

# VESP View

## VANUATU EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAM

April 2018

Issue 8: Promising Literacy and  
Numeracy results for Vanuatu



**The Vanuatu Standardised Test of Achievement is a large-scale literacy and numeracy assessment that was recently administered by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) to all students in years 4 and 6. Support was provided from the Vanuatu Education Support Program. This assessment complements the broader regional Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) administered to a sample of year 4 and 6 students in the Pacific. The VANSTA revealed some encouraging results for Vanuatu.**

### A partnership to improve Literacy and Numeracy in Vanuatu

The MoET is currently engaged in the large-scale curriculum reform of the primary years of schooling to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students.

With the support of VESP, the Ministry commenced the rollout of the new curriculum for years 1-3 in 2015. As part of supporting the new curriculum, the MoET and VESP worked in partnership to reintroduce the Vanuatu Standardised Test of Achievement, a national assessment activity that measures students' achievement in both literacy and numeracy.

Instructions in the VANSTA are written in French and English to accommodate students in francophone and anglophone schools. VANSTA tests the essential literacy and numeracy skills students need to make successful progression in subsequent years of schooling.

Results from the VANSTA administered in 2007 and then in 2009 showed a large proportion of students in years 4 and 6 did not reach the numeracy, reading comprehension and writing outcomes generally expected at their grade level. The

test administered in 2017 suggests significant improvements. Caution must however be exercised when comparing results between the 2007 and 2009 tests because they were different.

The development of the revised VANSTA followed a rigorous path to ensure reliability and validity of the test. In 2016, pilot tests in year 4 and 6 literacy and numeracy were developed by the Examination and Assessment Unit (EAU) and Curriculum Development Unit (CDU), in cooperation with a number of Vanuatu teachers. A key aspect of the revised VANSTA was referencing test items to minimum standards for literacy and numeracy at years 4 and 6. VANSTA pilot, 2015 PILNA results and information from the syllabus contributed to the development of the Vanuatu minimum standards for literacy and numeracy at years 4 and 6. Subsequently, the 2017 VANSTA test was developed that included questions at above and below the pitch of the national minimum standards. A statistical process was then used to determine each student's achievement relevant to the minimum standards.



## Improvements in literacy and numeracy over the last 8 years

Over 6,000 year 4 students and 5,000 year 6 students sat the revised VANSTA in early October 2017. This successful national assessment took many months to organise and is a credit to the MoET and schools throughout Vanuatu who participated. After the extensive data collection and then analysis of literacy and numeracy, the promising VANSTA results were officially shared by CDU with the Ministry and with Provincial Education Officers during the Curriculum Forum held in Port Vila from 16th to 20th April 2018. In summary, the proportion of students meeting the **minimum numeracy standards** at year 4 (86%) and year 6 (74%) has improved by more than 40% since the last VANSTA in 2009. In literacy, 64% of French speaking students and 65% of English speaking students met the year 4 **minimum literacy standards**. This is a considerable improvement since the last VANSTA in 2009, when only 23% met the previously defined

standards. Comparisons between the levels of achievement in each language show a high degree of consistency, suggesting that the under-performance of some students in VANSTA is not a result of the language of instruction or the teaching methods.

The VANSTA results were sent out to every school in April. The VANSTA report shows the proportion of students at each of the schools who have achieved, exceeded or fell below minimum standards of achievement for literacy and numeracy. The VANSTA results also provide school teachers with diagnostic information about their students' achievement that can help them plan and deliver appropriate programs for their students. Each school is also provided with the data about how individual students performed in the VANSTA, compared with the minimum standards for literacy and numeracy.

The summary results for the 2017 VANSTA tests are included in the table below

2017 VANSTA	Level of Achievement			
	Critically below	Approaching	Meeting	Exceeding
English Literacy - Year 4	441 (11%)	1022 (24%)	1457 (35%)	1280 (30 %)
English Literacy - Year 6	401 (11%)	526 (15%)	1515 (43%)	1054 (30%)
French Literacy - Year 4	267 (13%)	438 (22%)	688 (34%)	603 (30%)
French Literacy - Year 6	493 (32%)	417 (27%)	450 (30%)	161 (11%)
Numeracy - Year 4	387 (6%)	474 (8%)	2719 (44%)	2531 (41%)
Numeracy - Year 6	487 (10%)	820 (16%)	2062 (41%)	1706 (34%)

2017 VANSTA results per level of achievement

## VANSTA can drive school improvements

The VANSTA report provided to schools compares the performances of all schools within the same province, as well as across Vanuatu. The aim of VANSTA is to drive improvement by providing schools with student performance data. This means targets for literacy and numeracy can be set and intervention strategies adopted by schools. Provincial office staff will also get relevant information about their schools so they can prioritize the support required. At a national level, the 2017 VANSTA results will enable MoET to continue its work on a literacy and numeracy improvement strategy. In the future VANSTA tests, the schools, provinces and the MoET will be able to measure progress towards their literacy and numeracy targets.



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