emphasis on **mastery of key subjects such as Languages, Science, Mathematics, thinking and analytical skills**, teamwork with project-oriented multi-tasking, computer literacy and enhanced knowledge of global economic and communication systems. TVET and IT-related studies will be available for further specialization.

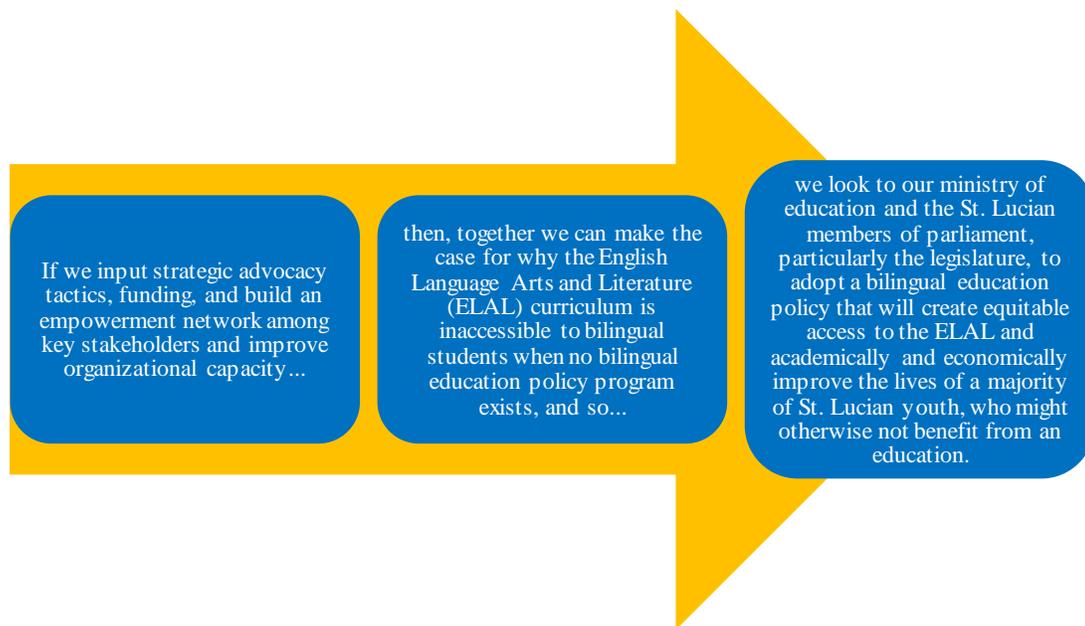
- **Ensure that every secondary child is made conversant in at least one foreign language** (2015).

The cabinet members and legislature must then agree that the policy has a good chance of accomplishing what it sets out to do, before forwarding it to the PM, Allen Chastanet, for his signature. The last approval must come from the Governor General, Dame Pearlette Louisy, who functions as the “monarch” of St. Lucia. Her executive power functions similar to Queen Elizabeth of England, who, she must consult with regularly about the general platform of the current political administration. Therefore, it is important that the governor general approves of the general platform of the current political administration because St. Lucia is a member of the Commonwealth of Realms of the United Kingdom, a source of overseas support.

Our advocacy organization will mobilize parents and teachers of struggling readers and influence MP Dominic Fedee to appeal to his fellow parliamentarians to reserve funding in the budget for goal one of our overall advocacy strategy, a three-year 50/50 dual language immersion demonstration pilot program at the Anse la Raye R.C. Infant School. Baseline data that the taskforce collects before, during, and after the pilot program will be used towards strengthening our argument for the adoption of a national bilingual education policy.

### **Strategy and Tactics**

The theory of change for our advocacy strategy is as follows:



As part of our monitoring, evaluating and learning plan, we will attempt to answer the following evaluation questions: did the strategic advocacy activities outlined in the composite logic models contribute to short and long term outputs/outcomes? Did the strategic advocacy activities contribute to the ultimate policy goal? Did strategic advocacy activities contribute to the ultimate policy impact? Did strategic advocacy activities contribute to public and political will and salience? However, to make our argument more compelling, we will need to collect a vast amount of baseline data via our assessment tools that will contribute to our understanding of the level of need of a bilingual intervention. Some schools have more bilingual students than others, and baseline information regarding the amount of students we plan to impact, will be helpful in our strategic planning. The taskforce aims to paint a comprehensive picture, based on quantitative and qualitative data analysis, for decision and policy-makers to refer to when considering the adoption of a bilingual education policy.

**Risk and Management Plan**

Risk	How will the risk be managed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>Natural Disasters (and aftermath of extreme weather events) i.e. earthquakes, hurricanes, troughs</b></li> <li>◆ <b>Water shortages</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disaster management plans will be incorporated into strategic advocacy activities on a daily basis.</li> <li>- Careful planning during hurricane season will inform our strategic outreach planning schedule and the taskforce will take all warnings of extreme weather seriously.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>Political squabbling/in-fighting and divisiveness</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The taskforce will not be aligned or affiliate itself with any political party or administration and will focus solely on working towards its policy goals.</li> <li>- Emphasize and reiterate to stakeholders, champions and advocates that our work aims to help the youth of St. Lucia, regardless of political affiliation.</li> <li>- Avoidance of political events (i.e. rallies, parades, etc.)</li> </ul>

## Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan

Evaluation Users	Evaluation Uses	Evaluation Questions to Consider
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Advocates and Taskforce Staff</li> <li>◆ Stakeholders</li> <li>◆ Funders and Donors</li> <li>◆ Partner Organizations</li> <li>◆ Media Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>Strategic Learning</b> – for Taskforce advocates and staff as well as funders, donors, and partner organizations</li> <li>◆ <b>Accountability</b> – for Taskforce advocates and staff as well as partner organizations.</li> <li>◆ <b>Methods</b> – self and peer assessments, observations, story-telling, intense debriefing sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Did strategic tactics/activities outlined in the monitoring, evaluation and learning plan contribute to short and long term outcomes?</li> <li>◆ Did strategic tactics/activities contribute to achievement of policy goal?</li> <li>◆ Did strategic tactics/activities contribute to achievement of policy impact?</li> <li>◆ Did strategic tactics/activities contribute to public and political salience and will?</li> <li>◆ To what extent was organizational capacity improved?</li> <li>◆ To what extent did advocates strengthen their individual advocacy capacity?</li> </ul>

### How the Taskforce Learns

The Taskforce will learn from strategic activities that correspond with the particular target audience (i.e. primary, secondary influencers/targets and the general public) via bi-weekly Taskforce, and monthly coalition debriefing sessions. Debriefing sessions will function like a strategic planning meeting where participants share their experiences, challenges, and updates on their personal and collective advocacy journeys. In addition to discussions of advocacy experiences, strategic meetings are opportunities for the team to refer to the MEL plan, analyze collected data, and track what progress the advocacy strategy has achieved in relation to interim outcomes. Participants are also expected to discuss the challenges and successes associated with their role or responsibilities

as an advocate and indicate specific needs for improvement. It will be the habit of the Taskforce advocates and staff to, via self and peer assessments, highlight weak areas of advocacy capacity and request training.

For example, an ordinary debriefing session for the Taskforce might be held 48 hours following a community outreach event for public will and salience. After application of the events checklist tool for preparation and planning, the Taskforce might come together to discuss what worked well and what did not work well. Immediate debriefing and sharing of experiences may encourage timely and adequate responses to problem areas and maintain constant self-reflection. Other ways in which the Taskforce might learn from the information that comes out of this type of debrief session may come from survey and poll results from audience members and participants of the event. Survey and poll questions might address whether or not audience members felt that they knew more about the benefits of bilingual integration and education for primary and secondary school children. Taskforce advocates can then compare and assess accounts and opinions on how successful the community outreach event based on responses from advocates and audience members for further analysis.

**Composite Logic Model – Phase 1**

<b>Influencers/Secondary Targets Audience</b>	<b>Advocacy Strategies/Tactics</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Dominic Fedee – <b>Member of Parliament (MP), District 4</b></li> <li>◆ Dr. Gale Rigobert – <b>Minister of Education (MoE)</b></li> <li>◆ Mrs. Fiona Mayer – <b>District Education Officer (DEO) of District 4</b></li> <li>◆ <b>District 4 Council Members – TBA</b></li> <li>◆ Mrs. Mary Samuel, Ms. Labadie, Mr. Albert Joseph – <b>Past and Present Principals in Anse la Raye, District 4</b></li> <li>◆ Martina Poleon, Lucilla Andrew, Fintana Edward, Nadiege Charles, Magnus Popo, Sherniel Charles, Kate Popo – <b>Teachers from the Anse la Raye R.C. Infant School</b></li> <li>◆ Teachers’ Union – <b>300 In-Service Teachers island-wide</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Communications &amp; Outreach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>coalition and network building</b> – <i>measures/indicators</i> – 20 coalition members make up the Taskforce, bi-weekly coalition meetings are held with 100% attendance rate on the part of members.</li> <li>◆ <b>briefings/presentations</b> – <i>measures/indicators</i> – 1 briefing/presentation per month to DEO, MP and MoE, at least 50 attendees at briefings/presentations.</li> <li>◆ <b>demonstration pilot program</b> – <i>measures/indicators</i> - 2 pilot demonstration programs at 2 different sites, sufficient funding secured for implementation, monitoring and evaluation.</li> <li>◆ <b>electronic outreach/social media</b> – <i>measures/indicators</i> – Taskforce social media site is established, 50% increase in number of likes <i>and</i> followers on social media site.</li> <li>◆ <b>earned media</b> – <i>measures/indicators</i> – 12 press releases developed and distributed.</li> <li>◆ <b>media partnerships</b> – <i>measures/indicators</i> – 5 media partnerships developed (local and online news)</li> </ul>

**Interim Outcomes**

1. **Organizational Capacity** – 50% increased knowledge about advocacy, mobilizing or organizing tactics among advocates
2. **New Advocates and Champions** – 4 new advocates recruited, 4 new champions recruited and constituencies represented
3. **Organizational Visibility and Recognition** – 15 requests for policy briefs, 15 requests for advocates to speak as experts
4. **Awareness, Attitudes/Beliefs, Salience** – 100% of audience have knowledge of the issue, 100% of audience say issue is important to them, 100% of audience have favorable attitudes toward the issue
5. **Partnerships and Alliances and New Donors** – 4 new and stronger organizational relationships developed
6. **Political Will** – 3 elected officials publicly support advocacy efforts, 3 issue mentions in elected officials’ speeches.
7. **Constituency or Support Base Growth** – 60% increase in likes *and* followers on social media site

**Methods**

- ◆ Polls, Self and Peer assessments
- ◆ Language Attitudes Survey
- ◆ Media Tracking
- ◆ Network Mapping
- ◆ Case Study – Demonstration Pilot Program

**Interim Policy Goal:  
Bilingual Integration and  
Education Pilot Program –  
Secure funding and make the  
case for the development, design,  
implementation, monitoring and  
evaluation of a 3-year  
demonstration pilot program.**

**Composite Logic Model – Phase 2**

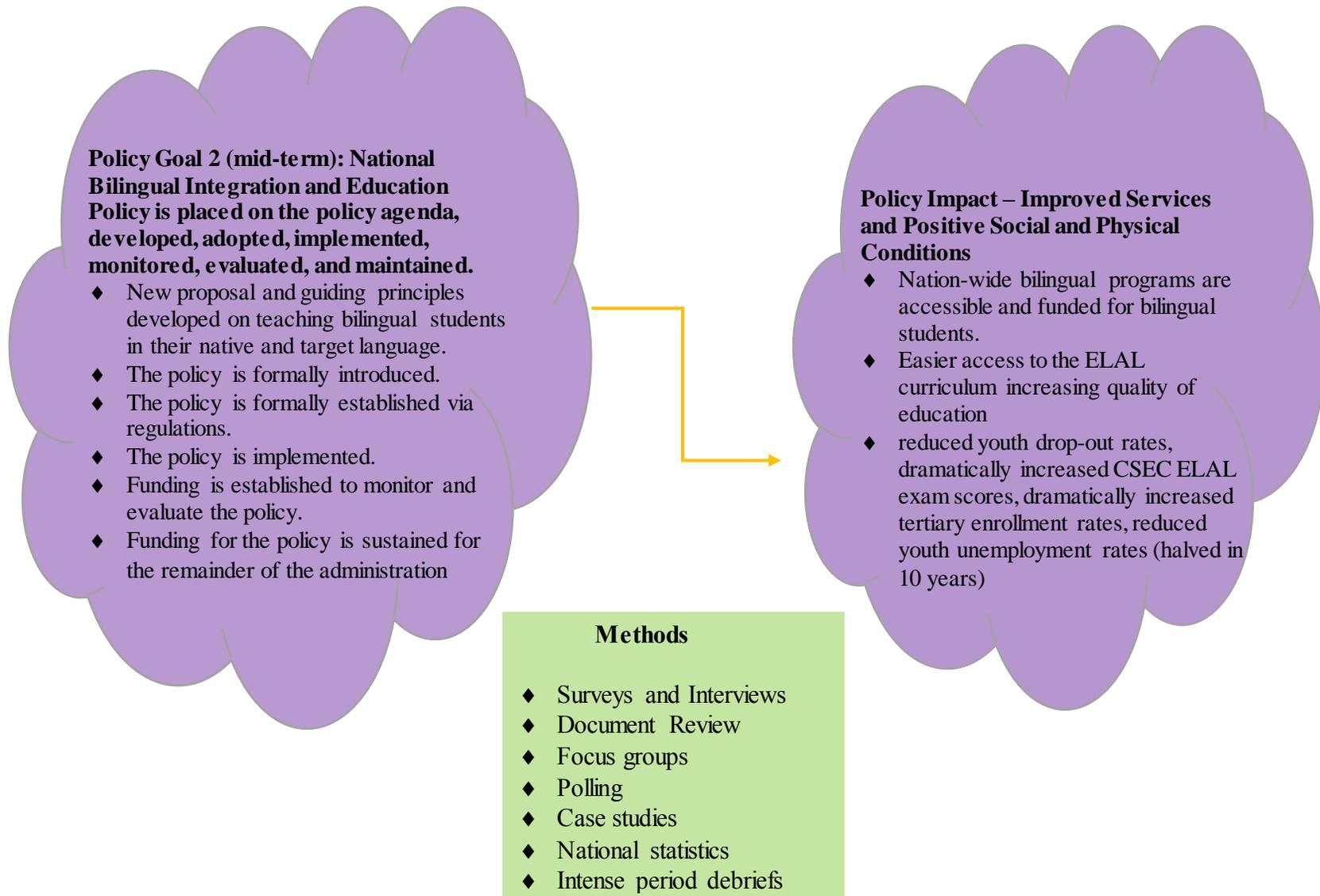
General Public Audience	Advocacy Strategies/Tactics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>Parents and Guardians</b> – of struggling readers</li> <li>◆ <b>Community of Education Practitioners</b> – speech pathologists, socio-linguists, speech therapists, academics at major universities in the region</li> </ul>	<p><b>Communications and Outreach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>electronic outreach/social media</b> – <i>measures/indicators</i> – E-mail listserv is established, twice monthly public updates are distributed</li> <li>◆ <b>briefings/presentations</b> – <i>measures/indicators</i> – twice monthly public outreach events are held, at least 100 attendees per outreach event</li> <li>◆ <b>earned media</b> – <i>measures/indicators</i> – 24 outreach attempts to reporters to cover public outreach events</li> <li>◆ <b>grassroots organizing and mobilization</b> – <i>measures/indicators</i> – 4 communities where organizing takes place, 11 rallies held with at least 100 attendees each</li> </ul>

<p><b>Interim Outcomes</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Awareness, Salience, Attitudes or Beliefs</b> – 60% of audience members with knowledge of an issue, 60% of audience members with favorable attitudes toward the issue, 60% of audience members saying issue is important to them.</li> <li>2. <b>More or Diversified Funding</b> – 50% increase in individual donors</li> <li>3. <b>New Donors</b> – 50% increase in first-time donors, 50% increase in in-kind donors, at least EC\$50 dollars on average given by new donors.</li> <li>4. <b>New Champions and Advocates</b> – 4 new (unlikely bi-partisan) advocates recruited, 4 new constituencies represented among champions, 4 new champions recruited, 4 new constituencies represented among advocates</li> <li>5. <b>Constituency or Support Base Growth</b> – 50% increase in number of likes and followers on Taskforce’s social media site.</li> </ol>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Methods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Language Attitudes Survey</li> <li>◆ Polls</li> <li>◆ Focus Groups</li> <li>◆ Observations</li> <li>◆ Intense Debrief Sessions</li> </ul>

### Composite Logic Model – Phase 3

Primary Targets Audience	Strategic Activities/Tactics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Allen Chastanet – <b>Prime Minister (PM) of the United Workers Party (UWP)</b></li> <li>◆ PM’s <b>Cabinet Members</b> – Legislative Ministers and MP’s</li> <li>◆ Dominic Fedee – <b>Member of Parliament, District 4</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Politics and Policy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>relationship building with decision makers</b> – <i>measures/indicators</i> – 20 meetings held with decision makers, with at least 80% attendance of invitees</li> <li>◆ <b>policy/decision maker education</b> – <i>measures/indicators</i> – 10 briefings/presentations with decision makers, 3 with opposing party members, 7 with key committee members</li> <li>◆ <b>policy proposal development</b> – <i>measures/indicators</i> – 1 policy proposal development</li> </ul> <p><b>Communications and Outreach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>lobbying</b> – <i>measures/indicators</i> – 100% of key committee members reached, 10 key committee member meetings</li> </ul>

Interim Outcomes	Methods
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Partnerships and Alliances</b> – new relationships with decision makers are formed and strengthened</li> <li>2. <b>New Champions</b> – 10 new decision makers, champions with 70% of champions’ actions include speaking out, signing a petition, publicly endorsing advocacy issue</li> <li>3. <b>Awareness, Salience, Attitudes or Beliefs</b> – 100% of audience has knowledge of the issue, 100% of audience say issue is important to them, 100% of audience have favorable attitudes toward the issue.</li> <li>4. <b>Political Will</b> – 10 decision makers who publicly support advocacy effort, majority of parliament (60%) supports advocacy issue, 50 citations of ideas in policy deliberations</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Polls, Surveys</li> <li>◆ Focus groups</li> <li>◆ Observation</li> <li>◆ Media, policy and networking mapping</li> <li>◆ Recorded interviews</li> </ul>



## Communications Plan

### What is a Frame?

According to Stephen Reese and the Framework Institutes' "Framing Public Issues," frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world (2002). In other words, it is "the lens through which people interpret issues" (2002).

### Thematic vs. Episodic Framing

We want to use a thematic approach to frame the issue of youth unemployment versus an episodic frame, meaning, we want to "provide details about trends, not just individuals...[and] identify shortcomings at the community or systems level that have contributed to the problem" (2002). "The more thematic and contextual the coverage, the more likely it is that citizens will see the issue as one appropriate to government resolution" (2002). The three levels of understanding or frames from which we speak and advocate from are as follows:

**Level1** – Economic and academic empowerment for youth in St. Lucia

**Level2** – Equitable access to the English Language Arts and Literature (ELAL) curriculum for students

**Level3** – A National Bilingual Education policy, a human and civil right afforded to everyone.

We will adopt the perspective of a **strategic frame analysis (SFA)** which is the understanding "that communication is storytelling" (2002). Our stories will be about "politics in the sense that it is about the values that drive us to communal action...[and] invites people into the solution, by demonstrating that solutions exist" (2002). Our story will also be told by people who "the public believes [has] no reason to lie...and who have authority and knowledge of the

issue” (2002). Therefore, “SFA is applied to help determine the organizing constructs or values that may be used to frame the issue in order to make it known as a social problem that then captures the minds and concerns of the public and its elected officials” (2002).

### **Elements of the Frame**

Our thematic approach will cover the individual incidents of high youth drop-out rates, decreased tertiary enrollment rates, low national CSEC scores in the ELAL, and high youth unemployment rates “within long-term or national trends” (2002). We will also highlight and promote the success of the Jamaican Bilingual Education Project (BEP) to emphasize the feasibility of a national bilingual education policy in St. Lucia. The cause here is unequitable access to the English language arts curriculum for Creole-speaking students. We will take a thematic approach to describe and frame the context exploring “causes...effects and explain[ing] rather than dramatiz[ing]” (2002). The issue of youth unemployment affects everyone and is therefore a public issue, worthy of being included in the legislative policy agenda.

**Context** – The release of the Education Sector Development Plan for the years 2015-2020 by the St. Lucian Ministry of Education was a tremendous step in the right direction for the betterment of St. Lucia’s education sector. It provides direction and clear goals to work towards achieving in the next four to five years. As part of the Education Sector Development Plan (EDSP), innovative programming for solving academic problems are encouraged and will receive specific funding. The problem of youth economic well-being affects all of us in the community including politicians, parents, students, teachers and many more. Contributors to the issue of youth

economic insecurity include high youth drop-out rates and unemployment rates; low national CSEC scores in ELAL and lack of access to tertiary level education based on ELAL scores.

If national CSEC scores in ELAL continue to be stagnant and low, youth transition rates from secondary to tertiary will also remain low, while youth drop-out rates remain high. If fewer youth attend tertiary level education, then fewer will become employable and the youth unemployment rate will remain high. We know, as well as the Ministry of Education, that ELAL CSEC scores are largely influenced by English subject academic performance over time, at the Infant, Primary and Secondary school levels. Low English academic performance is a result of students' inability to grasp ELAL concepts thus contributing to their illiteracy. Without the Ministry and the District Education Offices' support, we will not be able to move forward with designing and implementing innovative programming for our schools. We need their support in creating equitable access to the English language arts curriculum for students who may be primarily Creole-speakers through the adoption of a national bilingual education policy program. So, we will appeal to our influencers and secondary targets and apply the appropriate pitch.

*Numbers* – Charts and Graphs

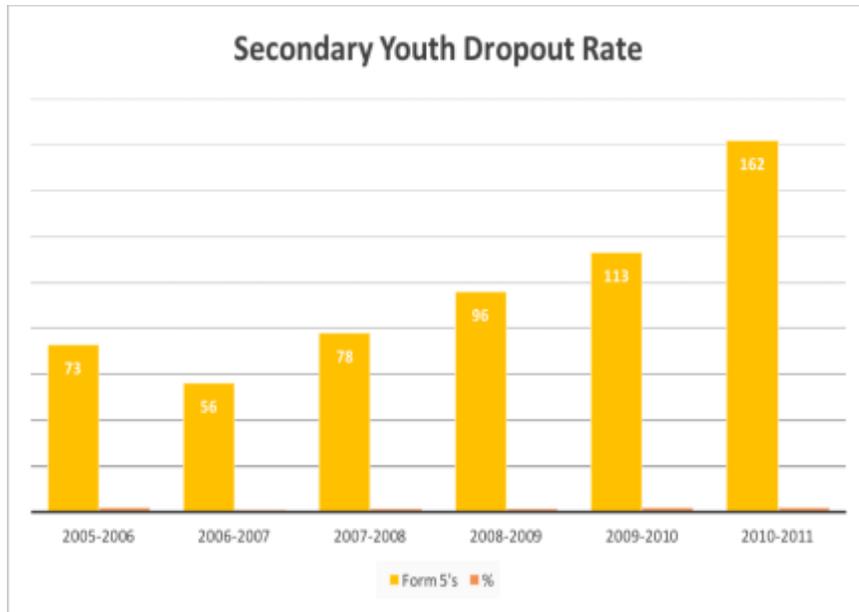


Figure 3 (Educational Statistical Digest, 2012)

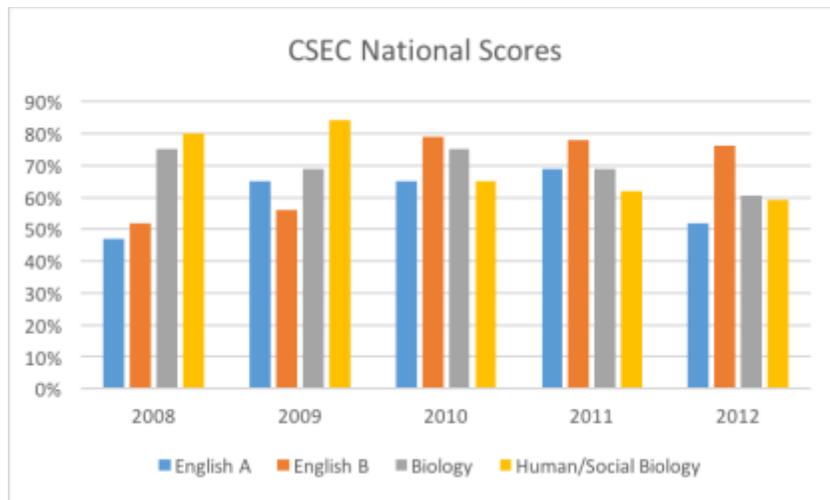


Figure 4 (Education Statistical Digest, 2012)

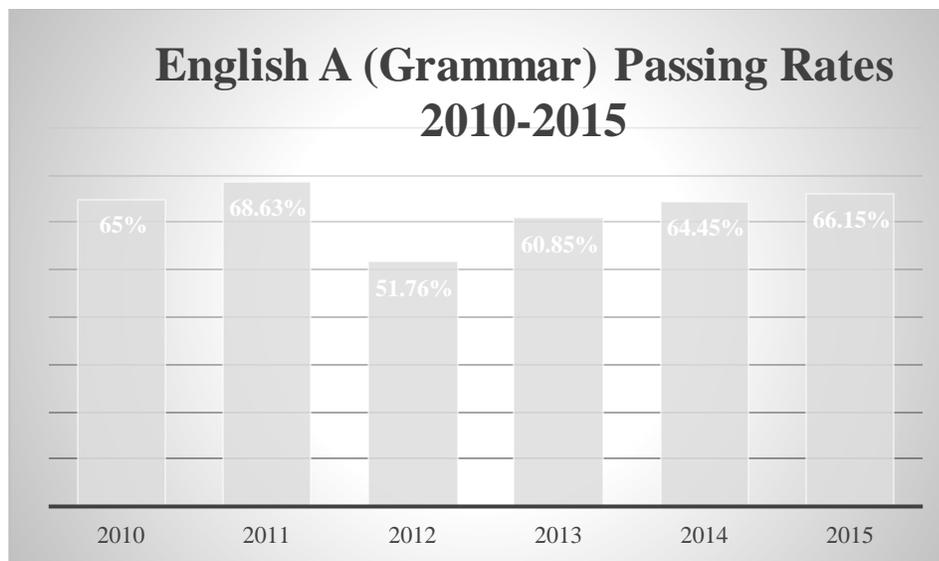


Figure 5 (The Voice, 2015)

In the figures above, CSEC passing rates in English A – Grammar has been consistently stagnant or low and passing rates in English B – Literature tells a similar story despite a slight increase from 2009 to 2010. CSEC passing rates in Math, English and Biology from the years 2014 and 2015 will be also be used to frame the public issue and can be seen below.

School year	CSEC Subject	Passing Rate
<b>2014</b>	English A	51%
<b>2014</b>	Biology	53%
<b>2015</b>	English A	55%
<b>2015</b>	Biology	61%

In the years 2014 and 2015 English A passing rates remained stagnant with only a 4% increase in 2015. This means that about half of graduating secondary youth are passing one of their compulsory and most important CSEC subjects. Despite marginal increases in passing rates on the English CSEC, according to St. Lucia’s Social and Economic Outlook report in 2012,

“total enrollment at the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC) fell by 9.9% [or by] 3,164 [admitted students] in 2011/2012” (2012). In 2014, the percent of the population aged 15-64, in essence, the country’s workforce population, made up almost 68% of the overall population. This statistic coupled with an overall unemployment rate of 24.4% in the country might highlight the fact that nearly half of the working population is unemployed (Ministry of Finance, 2015). The youth unemployment rate, according to UNDP’s Human Development Report on St. Lucia, is 27.5% (2015), however, the recently elected political administration estimates it being as high as 40%.

### ***Tone*** – Rhetorical vs. Reasonable

Our tone for our communications plan is intended to sound reasonable and invoke a “can-do” attitude in our audiences. We are not aiming to criticize the existing EDSP, however our focus is on meaningful implementation and programming that is based in evidence and will produce results. We also plan to stick to using the Level one value of economic prosperity and academic empowerment for youth in St. Lucia as a starting point. Below are the three different targets and pitches that we will employ via various frames to get our policy proposal on the agenda and increase public salience.

### **Targets and Pitches**

- ***Political Pitch – Level One value: Economic and Academic Empowerment for St. Lucian Bilingual Youth***

“Jump start economic progress for bilingual youth in St. Lucia and help them navigate the educational system, through the adoption of a bilingual education policy program. Work towards

SDG Goal Four and increase access to the English language arts curriculum. Support the Bilingual Education Taskforce (BET) in its efforts to reduce youth unemployment and youth drop-out rates by keeping students engaged in learning. Before you know it, tertiary enrollment will be up because national CSEC ELAL scores will be up. Bay ti moun yo yon chans pou travay byen lekòl!”

- ***Public and Parents (of struggling readers) Pitch – Level Three value: equitable access to the English Language Arts curriculum*** “Bay ti moun yo yon chans pou twavay byen lékòl. Annou apwam an dé lang, Kwéyol evek Anglé. Join us! Listen! and Act! Towards a national bilingual education program! The Bilingual Education Taskforce (BET) is coming to a neighborhood tou pré ou!”
- ***Teachers’ Union Pitch – Level Two value: increased English CSEC scores, being a part of the solution by joining the BET***

“Create equitable access to the English Language Arts curriculum for Creole-speaking students through the adoption and implementation of a bilingual education program. Research says that students who develop both their first and second language experience academic progress in other subjects, higher order, abstract and creative thinking, enriched and enhanced cognitive development as compared to their monolingual peers. Join the Bilingual Education Taskforce (BET) and advocate for a national bilingual education policy. Edé nou pou bay ti moun yo yon chans pou twavay byen lékòl!”

### **The Dominant Frame**

It is difficult to gauge what the dominant frame is towards a national bilingual education policy in St. Lucia at this time because the data does not yet exist. Some common refusals to

bilingual education however, include: the belief that learning two languages at once only confuses students further and prevents acquisition of the dominant language, English-only classroom settings as the only means for students to acquire standard St. Lucian English, resistance to a new or innovative approach to language education, and teachers, administrators, and ministry of education staff feelings of “more” work being placed on them. Through the implementation of our strategic advocacy plan and our outreach/grassroots mobilization efforts, we plan to combat any existing dominant frames and find creative ways to shape the narrative and conversation around bilingual education policy as much as possible.

# A National Bilingual Education Policy for Youth Economic and Academic Empowerment

## The Problem

In September of 2015, the United Nations officially recognized equitable access to quality education as a human right when it ratified the 2030 Development Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal four of the SDGs aims to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning,” and under goal four, target six aims to “ensure that [by 2030,] all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy” (<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>, 2015). In addition to target six, targets one and four aim to “ensure [by 2030,] that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes” and “substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship” (<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>, 2015) respectively.

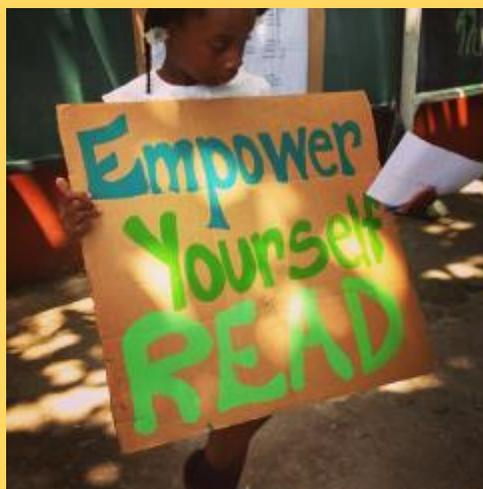
In the small, bilingual island nation of St. Lucia, a windward island in the Eastern Caribbean with a population of about 170,000, the sure path to economic prosperity begins with successful access to and navigating the education system; and, establishing one’s self as educated, and therefore employable in society. However, when students are not able to access tertiary education, they lack crucial skills that employers seek in new hires. Employers often look to tertiary institutions and vocational schools to hire combination-experienced youth. In fact, results from *The Analysis of the St. Lucia Labor Market Needs Assessment Survey* cited that from September to November of 2012, 44% of jobs required completion of tertiary education as a qualification, while 31% of jobs required CSEC exams in five or more subjects. Only 25% of jobs required less than a secondary school certificate (2013). If youth are not provided access to opportunities for combination educational and practical experience, including specialization, then they are less likely to be considered and often end up under- or unemployed. Youth who become unemployed and out of school for a prolonged period of time may give into negative behavioral patterns and illegal activity.

What are the barriers to tertiary education? In addition to many other factors, one barrier to tertiary education for bilingual youth is the inability to achieve passing scores on the CSEC ELAL exams. What are some of the consequences of bilingual youth consistently performing poorly in English literacy? As previously mentioned, low and stagnant CSEC ELAL exam scores is one consequence that is a result of consistent low performance in ELAL throughout a student’s academic years. Achieving passing scores on the CSEC ELAL exam is crucial because the exam is inherently bias with metrics designed for monolingual or St. Lucian English-speaking students. The current education system “assumes” students who sit for the exam are equipped with fundamental language concepts that are taught, retained and mastered throughout Infant, Primary, and Secondary school. Therefore, we must ensure from the earliest school years, that our youth meet the minimum requirements in ELAL concepts by establishing and adopting a National Bilingual Education Policy. The Bilingual Education Taskforce (BET) puts forth the following recommendations on the following page.

## Recommendations

The Education Sector Development plan authored by St. Lucia's Ministry of Education already highlights the urgent need for academic interventions that are rooted in research and driven by evidence. However, there are no specific strategies the Ministry recommends to achieve these interventions. The Taskforce believes that it has identified an intervention that is feasible, cost-effective, rooted in evidence and has successfully been demonstrated in other Caribbean islands with similarly identified issues and promising outcomes. The BET will address targets addressed in the EDSP as well as the current political party's platform for education. We ask that policymakers consider our policy proposal and take seriously our recommendations.

- ✓ Secure funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) fund for targeted program implementation as outlined in the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP).
- ✓ Design, develop, implement, monitor and evaluate a 50/50 (SLC – SLE) dual language immersion pilot program model for Infant and Primary schools that is replicable locally and nationally.
- ✓ Develop a data collection and management system that monitors the academic progress of bilingual struggling readers – literacy, phonemic awareness, invented word decoding – at every school on the island.
- ✓ Allow school principals and district education office leadership to work closely together in developing the dual language immersion program that best fits their needs.
- ✓ Develop intense bilingual/dual language immersion education professional development modules and training programs for pre- and in-service teachers.
- ✓ Acquire and provide adequate resources, including curriculum and teaching materials in French-lexifier, Lesser Antillean Creole including home language surveys.
- ✓ Require parent/guardian notification of students who are assessed and placed into the bilingual program and maintain an open line of communication with parents/guardians in a language they can understand.
- ✓ Lead a successful advocacy campaign for the adoption and implementation of a national bilingual education policy.



**The Challenges Youth Face**

The Taskforce found that struggling readers at the K-2 level used phonemes (sound) found in SLC to decode similar phonemes found in standard St Lucian English (SLE); and so, spelling was particularly challenging. BET researchers found that the St. Lucian accent in both SLE and SLC, pronounces short “i” as “ee” or long “e;” and, pronunciation of short “e” resembled more of an “ay” sound. One can imagine the challenge and confusion a bilingual struggling reader faces when trying to distinguish between “fit” and “feet,” and even “feat,” when everyone, including teachers and parents in their immediate surroundings, pronounces the middle “i” in this example like “ee.” Students were often confused about each sound, or groups of sounds, the difference between them, and the relationships between letters and sounds, hence phonemic awareness. Bilingual students who never receive the language support they need continue to fall behind in ELAL throughout primary and secondary school. Some drop out of school, many score low on the CSEC ELAL, and many more never make it to tertiary education. The diagrams below show drop-out rates and stagnant CSEC ELAL scores.

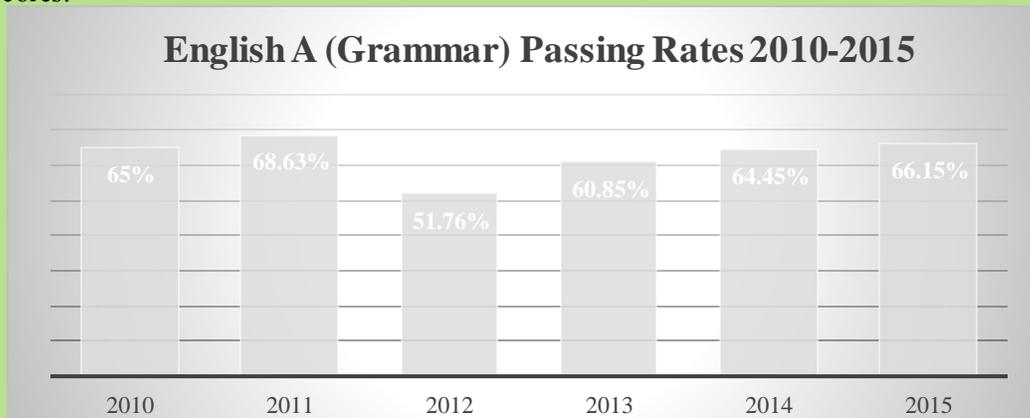


Figure 6 The Voice St. Lucia, 2015

The ultimate impact of this trend can be seen in high youth unemployment rates. As reflected in *The Analysis of St. Lucia Labor Market Needs Survey*, 60% of unemployed persons from July to September of 2012 on the island had below a secondary school education while just 7% had tertiary education; meanwhile, qualifications for new employees hired from January to August of 2012 consisted of 40% with secondary CSEC exams and 37% with tertiary education. It is evident that employers are seeking the most qualified and educated youth to fill jobs, which only makes the point clearer that youth who are given equitable access to education with language support early on are more likely to succeed in ELAL, score high on the national exam and be accepted at tertiary institutions.

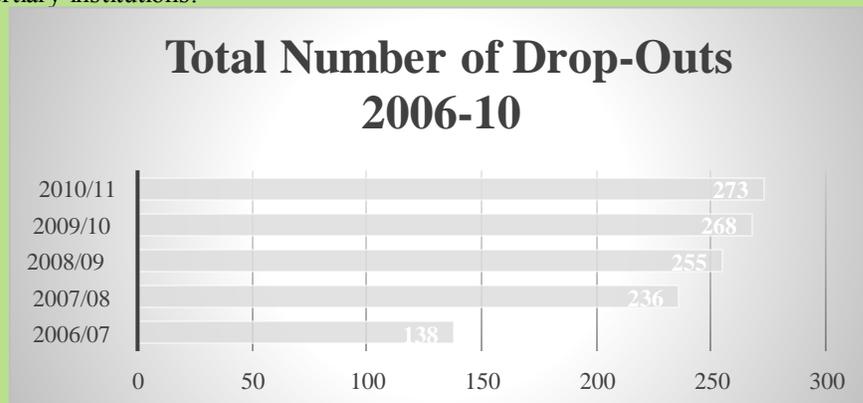


Figure 2 St. Lucian Education Statistical Digest, 2012

### Benefits of Bilingual Education

Today, a revived international movement has developed around the push for dual language education as an intervention for inclusion and narrowing of academic achievement gaps among primary and secondary school youth. One example of an ongoing international initiative, The Global Campaign for Education, published their policy brief entitled “Mother Tongue Education: Policy Lessons for Quality and Inclusion,” which specifically to the hesitation on the part of some governments around the adoption of bilingual education policies “...despite the increasingly overwhelming evidence of the value and benefits of early education in mother tongue, too few countries invest in it” and that in order to “begin literacy teaching in mother tongue...” design a bilingual and/or multilingual curriculum that is “rooted in the child’s known language, culture and environment, with appropriate and locally-developed reading and curriculum materials [that] are crucial for early learning success” (2016). The primary benefits of bilingualism include:

- academic progress in other subjects.
- narrowed achievement gaps.
- higher order, abstract and creative thinking.
- enriched and enhanced cognitive development.
- cultural awareness promotion and competency.
- better ability to focus attention on relevant information and ignore distractions.
- more creative and better at planning and solving complex problems as compared to monolinguals.
- greater access to people and resources.

### Bottom Line

The Taskforce will take a page out of the Jamaican BEP model and research framework around language attitudes and behavior, and advocate on behalf of communities of parents and educators around the island for the adoption of a bilingual education policy, however, the Taskforce requires the support St. Lucia’s Ministry of Education. Bilingual and dual immersion education programs create equitable avenues and opportunities for bilingual students to succeed and achieve in their schooling. Primary and secondary school youth deserve evidence-based interventions that are well funded and will improve economic outcomes for youth poised to enter the workforce, so they can lead meaningful and productive lives.

### Applied Bilingual Education in Jamaica, *The Language Education Policy of 2001*

Jamaica, a Greater Antilles island in the Caribbean has a population of about 2 million and is considered by the Jamaican Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture (MOEYC), to be a bilingual country, the two main languages spoken being Standard Jamaican English (SJE) and Jamaican Creole (JC). The MOEYC of Jamaica, in partnership with the University of West Indies at Mona, realized that struggling readers had a majority of lexicon in JC, showing “unsatisfactory performance...in language and literacy at all levels of the Jamaican educational system, and its accompanying effects on language competence and on the potential for human development in the wider society” (Ministry of Youth, Education and Culture, 2001). To address this issue, the MOEYC created a national language education policy to address and provide much-needed academic support to JC-speaking students. The language policy’s key objectives are as follows:

- The application of a variety of instructional and learning modes relevant to learners’ language needs.
- Provisions for access to, acquisition and maintenance of Spanish as the official foreign language. Provisions that ensure that the needs of learners with exceptionalities are adequately addressed.
- Provisions for assessment strategies that are current and appropriate to the learning environment and to strategies employed in language teaching.
- Provisions for the preparation of teachers to work in a bilingual environment through relevant teacher education and professional development programmes (2001).



The Bilingual Education Project (BEP) demonstration pilot program and baseline data began in the mid 1990’s and culminated in the late 1990’s resulting in the national adoption of a language education policy. One of the key principle investigators of BEP, Hubert Devonish, played a crucial role in the making the case for a bilingual intervention in primary schools in Jamaica. A major difference Devonish discusses in his article, *Towards Full Bilingualism in Education: The Jamaican Bilingual Primary Education Project*, points out the underlying ideology behind the BEP’s approach “...the bilingual nature of Jamaican society [is] an advantage rather than a hindrance. Societal bilingualism...presents the education system with the opportunity to benefit from being fully bilingual, rather than simply developing literacy skills in the first language of children. There is...the chance to give children early opportunities to develop as full bilinguals, rather than diglossics in the two languages widely spoken in their country” (Devonish & Carpenter, 2007)

### **Assessments & Learning**

The Sustainable Development Master's program at SIT Graduate Institute is fast-paced, intense and requires a great deal of commitment and sacrifice. I would like to think that I learned a lot from working in such a high-paced environment. I learned how to plan and divide parts of an assignment into feasible pieces, meet hard, turn-around deadlines, and produce quality work in a short space of time. I also had an opportunity to perfect my skills in time management and maximization as well as effort. I exerted a lot of effort into my deliverables because I wanted to make sense of a long, hard and phenomenal two years as a youth and community developer with the Peace Corps in St. Lucia, West Indies. I wanted to further unpack my experience, learn about and master skills that I knew I was lacking, and meet and learn from others who shared my fears, anxieties, passions and ambition for international sustainable development.

Today, I feel as though the immediate outcomes of my participation in the program have been positive overall. I have a remarkably newer and precise outlook on exactly what I want my research to be and it is because of the challenging assignments and the thought-provoking discussions. SIT faculty helped make the experience unforgettable and nine times out of ten, had positive and uplifting feedback to give. Not only do I feel more laser-focused on my area of interest, I am grateful for the opportunity given to me to rediscover my strengths, weaknesses, and talents through the experiential learning process at SIT.

Some powerful themes that were particularly impactful on my work during the program included the notions of power dynamics, human insecurity theory, and theories and practice in development. Specifically, in policy advocacy and analysis, power dynamics and relationships (politics) were at the forefront of my mind in the design of the portfolio. I am now much more

aware of how power affects all of the work I do and my new found awareness on my style of leadership will help to inform the way I interact with others whether in a team or one-on-one setting. As an advocate, I have grown professionally and intellectually. The amazing policy faculty have helped me learn new analytical skills and helped me to regard my actions from a more strategic perspective, especially in the context of my advocacy work. During my Peace Corps service, I did not always realize that my actions, particularly in my youth and community development work, were not consistently strategic and in the best interest of my community members. After the program at SIT, I feel that I am equipped with crucial advocacy skills that will help advance some of my most ambitious dreams for the community in which I served.

I learned that I am more patient and more dedicated to the work and change I want to see happen in the world of education policy. In many ways, my experience at SIT felt like an extension of my Peace Corps service, a part two debriefing session that was designed to fine tune skills that I had begun to test out in the field. The program at SIT has transformed how I fight for human rights in terms of equitable access to education policy and I will undoubtedly use the resources introduced to me over the course of the past year and apply new and refined skills to my future work, whether in the field or at headquarters.

## References

- Anderson, S. R. (2012). *Linguistic Society of America*. Retrieved 7 8, 2016, from Linguistic Society of America: <http://www.linguisticsociety.org/content/how-many-languages-are-there-world>
- August, D. 2015. Dual Language Education Programs. *American Institutes Research*. Powerpoint.
- Boesen, J.K., Martin, T. 2007. Applying a Rights-Based Approach: An Inspirational Guide for Civil Society. *The Danish Institute for Human Rights*, 1-45.
- Bishop, S. 2015. CSEC Results: A Mixed Bag – Can Local Educators do More?. The Voice St. Lucia: The Voice Publishing.
- Coffman J., Beer, T. 2015. The Advocacy Strategy Framework: A Tool for Articulating an Advocacy Theory of Change. *Center for Evaluation Innovation*, 1-14.
- Collier, V.P. 1987. Age and Rate of Acquisition of Second Language for Academic Purposes. *TESOL Quarterly*. 21(4), 617-641.
- Collier, V. (1995). Acquiring a Second Language for School. *Directions in Language & Education*, 1(4), 1-8.
- Collier, V.A. 1989. How Long? A Synthesis of Research on Academic Achievement in a Second Language. *TESOL Quarterly*. 23(3), 509-531.).
- Cortina, R., Makar, C., Mount-Cors, F.M. 2015. Dual Language as a Social Movement: Putting Languages on an Even Playing-Field. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 17(1), 5-16.
- Craig, D.R. 1976. Bidalectical Education: Creole and Standard in the West Indies. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. 1976(8), 93-136.
- Cummins, J. 1981b. The Role of Primary Language Development in Promoting Educational Success for Language Minority Students. *Schooling and Language Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework*. Los Angeles: California State University, National Evaluation, Dissemination and Assessment Center, 16 -49.
- Cummins, J. 2007. Rethinking Monolingual Instructional Strategies in Multilingual Classrooms. *Canadian Journal of Applied Languages*. 10(2), 221-240.
- Devonish, H., Carpenter, K. 2007. Towards Full Bilingualism in Education: The Jamaican Bilingual Primary Education Project. *Social and Economic Studies*. 56(1&2), 277-303.

ECLAC. (2015). Social Development and Equality. *National Model United Nations* (p. 6). New York: National Collegiate Conference Association.

Education Sector Development Plan: Priorities and Strategies 2015-2020. Government of St. Lucia. Vol.1, 1-98.

Education for All Global Monitoring Report. 2015. *Policy Paper 18*. UNESCO. Paris, 1-8.

Frameworks Institute. 2005. Framing Public Issues. 1-56.

Global Education Monitoring Report. (2016). *Policy Paper 24*. UNESCO. Paris: UNESCO.

Mackenzie, P.J., Walker, J. 2015. Global Campaign for Education Policy Brief: Mother-tongue Education: Policy Lessons for Quality and Inclusion. *Global Campaign for Education*. 1-19.

Madriñan, M. S. (2014). The Use of First Language in the Second-Language Classroom: A Support for Second Language Acquisition. *Gist Education and Learning Research Journal*, 50-66.

Malarz, L. 1998. Bilingual Education: Effective Programming for Language-Minority Students. Curriculum Handbook. 1-23.

Ministry of Education, Human Resource, Development and Labor. 2012. Education Statistical Digest 2012, 1-221.

Ministry of Finance. (2015). *Budget Statement, 2015*. Parliament, Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and Social Security, Castries.

Ministry of Youth, Education and Culture. (2001). *Language Education Policy*. MOEYC. Kingston: MOEYC.

Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs, Planning and Social Security. 2013. *Economic and Social Review 2012: Research and Policy Unit*, St. Lucia, 1-61.

National Education Association. (2007, December). The Benefits of Second Language Study. *Regarding World Language Education*, 1-12.

Pacific Policy Research Center. 2010. Successful Bilingual and Immersion Education Models/Programs. Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools, Research and Evaluation Division.

Ramirez, N.F., Ramirez, R.R., Clarke, M., Taulu, S., Kuhl, P.K. 2016. Speech Discrimination in 11-month-old Bilingual and Monolingual Infants: A Magnetoencephalography Study. *Developmental Science*, 1-16.

Statistics, U. I. (2013). *Adult and Youth Literacy: National, Regional and Global Trends, 1985-2015*. Montreal: *UNESCO Institute for Statistics*.

St. Catherine, E. 2013. *Analysis of the St. Lucia Labor Market Needs Assessment Survey 2012*. *Ministry of Finance*, 1-28.

The Voice. (2015, March 5). CSEC Results Trending Upwards. *The Voice*, p. 1.

UNDP. 2015. *Human Development Report 2015 – St. Lucia*: UNDP, 1-7.

United Workers Party. 2016. *Manifesto*. 1-71.

VeneKlasen, L., Miller, V. 2007. *A New Weave of Power, People, and Politics*: Stylus Publishing, pp. 223