



PRESS RELEASE

4000 PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AND LEADERS RECEIVE COMPETENCY TRAINING IN FOUR TARGETED DISTRICTS

4000 teachers and school leaders in Bo, Kenema, Bombali and Port Loko districts have been invited to a series of weekly training programmes over the period of one month, “to provide increased professional development opportunities” to teachers and school leaders.

The training objective of the courses is in line with the “Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders” which sets out guidelines that illustrate the knowledge, skills, ethics and values that every teacher must have. They were developed by the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) in 2017, with support from the EU programme ***Support to the Education Sector in Sierra Leone (SESSiL)***, which aims to improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially at the primary level of education.

Over the next month, teachers and school leaders in various primary schools will attend a set of competency classes, where they will take various courses developed by the Teaching Service Commission to improve their skills and abilities in the professional practice of teaching. These include Content Knowledge, Pedagogy and Engagement with Communities and Colleagues. These competences will cover themes such as Mathematics, English Language, Pedagogy, Classroom Management, Special Needs and Inclusion, Assessment of Learning and for Learning, Leadership and the Teacher’s Professional Portfolio, or progress and skills attainment file.

By attending these classes, each teacher will gain a number of professional development credits that will enable them to move from one career stage to another. “For each class they take, they receive between three and five academic credits,” explains Dr Dennis Luseni, the Deputy Director, Teacher Development and Performance of the TSC. “Gaining a certain number of credits will lead to a teacher’s professional career advancement.”



Dr Dennis Luseni (with hand raised) addresses the hundreds of teachers and school leaders who showed up for the first set of competency classes held in Makeni. On the far right is Mr. Joseph Kargbo, Deputy Director, Teaching Service Commission, Makeni

Four career stages are outlined in the Professional Standards policy document, they are New Teacher, Proficient Teacher, Highly Accomplished Teacher and Distinguished teacher. "All teachers will start at the New Teacher level," says Dr Luseni. "In order to advance to the level of Proficient Teacher, they need a total of fifty credit hours." The competency classes that are now underway, give every teacher the opportunity to earn a maximum of nine credits. They can subsequently build on those nine credits by undergoing other professional development courses.

Anthony Kalawa Sesay is a senior teacher at St Francis Secondary School and one of the facilitators at the Competency Classes held in Makeni, Bombali District. He teaches Number Sense to a class of approximately forty teachers and school leaders. While he admits that most teachers already possess the knowledge of helping students with numbers and counting, he maintains that further training is necessary because many teachers shy away from teaching mathematics at this level. "We want to develop their skills with numbers and encourage them to overcome their fears." he says.



Anthony Kalawa Sesay explaining Number Sense to his class

Lucinda Koroma, a lecturer at the Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology, Makeni, handles the course Inclusive Education, that is understanding Children with Special Needs. "Children with special physical and mental needs tend to be discriminated against within the classroom

environment,” she says. “The Sierra Leone Education Act of 2004 states that every child should be



Lucinda Koroma in her Inclusive Education class

afforded a basic education in spite of their varying levels of capacity. In this course, we discuss the benefits of inclusive education to both pupils and teachers and how a positive attitude towards children with special needs contributes to the development of the nation as well.”

According to Dr Luseni, once all the subject areas have been covered, teachers will be graded and awarded credits, which will then go into report cards designed by the TSC to capture teacher data. “This data is going to be available in our district offices so that whenever a teacher earns credits from any other professional development course, they can update their report card and also their professional progress file called their portfolio,” he says.

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