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LEGACY



TRANSFORMATION IN ACTION

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**Bridging the Gap between Reform and Reality:
Implementation Stewardship (IS) and the Future of
Educational Transformation in Jamaica**



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Advancing Educational Transformation in Jamaica



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Bridging the Gap between Reform and Reality: Implementation Stewardship (IS) and the Future of Educational Transformation in Jamaica

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Overview

My interest in educational policy began in 2012 when I applied for an Australian scholarship to pursue graduate studies in Educational Policy at the University of Melbourne. Although that opportunity did not materialize, the application process sparked a curiosity that has remained with me throughout my career. As a classroom teacher, I watched successive governments introduce initiatives intended to improve educational quality, equity, and student achievement. While these reforms were often visionary and well intentioned, many teachers struggled to see the impact reflected consistently in everyday classroom practice. This disconnect led me to question whether the challenge is embedded not in policy itself, but in how policy is translated into practice. That question became more significant as I progressed through various leadership roles and eventually Edwin Allen High School's first Male Master Teacher. Each role offered a different perspective on leadership and reinforced the hard lesson that meaningful change is rarely driven by position alone. Rather, it is driven by influence, credibility, relationships, and the ability to mobilize people around a shared vision.

Throughout this journey, leadership has often reminded me of a bus ride. At times, you sit in the front supporting the driver. At other times, you work from the middle coordinating the passengers. Occasionally, you find yourself at the back encouraging others to move forward. And, if we are honest, there are moments when it feels as though the bus has run over you entirely. Yet every position offers valuable lessons about leadership, influence, and organizational change. Not everyone will become a principal, but every educator can lead meaningfully from wherever they are positioned. Furthermore, these experiences shaped not only my understanding of leading changes but also to ponder why some reforms succeed while others fail. Over time, I realized the answer is embedded less in policy design but in a leaders' ability to create the conditions that enable reform to take root, build stakeholder ownership, and produce lasting change.

Why Good Reforms Fail

Educational policymakers have, over the years, crafted reforms to improve teaching and learning. Moreover, successive administrations have invested substantial resources in curriculum reform, leadership development, teacher training, technology integration, and accountability systems with the expectation that these initiatives will improve student outcomes. Yet, despite the quality of many policy proposals, the anticipated improvements often fail to materialize. Therefore, If the reforms themselves are sound, why do so many fail to achieve lasting impact?

The Jamaica Education Transformation Commission concluded that many recommendations from the 2004 Task Force on Education failed to produce meaningful impact because of emphasis on institutional capacity while improvements in pedagogy remained limited (The Jamaica Education Transformation Commission, 2021, p. 2). In addition, these changes “are yet to have any meaningful effects on the academic performance of our students, the majority of whom continue to perform at well below the goals and standards set by the Task Force” (The Jamaica Education Transformation Commission, 2021, p. 2). Therefore, these recurring implementation challenges prompted me to reflect more deeply on what successful educational change truly requires. Over time, they led me to develop a practical leadership framework that ultimately became the foundation for what I now describe as *Implementation Stewardship (IS)*.

Introducing Implementation Stewardship

Implementation Stewardship (IS) is a framework that guides educational transformation from policy to practice by intentionally creating the organizational, relational, and contextual conditions necessary for sustainable improvement. Rather than viewing implementation as a compliance exercise, the framework recognizes it as a continuous leadership process that builds understanding, develops capacity, fosters collaboration, and sustains improvement over time. In addition, while policies establish directions, it is valuable human resources who determine whether change is understood, embraced, implemented, and sustained.

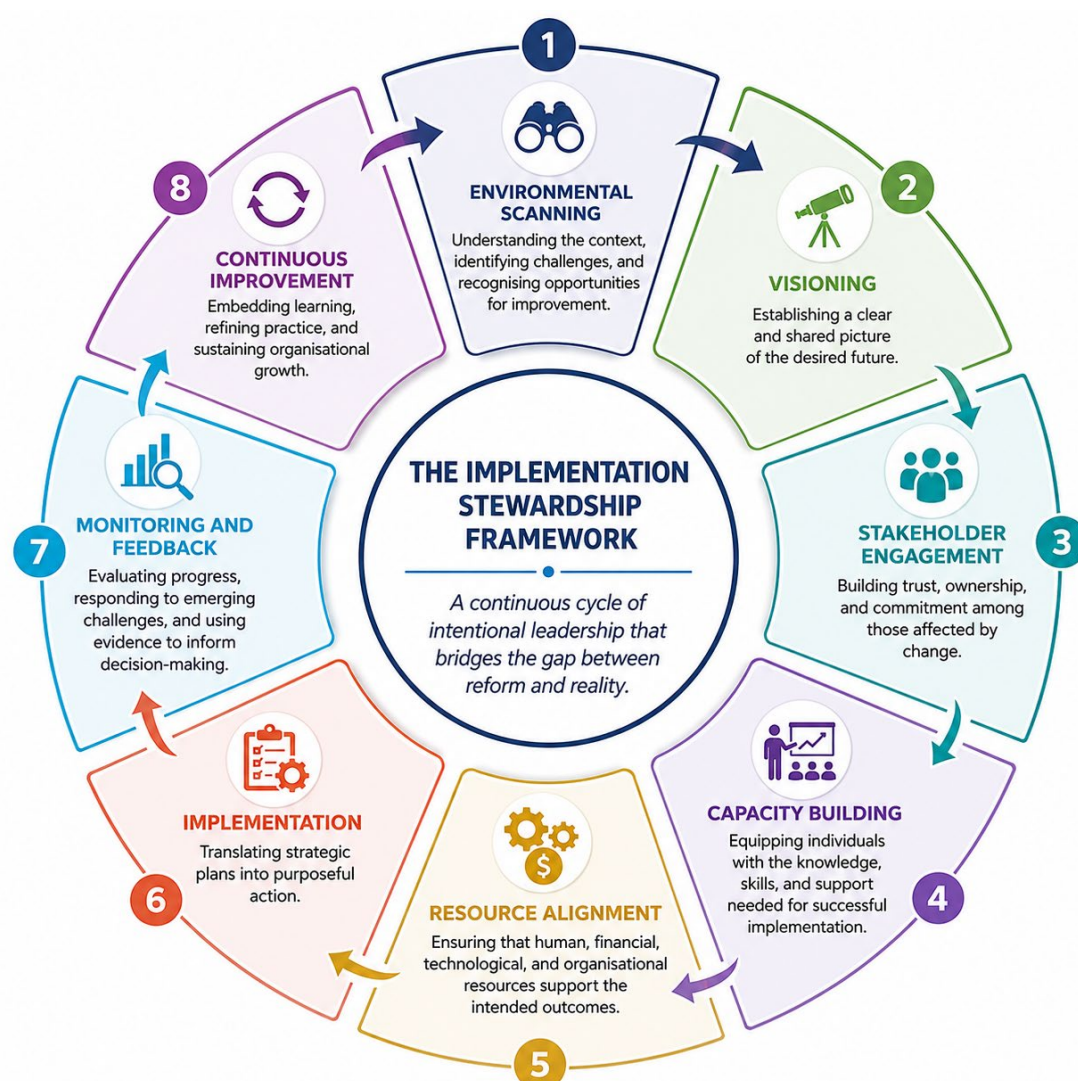


Figure 1 The Implementation Stewardship Framework

A practice-informed leadership framework illustrating the continuous cycle of implementation from environmental scanning through continuous improvement.

Although presented chronologically, these stages are not linear. Effective implementation requires school leaders to move continuously between them as circumstances evolve, new evidence emerges, and stakeholders’ needs change. The framework therefore encourages ongoing reflection, adaptation, and learning rather than a one-time implementation process.

This framework has been shaped through practice rather than abstract theory. It developed from years of leading school improvement initiatives, responding to National Education Inspectorate recommendations, analyzing student achievement data, engaging stakeholders, strengthening instructional leadership, and refining school improvement at Edwin Allen High School. Looking back, I recognized that the success of these initiatives depended less on the programmes themselves than on the deliberate leadership practices that supported their execution. While the framework is theoretical, its true value is demonstrated through practice. The initiatives undertaken at Edwin Allen High School illustrate how this approach translated strategic vision into measurable improvements in teaching, learning, stakeholder engagement, environmental stewardship, and organizational excellence.

Implementation Stewardship (IS) In Action

The true value of this leadership framework lies in its ability to translate vision into sustained practice. At Edwin Allen High School, IS was not applied through a single initiative. Distinctly, it provided the leadership approach that guided the planning, implementation, monitoring, and continuous refinement of several unified improvement strategies. Although each initiative addressed a separate school priority, collectively they demonstrate how intentional leadership, collaborative decision-making, and evidence-informed practice can transform reform into measurable and sustainable outcomes.

Building Capacity

From our 2015 and 2020 National Education Inspectorate (NEI) Reports, it highlighted weaknesses in instructional leadership, curriculum implementation, lesson planning, assessment practices, and the consistent use of data to improve teaching and learning. These findings prompted our leadership team to reflect critically on the school's existing practices and recognize that sustainable improvements in student achievement would require more than isolated interventions. Rather, they would require strengthening teachers' professional capacity while establishing systems capable of supporting continuous improvement.

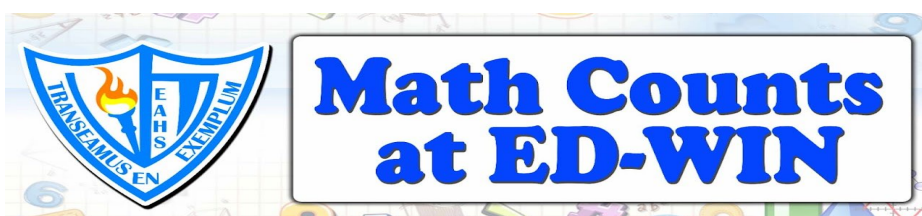
Consequently, the implementation journey began with strengthening the school's organizational infrastructure. During the 2021- 2022 academic year, under the leadership of Principal Jermaine Harris, the role of Dean of Academics was established to provide strategic oversight of curriculum implementation and academic improvement. At the same time, the Curriculum Implementation Team (CIT) was repositioned as the school's change agent. Regular CIT meetings became rooted within the academic calendar, creating a forum to engage our conversational competencies of visioning, creativity, relationship and implementation essential to transformational leadership.

As the work progressed, student achievement data, lesson observation findings, departmental reports, and stakeholder feedback were systematically analyzed to guide decision-making and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. This evidence-informed approach laid the foundation for the Innovation in Teacher-Student Engagement and Assessment through Collaboration for Holistic Development (I-TEACH) Initiative, which integrated professional learning communities, instructional coaching, standardized lesson planning, curriculum monitoring, diagnostic assessments, technology integration, and the development of an Artificial Intelligence Governance Framework. Collectively, these strategies strengthened collaboration, enhanced instructional practice, and fostered a culture of continuous learning and innovation.

Overtime, the initiative strengthened instructional leadership, promoted evidence-informed teaching, enhanced collaboration across departments, and improved curriculum implementation. More importantly, it established the organizational capacity needed to sustain ongoing school improvement rather than relying on short-term interventions. These efforts contributed to measurable gains in academic performance and were further affirmed when the school received the MOESYI/Region 7 School Awards for Innovation in Teaching and Learning at the School Leaders Conference 2026, recognizing the school's commitment to instructional excellence and continuous improvement.

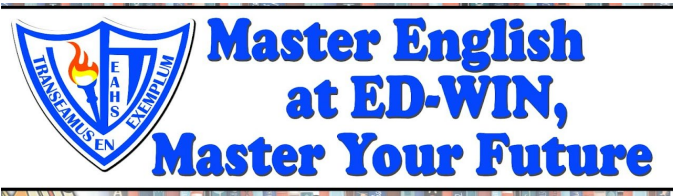


While the I-TEACH Initiative strengthened the school's instructional capacity, the leadership team recognized that this capacity had to be translated into measurable improvements in student achievement. Although academic performance had begun to improve, the school remained committed to increasing the proportion of students leaving with at least five CSEC subjects, including Mathematics and English Language, while ensuring that every learner had access to an appropriate pathway for success.



Building on the structures established through the Curriculum Implementation Team (CIT), the school introduced the ED-WIN 5 in 5 Framework as a strategic approach to improving academic outcomes. The 5 in 5 Policy reflects Edwin Allen High School's commitment to academic excellence, vocational competence, and career readiness. Aligned with the vision of our Principal, Mr. Jermaine Harris, this policy ensures that every

student entering Grade 7 graduates with at least five (5) subjects, including Mathematics and English at the CSEC or City and Guilds level. The framework aligned curriculum planning, targeted interventions, literacy and numeracy support, pathway placement, continuous assessment, and departmental collaboration around a shared vision of student success. Student performance data were routinely analyzed to identify learning needs, monitor progress, evaluate interventions, and inform instructional decisions. This approach encouraged collective responsibility, enabling teachers and to work collaboratively in supporting student achievement rather than operating in isolation.



Moreover, the framework contributed to sustained improvements in literacy, numeracy, and external examination performance while embedding a culture in which student success became a shared responsibility across the school. Evidence from the school’s self-evaluation demonstrates measurable improvements in overall CSEC performance, significant value-added gains across several subject areas, and a steady increase in the percentage of students attaining five (5) or more CSEC subjects, including Mathematics and English. These outcomes reflect the impact of aligning instructional practice, continuous monitoring, and collaborative leadership around a common goal of improving learning for every student.

EDUCATION

Edwin Allen High Back on Track Under National School Learning Intervention Plan

The Clarendon-based institution is celebrating a 74.1 per cent pass rate in Mathematics in the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC).



Strengthening Partnerships: Edwin Connect

As instructional systems became more firmly established, it became increasingly evident that sustainable school improvement could not be achieved through internal leadership alone. Lasting transformation required the confidence, participation, and collective ownership of parents, alumni, community partners, and other stakeholders. Recognizing that meaningful partnerships are built through consistent communication and shared responsibility, the school introduced Edwin Connect as its strategic stakeholder engagement framework.

Guided by the principles of IS, Edwin Connect created structured opportunities for collaboration through town hall meetings, virtual conferences, WhatsApp communication, alumni engagement, career expos, and strategic partnerships with community organizations. In addition, through the support of our stakeholders, the school has established scholarship opportunities valued at more than \$6 million (JMD) for our students and successfully published two digital scholarship magazines to recognize and promote these initiatives. This has strengthened communication, encouraged stakeholder participation in school improvement, and fostered a shared commitment to student success. Rather than viewing parents and community members as external supporters, the framework positioned them as active partners in the educational process.

The impact of this collaborative approach extended beyond improved communication. Stakeholder confidence increased, parental engagement became more consistent, alumni involvement expanded, and community partnerships contributed directly to the school's strategic priorities and student development initiatives. These collective efforts strengthened the school's culture of shared accountability and were formally recognized at the MOESYI/Region 7 School Awards by receiving the Best School-Community Partnership Award.

PRESENTS
ED-WIN CONNECT

NOVEMBER 23, 2025 | 4PM - 5PM

HOST
JERMAINE HARRIS
(PRINCIPAL)

THIS WEEK THE PRINCIPAL WILL:

- 1** **PRESENT THE 2025 TOP CSEC & CAPE PASSES**
- 2** **SHARE SCHOOL UPDATES**
- 3** **ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM STAKEHOLDERS**

CORE VALUES

Building Responsible Citizens: Sustain-ED



As academic performance improved and stakeholder partnerships strengthened, the school's leadership recognized that educational success must also be measured by the character, values, and civic responsibility of its students. For this reason, the school sought to create meaningful opportunities for students to apply their learning beyond the classroom while contributing positively to their communities and the environment.

This commitment led to the introduction of the Sustain-EDWIN Waste Reduction and Recycling Initiative, which integrated environmental education with practical action through campus-wide recycling programmes, student leadership initiatives, environmental awareness campaigns, and strategic partnerships with agencies such as the National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA) and Recycling Partners of Jamaica. By engaging students in authentic sustainability projects, the

initiative enabled them to address real-world environmental challenges while developing leadership, teamwork, problem-solving skills, and a greater sense of civic responsibility.

The initiative not only increased environmental awareness across the school community but also strengthened external partnerships, attracted additional support for environmental programmes, and reinforced the school's commitment to holistic education. More importantly, Sustain-ED demonstrated that educational transformation extends beyond academic achievement to prepare students to become responsible citizens capable of making meaningful contributions to society. In this way, the initiative exemplified another dimension by creating learning experiences that connect curriculum, community engagement, and character development in ways that produce lasting educational impact.

LAUNCH OF THE SUSTAIN-EDWIN PROJECT



Lessons Learned



Viewed collectively, these initiatives demonstrate that successful educational reform is rarely the result of isolated programmes. Instead, lasting improvement depends on building organizational capacity, establishing collaborative structures, using evidence to guide decisions, engaging stakeholders meaningfully, and continuously refining practice in response to emerging needs. The Curriculum Implementation Team served as the strategic mechanism through which these principles were translated into action.

I have come to appreciate that educational transformation depends as much on people as it does on policy. While every school operates within its own context, four enduring lessons emerged from our experience that continue to shape my approach to educational leadership.

The lessons from Edwin Allen High School extend beyond a single institution and offer practical insights for educational leaders navigating Jamaica's evolving reform agenda. As initiatives such as the National School Leaving Certificate (NSLC), the Education Management Information System (EMIS), ZyQual, and the integration of Artificial Intelligence continue to reshape education, successful reform will depend not only on sound policy but also on effective implementation. The experiences presented in this article informed the development of the Implementation Stewardship (IS) framework, which offers a practical, adaptable approach to translating reform into practice. While every school's context is unique, enduring educational transformation requires leadership, organizational capacity, and sustained commitment to implementation.

Conclusion

While policies establish direction and reforms articulate ambition, meaningful change occurs only when leaders intentionally translate policy into practice. The experiences at Edwin Allen High School demonstrate that lasting improvement is built not through isolated initiatives, but through professional capacity, collaborative relationships, evidence-informed decision-making, and a culture of continuous improvement. Although every school's context is unique, these principles provide practical guidance for educational leaders seeking to implement reform successfully. As Jamaica's education system continues to evolve, school leaders must remain intentional, adaptive, and committed to stewarding implementation with the same care devoted to developing policy.

Figure 2. Leadership Lessons Emerging from Implementation Stewardship



References

The Jamaica Education Transformation Commission. (2021). [The reform of education in Jamaica, 2021](#). Office of the Prime Minister, Jamaica.



Joel Gray is a Master Teacher, Co-Head of the Humanities Department, Dean of Academics, and Head of the Curriculum Implementation Team at Edwin Allen High School, with more than 18 years of experience in secondary education. He previously served as Acting Vice-Principal of Programmes and has contributed to improvement initiatives which have strengthened teaching, learning, stakeholder engagement, and student achievement. Joel holds a Master of Science in Management and Educational Leadership and is nationally recognized for excellence in teaching through his Master Teacher designation. Professional interests include educational leadership, policy implementation, school improvement, curriculum innovation, and the ethical integration of emerging technologies in education. Through his work, he advocates for Implementation Stewardship as a practical leadership framework for translating educational reform into sustainable educational improvement.



Legacy is the official journal of The Worthy Educator, elevating the good work being done by leaders in education who are working to change the narrative on the profession and actively plan for impact that transforms its future to serve the needs of a diverse, decentralized, global society that is inclusive, equitable and open to all people as next generations adapt, evolve and contribute by solving problems and creating solutions that meet the needs of a world we have yet to envision.

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