

Faculty Handbook for Teaching in Jamaica

Section 1 -- Preparing for Your Jamaican Teaching Assignment

A. Our Teacher Education Mission in Jamaica

This program has the same fundamental mission as the teacher education program on campus -- to improve the educational experiences of young people in schools. In Cullowhee we primarily serve the teachers and children of the Southeast region of the United States, particularly North Carolina. In Jamaica, we serve the teachers and children of this Caribbean nation.

The differences between the two nations, their cultures, and their educational systems create differences in the ways we approach our mission. Compared to U.S. schools, Jamaican classes are large. Teachers typically have class rosters of fifty to sixty children. Classrooms, however, are similar in size to those in the U.S. Student attendance is often sporadic.

Many Jamaican children grow up speaking *Patois* in their homes. This is an unwritten language developed by the slaves to secretly communicate with each other. Consequently, it is an important part of their culture. One goal of the schools, however, is to increase English literacy, so children are expected to speak, read and write English by the time they leave elementary school. Having two languages, one which is a part of their heritage and cultural pride, and another which represents the official language, sometimes increases the literacy difficulties experienced by Jamaican children.

An understanding of these cultural differences is important for professors as they try to find ways to help Jamaican teachers become more effective with their students. Consequently, while teaching in Jamaica, professors are expected to set aside at least one-half day to visit a Jamaican K-12 school. The best way to arrange such a visit is to ask the on-site WCU program coordinator to schedule a visit to a school. The purpose of the visit is to become a student of Jamaican schools.

Finally, this program is designed to involve several types of experiences for the Jamaican students. Ten days of classes during a two-week stay in Jamaica is one part of the course. Two other parts are those experiences required before you arrive in Jamaica and the assignments required after the two-week class is finished. Students are expected to read material before the professor arrives and to complete course requirements after the professor leaves the island. If professors plan adequately during the semester prior to the teaching assignment, these can be valuable learning experiences that complement in-class experiences.

B. Timeline

Four months prior to a teaching assignment in Jamaica, the instructor should contact Educational Outreach, which administers the Jamaica program. Educational Outreach staff will assist you in acquiring an application for a passport. They will also want to know your plans for travel, books and

materials ahead of time. Educational Outreach will order and ship the books for you. Materials to be copied should be sent (via email or hard copy) to Lois Stiles, Educational Outreach. She will coordinate the copying of materials with Mr. Bailey. All materials (books, syllabi, handouts) have to be sent to Jamaica 6-weeks prior to the start of the class. Check with Educational Outreach to find out how, where, when, and how much.

Mr. Bailey will handle the course evaluations. (NCATE requires evaluations of all courses taught by WCU faculty.)

C. Covering WCU Classes

Work with your department head to cover campus classes during your absence. Tests or guest speakers should be scheduled for class sessions you cannot attend. Teaching in Jamaica is an opportunity to enrich both the professional perspectives of faculty as well as those of students remaining on campus. Be sure to plan good educational experiences for your students while you are gone.

Before you leave, complete a Course Coverage Information Sheet and submit it to your Dean's Office.

Section 2 -- An Introduction to Jamaican Schools

A. Types of Schools

Depending on their family economic condition, aptitudes and career goals, Jamaican children progress through the following schools:

Kindergarten or Infant School for ages 2.5 to 6.

Preparatory Schools for ages 3-12.

Primary School for ages 6-12.

All-Age Schools for ages 6-15.

Junior High Schools for ages 13-17.

Comprehensive High School for ages 13-18.

Technical High School for ages 14-18.

Jamaican children of the same age attend different types of schools because Jamaican schools have different missions. The difference between a kindergarten and a preparatory school is that many affluent Jamaicans send their children to preparatory schools--government subsidized schools run by churches and private groups. The preparatory school's mission is to prepare students to score well on the national exam, which determines the kind of secondary school the student can attend. On the other hand, children of less affluent families often attend a basic school and then move to a Primary School.

An All-Age School enrolls children in Grades 1-6 and 7-9. Its purpose is to prepare students for a second opportunity to take the national exams, through which children gain access to secondary education.

The government is in the process of bringing Junior High Schools into the education system. Some All-Age Schools have become Junior High Schools. The government announced in March 2001 that all students entering the seventh grade in 2003 will be guaranteed five years of secondary experience.

The differences among the high schools are reflected in their missions. The Comprehensive High School curriculum has both academic and vocational courses of study. The Technical High School curriculum emphasizes vocational preparation for the work force. Both types of schools encourage students to pursue tertiary education.

B. Guidance, Leadership and Special Education in Jamaican Schools

In Jamaica most secondary schools have one guidance counselor. A few primary schools have a counselor. WCU has prepared many teachers for school counseling positions; but, when a guidance counseling position becomes open, principals sometimes fill them with teachers who are not trained in counseling. Consequently, some teachers trained in counseling do not have a guidance position.

Similarly, the process used to hire principals is sometimes political as in several other countries. Local boards of education hire principals, but sometimes the decision is heavily influenced by other factors. Principals receive housing and a car allowance in addition to a salary. School principals are seen as community leaders. They are expected to link the school to the community. In Jamaican schools, the senior teachers and department heads often function as the instructional leaders while the principal plays a community relations role. Similar to U.S. schools, assistant principals are often responsible for maintenance of the campus and supervision of the teachers and instructional programs.

Although Jamaican educators recognize the need for special education programming, their system does not have the resources needed to meet the needs of exceptional students. Special Education in Jamaica is a matter of trying to address the special needs of students in classrooms that have very few resources.

C. Major Issues in Jamaican Schools:

1. Classes tend to be very large. Most classrooms are far too small for 50-60 students. Teachers are lobbying for class maximums of 45 students.
2. Educational materials are limited, including library resources.
3. The government is building computer rooms and purchasing computer equipment for students, but technology infrastructure remains spotty.
4. Education policies are evolving but remain inconsistent.

D. Government Schools and Private Schools

Public schools, like ours, educate children from all social classes. No child can be turned away from a government school. Private schools, even those that receive public funds from the Ministry of Education, can deny admission to students they believe will not be successful in their school. Most private schools are funded through a combination of tuition payments and government subsidies.

Section 3 -- Professors and Students Working Together

A. Adult Students in our Jamaican Program

Unlike traditional age students in our residence undergraduate teacher education programs, the Jamaican students are experienced educators in their own right. Many of them have years of dedicated service to the children of their communities, and they are well-respected educators in their nation.

Jamaican teachers often attain additional professional responsibilities as they prove themselves to be effective educators and leaders within their schools. Accordingly, a professional hierarchy exists in Jamaican schools, and we enroll professionals in all but the first category:

- (1) Pre-trained Teachers are high school graduates hired to fill vacancies when the school cannot find a teacher college graduate to fill a position.
- (2) Trained Teachers are those who hold a teacher's college diploma.
- (3) Graduate Teachers are those who have a bachelor's degree, but not a diploma from a Jamaican Teachers' college.
- (4) A Graduate-Trained teacher is a teacher with a bachelor's degree and a diploma from a Jamaican Teachers' College.
- (5) Senior Teachers and Heads of Departments are teachers who share leadership and management responsibilities with their principals and assistant principals.
- (6) Assistant Principals and Principals perform roles similar to those in American schools. More than in our country, Jamaican principals are considered leaders in their communities.
- (7) Some teachers become Education Officers working in the Ministry of Education.

Furthermore, some of our students are administrators and staff members in Jamaican social service agencies.

The WCU program enrolls professionals with varying backgrounds because Jamaicans have few opportunities to earn a bachelor's degree. Our program in Jamaica has become an opportunity for many to realize a life-long dream--a bachelor's degree from an American university.

Jamaican teachers are also motivated to earn this degree because a bachelor's degree places them higher on the salary scale. Just like in our country, teachers are paid according to their educational level.

B. Jamaican Customs

Music -- Music is an important part of the Jamaican culture. Jamaican teachers use songs and music to teach concepts in math, social studies, etc. Every year Jamaican students compete in music and dance competitions that start in the schools, go up to the parishes, and end in a national competition. These competitions are part of the National Independence Celebration. When Jamaicans think about having a good time, they have to have music along with the food.

Holidays -- Jamaicans take off work and school to celebrate the following national holidays:

1. New Year's Day (January 1)
2. Ash Wednesday
3. Good Friday
4. Easter Monday

5. Labor Day (Last Monday in May)
6. Emancipation Day (August 1)
7. Independence Day (August 6)
8. National Heroes Day (Third Monday in October)
9. Christmas (December 25)
10. Boxing Day (December 26)

End-of Class Celebration -- When the course in Jamaica ends, students feel a tremendous relief and they want to mark this time with a small celebration. Students want to express their appreciation to the professor and relax with their visitor and teacher. Often the students sing and have cake and refreshments for the whole class. This is also a time when students may want you to sign their class book. Many students like a comment or two, along with an autograph, to help them remember the professor and the happy moments in class.

Graduation -- Jamaicans are known for their delight in celebration. Graduations are important events in their lives, especially college graduations. Students take it upon themselves to organize a graduation celebration to go along with the formal ceremonies that occur either on our campus or in Kingston, Mandeville, or Montego Bay.

Section 4 -- Logistical Concerns

A. Travel Costs and Arrangements

Flight arrangements are made through Educational Outreach. You will be asked to use your own credit card and be reimbursed later. You can also be reimbursed for travel to and from the airport, for airport parking, and for the Jamaican departure tax (\$27 U. S.). Submit these receipts to Educational Outreach when you return.

In Jamaica, you will receive the equivalent of \$575 U. S. dollars for meals and incidentals. This reduces the need to exchange American dollars for Jamaican dollars. Some professors may have money left, others will need to exchange additional American dollars to Jamaican dollars to cover the last few days on the island. If you exchange American dollars for Jamaican dollars, keep your paperwork or you will not be able to exchange any extra Jamaican dollars back to American dollars at the end of your stay. The on-site coordinator for WCU programs will arrange to have your per diem advance available to you when you check into the hotel. Your accommodations are paid for separately, through an arrangement between the hotel and the on-site coordinator.

Professors are usually able to check out of their weeknight accommodations for travel to interesting destinations on the weekends. By doing this, the bill to the School is reduced, and the money saved can be put toward the cost of the weekend lodging—but cannot exceed the cost of the original lodging. The on-site coordinator of WCU programs can help make these arrangements.

Other travel suggestions are included in the Faculty Suggestions Section at the end of this handbook. Maybe you will want to add something when you return from your Jamaican experience.

B. Important Phone Numbers

Educational Outreach - 828-227-7397

Holy Childhood School (Onsite Program Coordinator, Mr. Iva Bailey) 876-906-4404 (office), 944-0280 (home), 876-383-4287 (cell),

E-mail: ibailey@email.wcu.edu

- American Embassy in Jamaica (contact Mr. Bailey)
 - Physician contact at each site (contact Mr. Bailey)
 - Driver Contact at each site (contact Mr. Bailey)
- Liguanea Club, Kingston, 876-926-8144, fax 5501

Mandeville Hotel, Mandeville, 876-962-9764, fax 0700

El Greco, Montego Bay, 876-940-6116, fax 6115

RB Heart Hotel, Runaway Bay, 876-973-6671

In an emergency, instructors may call the Educational Outreach Office collect (828-227-7397). The office will refuse the call but will call you back immediately.

C. Library of Jamaican Travel Information

Educational Outreach has a set of brochures, books, and other travel information describing Jamaican customs and travel destinations. Faculty may check these out and take them on their trip.

Information about Jamaica may be accessed via the web sites

www.lanic.utexas.edu/la/cb/jamaica/ and www.jamaica-gleaner.com/

D. International Travel

If you are traveling to Jamaica to teach, you will need a valid passport. Please contact the Division of Educational Outreach who will assist you with obtaining a passport application and familiarize you with the routines associated with getting your educational materials to Jamaica.