

UNESCO International Literacy Day

This year, UNESCO is celebrating International Literacy Day (ILD) 2022 on the 8th of September under the theme - *Transforming Literacy Learning Space* - a global call to action that informs and inspires people of the importance of literacy learning spaces to build inclusive education for all. More than anything, ILD is for everyone to continue the celebration of progress achieved in literacy since the day it was first established in 1967. According to UNESCO, ILD aims to remind the public of the value of literacy as a matter of dignity and human rights. Yet, universally, there are still serious barriers to be addressed, as seven hundred and seventy-one million people in the world, two-thirds of whom are females, lack even the most basic literacy skills.

While the theme may seem daunting, it is to be acknowledged in a post-COVID society where, across the globe, many are still trying to adjust and adapt unique solutions in environments that have different features but are faced with a similar situation. In light of this, consideration and support for both formal and informal learning spaces in this transformation process is deemed critical by UNESCO and local stakeholders. Whether it is the traditional classroom setting, home learning, community centres, and other outdoor facilities, positive and appropriate educational literacy outcomes are concerns to be addressed, in addition to sensitivity to the learners through the provision of quality and inclusive learning spaces. These spaces are not limited to the physical environment but include psychosocial and cultural activities that are suitable to the socio-economic realities of all individuals.

In Jamaica, the government's Ministry of Education, Youth, and Information (MOEY) has much work to do in underscoring the importance of ILD. Media reports suggest that thousands of students have been and still are directly impacted by the global health pandemic. The absence of formal and safe learning spaces, the massive shift to digital technology, and issues of connectivity highlight the disparities faced by several households. With its mantra of "Every child can learn, every child must learn", MOEY has initiated projects to explore and provide online programmes with appropriate learning tools and resources that support improved literacy in students.

At a more general and basic level, literacy is a skill necessary for everyday life, enhanced through the interplay of the physical and virtual, since classrooms are no longer the singular hubs of learning. This is further reinforced by governments, citizens, private stakeholders, and the ability of other agencies to find sustainable strategies that can stimulate all children in spaces that foster community, mental wellness, amicable relationships, creativity, technology, and personal accessibility.

It is critical that we increase awareness of the different types of learning spaces available, promote them, and ensure that these are safe and equally accessible, but also take into account the unique needs of each learner. So, the task remains for everyone to realize and reflect on literacy as a significant foundational component of our daily lives. No matter what challenges there are, we can appreciate the achievements of the past and present while embracing new modalities of literacy through the evolution of advanced technologies.

Let us encourage, organize, share ideas, create, have fun, and dedicate some time to discover how we can influence ILD 2022!

Sources

UNESCO International Literacy Day 8 September. <https://www.unesco.org/en/days/literacy-day>

What Do Educators Need To Know About Learning Spaces?
<https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/learning-spaces/>

2022 International Literacy Day Activities for All Ages
<https://www.hmhco.com/blog/international-literacy-day>

September 8 is International Literacy Day. <https://moey.gov.jm/september-8-is-international-literacy-day/>

World Literacy Day- September 8, 2022. <https://nationaltoday.com/world-literary-day/>



(Photo credit - Getty Images/ iStockphoto)