

# ELiTE plan to boost English proficiency

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** A plan to double the periods for English lessons will be tried out in schools in a bid to boost the pupils' proficiency in the language.

A pilot project to give Year One students 18 English lessons a week instead of the present eight would begin soon in 50 schools, said Education Ministry director-general Datuk Dr Ahamad Sipon.

The year-long project, called "ELiTE or Early Literacy Through English programme", will see the Mathematics and Science lessons, of which there are seven and three periods a week respectively, effectively turned into English lessons.

The Mathematics and Science teachers will continue teaching their pupils but their focus will be to get the seven-year-olds more comfortable with the English language.

"We have selected schools with poor results in the English language, especially those in the rural areas. We want to give them a strong foundation so that the pupils can grasp the subjects better in the following years. This means giving them greater exposure to English from the start," Ahamad said.

He said pupils would still study Mathematics and Science but designed to familiarise them with spelling, reading and writing in English.

"Mastery learning" would be the approach, he said, and short phrases and simple sentences would feature heavily in the classroom.

"We will teach them how to spell 'eye' or 'nose' and get them comfortable with English terms, such as plus,

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*Datuk Dr Ahamad Sipon  
Education Ministry  
director-general*

minus and numbers," he said, adding that this would better prepare them for heavier lessons in Science and Mathematics in English later.

The plan is part of the ministry's efforts to help illiterate pupils in Year One, who then struggle in their subsequent years in school.

Last year, 163,835 Year One pupils who had trouble reading and writing were enrolled into the Early Interven-

tion Programme for Reading and Writing (KIA2M), later taking "exit tests" to determine their entry into normal classes.

The programme managed to halve the figure and in a surprise result, detected 6,000 pupils with special educational needs.

Educationists have noted that pupils with reading and writing problems often ended up with disciplinary problems or dropped out of the educational system.

Ahamad said ELiTE would be paired with KIA2M and other remedial programmes to nip that problem in the bud.

The programme will be conducted in 20 schools in Kelantan, 20 in Terengganu, five in Bentong, Pahang and five in Sembrong, Johor. The teachers involved will be trained in a special module this month.

Ahamad said there would be a test for the pupils under the programme at the end of May, to see if they required additional help.

"We will monitor the programme closely. The pupils will not have a problem completing the syllabus because once they grasp the language, they can learn better."