



CHALLENGE

Education in Haiti: A Luxury For Mountain Folk!

Education has its challenges in Bayonnais!!! Our environment works against us, the administration of education in the country presents barriers, superstition is prevalent, and poverty is oppressive. But Bayonnais succeeds! I am reminded of Nehemiah, whom God gave the job of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, against naysayers and in the face of a disheartened population. Nehemiah set about it with resolve and a firm belief in God's guidance, and he succeeded! Praise to the Lord, who provides for his children!



Students in Bayonnais

Getting to school can be treacherous, even for teachers!



2013 Floods in Bayonnais

In Bayonnais, nature works against us. Floods in La Couleuvre and school bus being stuck in Savane Ronde are always imminent.

On the 3rd of September, 2013, we almost lost our high school teachers and our school bus in the La Couleuvre River. Jordany Louis, our driver, while trying to get across the river that was very high with too much water from the mountains after a very heavy rain, had no means to control the bus. The bus was just turned around into the opposite direction. Ropes were used to get the teachers out of the water. The ropes were available because of the presence of hundreds of people that could not cross the river while coming from the market place, l'Estere. God was with us in this event!!

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OFCB Classrom in Cathor



Lunchtime!

Contrast of Public and Non-Public (i.e., Private) Schools in Haiti

ICB (Institute Classique de Bayonnais) is actually a “private”, or non-public, school. It is neither managed nor funded by the government. In fact, there are about 10 non-public schools in Bayonnais. But, non-public schools account for 85% of the education that occurs in Haiti!

Because of this the private sector, which funds the non-public schools, feels like it should have more input into decision taken on education in Haiti. We have heard frustration being expressed by saying that, since the Government provides education for less than 15% of the Haitian population, the private sector, which provides over 85% of teachers and students in the country, ought to have more participation in decision making.

For instance, too many unilateral decisions are made at the last minute to postpone school opening. Also, instead of having two Festival Carnivals in two years of administration - as has been the normal practice - the current administration has had six in two years, including one in Petion-Ville (Martelly’s home town) and one in Port-au-Prince. And these six carnivals were well planned (and expensive!).

Finally, one other major and terrible factor to consider is that the government employed teachers receive 14 months (“14” is not a typographical error!) of salaries per

year whether they teach or not. The private sector teachers must work in order to have a paycheck, and they are paid only for 10 or 11 months that they actually work. It has been said that ministry of education pays their teachers about 260.00 gourdes (41 gourdes to the US

dollar) an hour during 14 months, whereas the best schools in the private - or non-public - sector pay at most 250.00 gourdes an hour during 10 or 11 months a year.

By the way, you may find this hard to comprehend: In Haiti, regardless of public or non-public it takes a whole month to get all the students to come to school at the beginning of the school year. There are many reasons for it. For instance, it has always been a believed myth that the school compounds are too hot to be around

during the first days of school, where there might be evil spirits in the classrooms that might kill the children/ students during the school year. Whether you are in the cities or in the country like Bayonnais, you will probably hear the same thing.

This is an awful belief which we have been standing against at OFCB since the very beginning. This myth is no longer a dilemma for us here. We have won that battle. Praise be to God! In Bayonnais, our major challenges are the lack of funds for uniforms and textbooks and the government delays in the start date.

“In Haiti, regardless of public or non-public it takes a whole month to get all the students to come to school at the beginning of the school year.”

How Does ICB's Performance Compare to a Public School?

Let's give some numbers of how the Fiscal year 2012-13 ended up for the four schools in our school system: Cathor Kindergarten, Nicolas, ICB Elementary (Cathor) and ICB High (Cathor):

The percentage represents passing success rate; grades 6, 9, 12 and 13 show success on National Exams.

Cathor Kindergarten : 176/176 (100%), and 9 drop outs.

Nicolas, up to 5th grade: 166/206 (80.58%), and 6 drop outs.

ICB Elementary: 1st through 5th grade: 384/495 (77.57%), and 13 drop outs.

6th grade: 126/138 (91.3%), and 8 drop outs. (official exams)

7th grade: 118/153 (77.12%), and 37 drop outs.

8th grade: 79/140 (56.42%), and 51 drop outs.

9th grade: 80/87 (92%), and 10 drop outs. (official exams)

10th grade: 61/97 (62.88%), and 13 drop outs.

11th grade: 38/48 (79.16%), and 11 drop outs.

12th grade: 39/54 (72%), 15 failed and 2 drop outs. (official exams)

13th grade : 18/28 (64%), and 10 failed. (official exams)

As background, there are four (4) National Exams, prepared and managed by the Ministry of Education in Port-au-Prince. In grades 6, 9, 12 and 13 you must pass the official government exams in order to move forward. In 6th grade, five exams in two days. In 9th grade, six exams in three days, and in 12th and 13th grade, eight exams in 4 days. Each exam lasts 2 or 3 hours. Grade 6 & 9 exams are given at the ICB main campus. Grade 12 & 13 exams are given in Gonaives. If a student fails, he or she repeats the year or he or she drops out of school for ever. (And note that there are no trade schools available for the ones who fail!) The ones who drop out harvest the wood to make charcoal or go to other countries as a migrant worker with no skills or go to the slums to be used by politicians.

For performance comparison, we use the government public school in Ennery, a community about 30 kilometers (18.5 miles) north of Gonaives toward Cap-haitian. In July, 2013, Ennery sent 132 students to take national exams in 12th grade, three of whom passed those exams ($3/132=2.27\%$ success rate). Institution Classique de Bayonnais (ICB) had 54 in 12th grade take the same exam and 39 of them passed, a success rate of 72%. Note that the exams, regardless of school or location, are given and managed by the government officials.

Last year, in 2012, ICB was known as the NUMBER ONE SCHOOL in the Department (i.e., state) of Artibonite, which has 16% of the Haitian population.

18-yr-old, Fegens Saint-Louis from ICB, made the highest score in Artibonite for the national exams in 13th grade (by the way, we call 13th grade "Philo" in Haiti). Fegens, with his mother, Saingela Fleurisma Saint-Louis, was invited by the President of the country, Mr Joseph Michel Martelly, into the National Palace, to receive a gift of 2,500 gourdes (or \$ 61 US) with words of encouragement, congratulations and a cup of coffee.

Big thanks to God for the "Ravens" (i.e. A group of Brothers and Sisters in the Carolinas) who are now helping Fegens to achieve his goal of attending medical school at Quisqueya University in Port-au-Prince. God has used this team of "Ravens" to bring hope, bread, and cheese to this young boy whose parents could have not sent him. A big thanks to you all for Fegens. All too often, excellent students from Bayonnais like Fegens cannot continue their education, despite top performance on the national exams, because of lack of family resources and the lack of scholarships available in Haiti.

(To be continued next month: History of Education in Bayonnais)

How Might You Help?

Despite approximately 300 students being sponsored through World of God, we still have a number of students who cannot come to school because they do not have shoes, uniforms or textbooks. While sponsorship is the preferred way to support a student, we recognize that some donors cannot make the commitment to the \$35 per month and the letter writing. If you would like to help a student or some students, you may do so, by sending payment for:

- Uniform - \$24
- Shoes - \$30
- High School Textbooks - \$30
- Elementary Textbooks - \$10

Donations can be accepted online at www.worldofgod.org, click "Make A One Time Donation", add what the donation is for in the comments box .

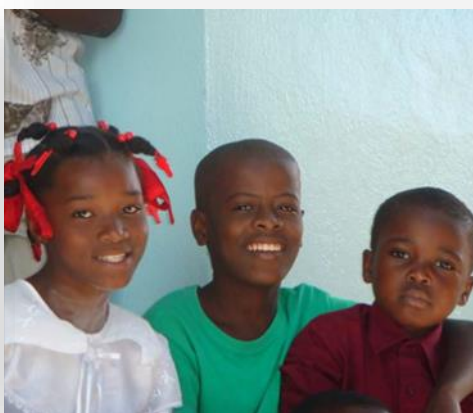
Checks can also be sent to World of God, 338 S. Sharon Amity Rd, No. 280, Charlotte, NC 28211. Please note on the check what it is for.

Once ICB receives these funds, the fabric can be ordered and sewn and the child (children) can start school immediately. Currently, approximately 300 children are not in school because of the lack of shoes and uniforms.

Our goal at OFCB is to fight for education to become a way of life in Bayonnais for as many as we can reach and for the people of Bayonnais to live like real people, with dignity through God's grace.

For, it is written: "*The people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*" Hosea 4:6

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Students lining up in Nicolas

Contact Us

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... a child is waiting