

What do we mean by Child-Friendly Schools (CFS)?

The term “child-friendly school” has been used to refer to a school where children and adolescents acquire and develop knowledge, abilities and life skills in a healthy and safe environment which is inclusive, protective, and respectful of gender differences and of cultural diversity.

CFS are concerned as much with the health, safety, security, nutritional status and psychological well-being of the child as they are with teacher training and the appropriateness of the teaching methods and learning resources.

They also focus on creating opportunities for children to express their views and opinions as they do with helping children learn to follow rules and regulations. Child Friendly Schools also have a strong link with the communities.

What are CFS standards?

CFS have three main principles:

- n **Child-centredness:** This suggests that everything is done in the best interest of the child (ensuring that lunch and breaks are set, the size of the classes are appropriate, the teaching methodology is appropriate: that there is a safe area for play: positive discipline is practice)
- n **Democratic participation:** This is a process where all stakeholders (including children and their parents) have a say in the curriculum; children are involved in student governance and have interactive classrooms so that the curriculum is relevant to the students
- n **Inclusiveness:** This means that all children have a right to education, regardless of their race, ability, gender, ethnicity, etc.

These principles can lead to the transformation of the physical facilities and services offered by schools. They also seek to address teaching and learning methods and to enhance the learning environment for students, ensuring a strong link with communities.

What aspects of CFS are being focused on in the Eastern Caribbean?

There are different approaches to the CFS model across the world. In the Eastern Caribbean, the focus is on developing CFS standards with a main emphasis on the reduction of violence against and among children in schools. In this regard the focus is on the implementation of :

- n **Positive Behavioral Management practices in schools**
- n **Inclusive, Learning-Ready Classrooms**
- n **Skills-based Health and Family Life Education and healthy lifestyles**
- n **Systems that encourage the participation of children**
- n **Systems that encourage parental and community Involvement**
- n **Systems that ensure the protection of children**



Why is there a need to focus on these aspects of CFS?

Schools in the Eastern Caribbean already integrate some child-friendly elements.

However, some challenges exist and these include:

- n Limited access for all children, for example for children with disabilities;

- n Limited focus on second chance formal education opportunities (for example for teen mothers and for suspected juvenile offenders);
- n Limited emphasis on positive approaches to discipline in many schools.
- n Children and adolescents lacking the relevant lifeskills to make informed choices on issues relating to peer pressure, drugs, their sexual and reproductive health among other issues. Further the rising incidences of non-communicable diseases such as obesity among children.
- n Limited support for children to be involved in school governance.

These have been some of the factors that have helped determined the focus of the CFS practices in the Eastern Caribbean.

Which countries in the Eastern Caribbean are involved?

To date, schools in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica and St. Lucia are involved, reaching approximately 9,933 students. Schools in other countries have expressed an interest in becoming involved as they learn more about the successes in other schools.

Who is leading the process in the countries?

The Ministry of Education in each country is leading the process with some technical support from the UNICEF Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean.

What is actually involved in the process of becoming a CFS?

To date, the Ministries of Education in the countries have selected schools that it would like to be involved, based on their interest and geographical spread. Each school

has undertaken a needs assessment and then based on this, they develop a plan of action towards making their schools more child-friendly. The action plan also includes a monitoring plan for their interventions, which may vary from school to school.

What were the criteria for selecting schools?

Each Ministry of Education has its own criteria for selecting schools. Nevertheless this does not, and has not prevented other schools that were not selected in the initial phase from learning about what is being done and implementing some of the practices at their schools.

What has been UNICEF's role?

UNICEF's primary role has been providing technical and financial assistance for the assessments that schools have undertaken, and providing support for the training of teachers and Principals on positive behavioral management and on classroom management techniques.

Are other partners on board?

Yes. In each of the countries, the Teachers' Union has been consulted and efforts are being made to involve civil



society groups, especially those who work in schools on board. In some countries the private sector has also come on board.

Will the implementation of the positive behavioral management aspect of CFS solve the problem of violence in schools?

Implementing CFS practices is not a quick-fix to all the problems that a school faces. However documentation has shown that those schools implementing CFS practices have reported that their students are "more settled;" there are choosing less violent means to resolve their conflicts and that the school environment is generally calmer.

How can I learn more about Child Friendly Schools practices in my country?

To learn more about Child Friendly Schools practices you can contact the Ministry of Education in your country, if your country has already implemented CFS practices in schools. You can also contact the UNICEF Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean at 246 476-6000 or email: bridgetown@unicef.org

What plans are there for the future?

It is hoped that the results and changes at the schools that are involved will be used as evidence for policy makers to develop and implement national and sub-regional policies on CFS in the Eastern Caribbean. Policies that will ensure that children attend safe, healthy, inclusive schools which teach them lifeskills and to be participating citizens of

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Frequently Asked Questions about Child Friendly Schools practices in the Eastern Caribbean

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