

# Canadian early childhood educators get life-changing experience in Jamaica [JM] <sup>[1]</sup>

Career and Education, The Jamaica Observer

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

Canadian college students seem to be gaining rewarding experiences from participating in the Jamaica project which sees George Brown College (ECE) Early Childhood Education students completing their fourth field placement in basic schools and daycare centres in Kingston.

The students live and work here for a month, educating children between the age of three and five in day cares and schools.

In an article posted on the Toronto Star newspaper website, the students described the programme as empowering and fulfilling.

"I looked to go to Jamaica, to do the Jamaica Project, to fulfill that goal of mine (to go aboard). It just seemed like an amazing opportunity to go and learn about a new culture, to live in the community and gain all the experience, the new skills, that will help me professionally when I finish school," Vanessa Roberts, a final year student told the Toronto Star.

Roberts had never been to Jamaica before. She said spending the month of January here built her confidence, both personally and professionally.

The experience was similar for Sandra Van Eeden, 31.

"It was an experience that changed my life completely," she said. "It wasn't perfect all the time, it wasn't easy all the time. There were times when I was with 34 children and thinking, 'Oh my goodness, what am I going to do?' I had to think of quick, spontaneous activities and manage those 34 children, all with different behaviours, and get them all involved.

"That's the biggest thing. I think if I can take care of 34 children in one room, bring it on!"

According to the Toronto Star, there has never been a better time to be involved in early childhood education in this province. Not only is the field gaining new attention as the Ontario government plans to implement full-day kindergarten - with early childhood educators tabbed to take over the extra half-day of instruction - but it is also, finally, gaining respect.

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The Jamaica Project began in 2003 as a way to give students international experience. For the 91 students who have already participated, "it's life-altering," Wilson said.

"It really empowers them," says Wilson, who herself has worked with teachers around the world, including Bosnia. "It challenges their skills, they need to be at their best. They leave more confident about their skills and abilities. They are caring for people outside their community and outside their own cultural group and they see the world as a much better place."

- reprinted from The Jamaican Observer

**Region:** Latin America and the Caribbean <sup>[2]</sup>

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