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## Final Set of Teachers Graduate Under ACEP



The early childhood education system in central Jamaica is set to be further bolstered following the graduation of the fifth and final cohort of teachers under the Advancing Childhood Education Programme (ACEP) recently. The programme, which was funded by Jamalco and Noble Foundation, was facilitated by the Mico University with support from the Early Childhood Commission of Jamaica.

During the one-year programme, teachers were trained in Literacy, Numeracy, Human Exceptionalities and Child Development to introduce them to fundamental principles needed to guide and prepare students to achieve the necessary mastery in critical areas at the early childhood level. The programme also offered a parenting component geared towards equipping parents with the skills and knowledge to become better parents. Training for the parents was conducted through a series of workshops organized by the Early Childhood Commission.

Keynote speaker and Chairman of the Early Childhood Commission, Trisha Williams-Singh, noted that it is important that the fundamentals of early childhood education is taught to every teacher because of the difference it makes in the lives of children.

"The most impactful years of a child's life is the first 1000 days and as adults, everything that we do should be about them."

Mrs. Williams Singh explained that with only 10 out of the 256 early childhood institutions in Clarendon achieving the 12 operating standards, the early Childhood Commission is working "very hard to change the attitude to early childhood education".

She also implored the graduates not to accept the status quo. "Go back to your institutions and your communities and help us work toward achieving the 12 standards," she said.

Director of HR, Security and Corporate Services, Christopher Buckmaster, says ACEP was implemented to address the low literacy and numeracy rates of students in its operating areas.

"We considered it prudent to invest in improving the early childhood system in Central Jamaica instead of trying to implement remedial strategies years later when the damage would have been too great to easily fix," he said.

This was done by targeting educators, who often lacked the basic training to help their students achieve the necessary mastery in critical subject areas.

Valedictorian of the graduating class, Areatia Knight-Mitchell said ACEP was “a journey that changed our lives for the better” and thanked the programme facilitators “for imparting valuable information to us”.

Meanwhile, graduate, Paula Montague-Rowe, said, “ACEP has truly transformed my life. When I started the course, I was the unemployed mother of a special needs child; but, having embarked upon this journey, I am now a part time teacher of literacy at Innswood High School and student at The Mico University College... None of this would be possible without Jamalco.

Since its inception in 2009, over 400 early childhood practitioners have been trained and certified and are now employed in early childhood institutions primarily in Clarendon and Manchester.

*Photo: Graduates from the 2019 graduating class. Sharing the moment with the graduates are (seated, from left): Former Secretary, Mico Foundation, Laban Roomes; Project Manager Mico University College, Sharon Heslop-Brown, Chaiman, Early Childhood Commission, Trisha Williams-Singh; Manager, Corporate Services, **Donna Marie Brooks-Gordon**; Director, HR, Security and Corporate Services, **Christopher Buckmaster**; CEO, United Way of Jamaica, Winsome Wilkins and Director, , Regulations & Monitoring - Early Childhood Commission, Tracy-Ann Morgan-Smith.*