

SSND Haiti Partnership

Year 2 Teacher Training Initiative

Lagonav, Haiti

July 19, 2018

Year 2 of the Teacher Training initiative at the Matenwa Education Center on Lagonav concluded July 6, 2018 with twenty-two Haitian teachers participating. The Teacher Training initiative is effective and able to grow in scale because each of the trainee-teachers incorporates what he/she is learning into their year-long work of training other teachers in the across the island in a program which spans a network of 25 schools on Lagonav with a total student population of approximately 3,000.



Teacher Training, Lagonav, Haiti, Summer 2018

At the commencement of the training program the three-member team of teacher-educators from Notre Dame of Maryland University, Sister Sharon Slear, Dr. Kathy Sipes, and Dr. Cindy Cottone, made its way from Baltimore to Ft. Lauderdale to Port-au-Prince to Lagonav Island. According to Sister Sharon Slear, coordinator of the project, “each leg of the journey brought back increasingly vivid memories of our first trip.

Initial recollections of heat, dust, and roosters crowing at 4:00 a.m. were quickly replaced by memories of the hospitality and warmth of our host family the enthusiasm and gratitude of the teachers in the training program, and the joyful shouts of the children who were attending the summer session of the school and who would ultimately benefit from the training. “

The instructional sessions this summer built on and expanded the initiatives from last year. Previously, teachers-in-training had been given basic information on early childhood pre-reading and mathematics skills as well as fine and gross motor development for young children. This year's instructional focus was two-fold: on special education topics including the recognition and response to anxiety, ADHD, autism, and related issues and strategies for classroom grouping utilizing differentiated instructional strategies and learning games.

Teachers in the training program listened intently as they learned about the signs of anxiety in children. As the facts were translated by Brian Stevens, the outstanding interpreter from Beyond Borders and SSND's partner in the Haiti initiative, teachers began nodding their heads in agreement as they recognized behaviors they had seen in their own classrooms. They were grateful to hear of strategies that would alleviate these symptoms, as, for example, deep breathing techniques, using puppets to assist children in expressing their feelings, and providing safe places with stuffed animals to cuddle. In a country that has had to deal with the repercussions from hurricanes, earthquakes, and pervasive and debilitating poverty, young and old alike suffer from the aftermath of trauma. As one of the teachers stated, "These techniques will help us, and not only the children."



Instructors Kathy Sipes, Sharon Slear, and Cindy Cottone

The second area of emphasis this year was on grouping and differentiated instruction in the classroom. In order to work successfully in small groups, students must be involved in activities that either review or enrich learning and can be engaged in without the presence of the teacher. The instructional team brought many manipulatives and resources for the teachers and explained the learning games and activities. Teachers enjoyed learning games using dice, counters, and manipulatives. All of the materials were re-usable so these small group activities can be incorporated into Haitian classrooms beginning the next term. Teacher response to the new materials was enthusiastic! It seems that a universal trait of teachers is their appreciation of classroom resources.



Learning the Haitian Alphabet

The Years 3 and 4 plan for the teacher training initiative will include a residential program on a site in Port au Prince and these will be held during the summers of 2019 and 2020. These more intensive sessions will include a focus on reading and mathematics strategies for pre-K through grade six. In addition, years 3-4 of training will include those specific skills that can improve the trainees work in training their colleagues across the island.

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