

National Report

**National Assessment of Achievement of Students
Completing Grade 8 in Year 2014 in Sri Lanka**

**Ministry of Education
National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC)**

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Message from the Secretary, Ministry of Education

It is my pleasure and privilege to write this message as the Secretary of Ministry of Education on the 'National Assessment of Achievement of Students Completing Grade 8 in Year 2014 in Sri Lanka'. Conducting periodical national assessments is one of the major activities of the Education Sector Development Framework and Programme (ESDFP) (2012-2016). This is an important practice which is exercised to reveal the achievement levels of students in various grades. While it enables teachers to understand the levels of achievement of students, it also provides an opportunity to policy-makers to determine the performance of the education system through learning outcomes, to what extent the educational development programmes and investments have been successful and what steps should be taken further to upgrade the performance. In Sri Lanka, recommendations and suggestions of the national assessments are predominantly used for policy-making purposes and also designing quality development programmes. Considering the importance of this exercise, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has planned to continue these assessments periodically and effectively.

The Ministry of Education, with the financial assistance of the World Bank, has commissioned the National Education Research and Evaluation Center (NEREC) of the Faculty of Education, University of Colombo to conduct a series of national assessments to determine the levels of achievement of students in grades 4 and 8, during the past several years. Its latest national assessment reveals factors that are particularly significant in order to enhance teaching and learning, analysed by various aspects such as types of schools, gender, and medium of instruction, location and competency levels of students who completed grade 8 in the year 2014.

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Abbreviations

EFA	Education for All
ESDFP	Education Sector Development Framework and Programme
ESS	Effective Sample Size
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
NEREC	National Education Research and Evaluation Centre
PPS	Probability Proportional to Size
roh	Rate of homogeneity
SD	Standard deviation
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

Executive Summary

National Assessment of Achievement is generally considered as an important investigation of schools and students (and sometimes teachers) that is designed to provide evidence about students' achievements at a particular stage of education, in identified curriculum areas such as, reading or writing, English language, mathematics or science. National assessments can play a critical role in demonstrating the efficiency or otherwise of all other investments in education.

NEREC has conducted National Assessments of Learning Outcomes both at primary and secondary levels. At secondary level, National Assessments of Learning Outcomes were conducted for Grade 8 in 2005, 2008 and 2012. This report presents the findings of the National Assessment conducted in grade 8 for English, mathematics and science in the year 2014.

The National Assessment conducted in 2012 used new instruments and as such a comparison of achievement levels with previous years was not possible. It served as a starting point for monitoring the level and distribution of learning outcomes overtime. The National Assessment of Achievement of 2014 used the same instruments that were used in 2012 to test cognitive skills in English, mathematics and science in keeping with the new competency based curriculum which was introduced to grade 8 in 2009.

The present National Assessments covered the entire country and the sample was drawn to enable analysis by type of school, gender, medium of instruction and location of schools. Patterns in learning achievement were discussed using mean, median, skewness of the distribution, cumulative percentages and percentile ranks. Furthermore, graphs including frequency polygons and box plots were also used. Data gathered through the achievement tests were analyzed on national and provincial bases in relation to school type, gender, medium of instruction and school location.

Moreover, to test the generalizability of results, statistical tests such as t-tests and F-tests were conducted. Findings of the National Assessment in 2014 revealed that

the achievement level of students completing grade 8 in 2014 is above 35 marks in all three subjects.

Further to the above, the findings revealed that there is disparity in achievement in all the three subjects in relation to school location, gender, medium of instruction and school type.

Differences in achievement of competencies related to the three subjects tested can also be seen in varying degrees.