



# RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

## **M.Ed. In TESL Program Country Informational Reports**

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program  
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

Country: Haiti  
Author: Ellen Jette

Program Contact Person: Nancy Cloud (ncloud@ric.edu)

# Haiti Informational Report



Ellen Jette

TESL 539: Language Acquisition & Learning

February, 2012

# Land Demographics

- Western 1/3 of the Island of Hispaniola (shared with Dominican Republic)
- Land mass is 27,580 KM<sup>2</sup> (slightly smaller than the state of Maryland)
- Terrain: Rough and Mountainous; highly deforested
- Coastland averages 81 degrees at the coast (F) & 61 degrees (F) in the mountains
- Most territorial boundaries are defined (one boundary dispute with the US remains as it relates to one island)
- Frequently impacted by hurricane storms in the Atlantic



# Population Demographics

- Population: 9.7 million people (June 2011 Est.)
- 0-14 yrs 39.5%; 15-64 yrs 60.1%; 65 & over 3.9%
- Females 50.43%; Males 49.56%
- 95% Black; 5% Mulatto and White
- Poorest country in the Western Hemisphere
- 80% of population live below the poverty level
- Between 45% and 53% of population are literate
- 66% of population work in agricultural sector

# People Demographics

- While French is the official language, 90% of the population speak Haitian Creole.
  - Haitian Creole was developed out of a need for African slaves to be able to communicate with the French Plantation owners and with one another.
  - French is the language taught in school; and is used in government documents; only 5% of the Haitian people speak it fluently
- 80% of country is Roman Catholic; 16% Protestant
  - ½ of the population practice Voodoo (many in concert with Catholicism)
- Unemployment is exceptionally high: Estimates as of 2003 indicate numbers were as high as 50%

# Political Demographics

- In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Haiti's ½ million slaves revolted. Haiti became the 1<sup>st</sup> black Republic to declare independence in 1804.
- It has been plagued by political violence and corruption throughout most of its history; In 2006, Haiti ranked as the most corrupt country in the Corruption Perceptions Index.
- 44 distinct presidential leaders since the Republic's formation
- Social classes: Yeomanry (the poor / work the land) & Elites (merchant / professional / educated class). Yeomanry tend to be darker skin toned than the Elites.

# Recent Events

- January, 13 2010: 7.0 Earthquake struck Port Au Prince (Haitian Capital)
  - Worst quake in 200 years to strike the island.
  - Capital city reduced to rubble
  - Total estimated costs \$8 - \$14 Billion
  - 200,000 – 316,000 estimated deaths
  - 634,000 live in displacement camps / tents
  - Two years later: 550,000 still live in encampments; \$2billion in aid payments from around the world; Schools continue to be rebuilt



Source: The New York Times.com; The Atlantic Guardian.com

# Educational Opportunities

- Before the 2010 quake, an estimated 500,000 children did not attend school because either:
  - Parents could not afford school fees (81% of schools were private); or
  - Children were required to stay home to work; or
  - No schools were nearby to attend (25% of Haitian districts had no schools).
- Primary grade levels include grades 1 – 6 all of which is considered compulsory. Secondary schools take six more years followed by 1 additional year of study.





# Educational Opportunities

- A typical classroom might include:
  - 70 – 80 students
  - Facilities are often dilapidated, lacking water, electricity, and recreational space
  - Open air in construction
  - Authoritarian / Teacher Dominated
  - Rote or memorization of facts and information
  - Critical thinking & discussion are generally only found in schools run by foreign institutions

([www.haitistories.com](http://www.haitistories.com))

(World Education Encyclopedia p.553)

# Education Opportunities

- Teacher qualification standards are lacking.
  - 15% of teachers have basic teaching qualifications
  - Teachers are absent a lot
  - Many have not graduated from secondary education levels or have any professional training in teaching
- Starting in 1980, classes were offered in Haitian Creole (textbooks, however, were still only available in French). Sociologically, however, Creole is not respected as it is a blend of other languages. As such, students continue to be evaluated in a “foreign language” (e.g. French) which inhibits student opportunity for success.

(World Education Encyclopedia 2002 p.552)

([www.Mongabay.com](http://www.Mongabay.com))

# Education Opportunities

- Schools usually begin with students at the age of six. Only 67% enroll and less than 30% do not complete the sixth grade. 20% actually enroll in secondary education.
- The use of English in Haitian culture has emerged predominantly as a function of Haiti's close proximity to the United States.
- Haitian citizens were encouraged to learn English as American manufacturers looked to build factories on the island. English became more practical to learn as a second language by comparison to French.
- In addition, unlike French, English had no social status implication attached to it. All social classes could learn and use it without any social stigma.  
([www.mongabay.com](http://www.mongabay.com))

# Haitian Communities in the US

- According to the 2000 US Census, 408,731 Haitians migrated to the US. Most communities of Haitian migrants are concentrated in Florida, New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Illinois.
- The US is home to the largest concentration of Haitian migrants outside of Haiti.
- Empirical evidence suggests that attitudes towards Americans are mixed: Many migrate to the US, the US is the largest contributor to Haiti's financial aide, and has been an investor in the Haitian economy. On the other side, the US has supported Haitian dictators and has used US military resources in local disputes.
- Haitian immigrants tend to send their children to religious based schools, when resources are available.
- For lower income families, parents tend to be concerned about the American placement process of putting children in schools based on the student's age (rather than actual knowledge / ability).

# Haitian Communities in the US

- Haitian students may find the “informal” teacher / student relationship disturbing as it signifies a lack of respect. In Haiti, students:
  - Speak only when spoken to
  - Do not look the teacher in the eye
  - Are addressed by their last name only
  - Keep their head’s down
- Parental involvement in education is limited. In Haiti, parents are not encouraged to participate in school decisions. Teachers are viewed as ultimate authorities. In the US, this attitude translates into a more passive relationship with the school. Parents trust teachers completely and have a high expectation on results. Whereas many parents migrated to the US explicitly to give their children better educations, Haitian parents tend to place a very high value on classroom education and student development.

# Bibliography

## Texts

- Epstein, Debbie, Boden, Rebecca, Deem, Rosemary, Rizvi, Fazal, Wright, Susan, ed. 2008 Volume I . “The Europe World Year Book; International Organizations; Countries: Afghanistan – Jordan.” London, Great Britain. Routledge Group.
- Flaitz, Jeffra, ed. 2006. “Understanding Your International Students: An Educational Cultural and Linguistic Guide” Ann Arbor, Michigan. University of Michigan Press
- Ferguson, Rebecca . 2002 Volume I. “A Survey of Educational Systems Worldwide” World Education Encyclopedia – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition / A – H. Farmington Hills, Michigan. Gale Group.

## Internet Sites & Images

- Carty, Jeff. (2012). *Haitian School*. Retrieved February 14,2012 From <http://www.thejuliaproject.com/haiti-education.html>
- Corruption Perceptions Index 2006. (2006). Policy and Research – Surveys and Indices 2006. Retrieved February 14,2012 From [http://www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2006](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2006)
- Education in Haiti. (2007) In Wikipedia. Retrieved February 14,2012 From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education\\_in\\_Haiti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Haiti)
- Haiti. (2012) *CIA World Factbook: Haiti* Retrieved February 14,2012 From <https://www.cia.ov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>
- Haiti. (2012) *Haiti News – Breaking World Haiti News* Retrieved February 14,2012 From <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/haiti/index.html?scp=1&sq=Haiti%20News%20%E2%80%93%20Breaking%20World%20Haiti%20News&st=cse>
- Haiti Society. (n.d.) *Library of Congress – Haiti Society* Retrieved February 14,2012 from [http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country\\_studies/haiti/SOCIETY.html](http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/haiti/SOCIETY.html)
- Heisler, Todd. (2010) *Among the Ruins, Education is Also Lost*. New York Times . Retrieved February 14, 2012 From [http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2010/03/06/world/0306HAITI\\_2.html](http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2010/03/06/world/0306HAITI_2.html)
- Index Mundi. (2011). *Haiti Demographic Profile 2012* Retrieved February 14,2012 From [http://www.indexmundi.com/haiti/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/haiti/demographics_profile.html)
- Jacobson, Erik. (2003) *An Introduction to Haitian Culture For Rehabilitation*. Retrieved February 14,2012 from <http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/culture/monographs/haiti.php>
- Kennedy, Robert. (2012). *5 Facts About Private Schools in Haiti* Retrieved February 14,2012 From <http://privateschool.about.com/od/schoolsonlineworldwide/qt/haitianschools.htm>
- Microsoft Clip Art. (2012). Haitian Flag. / Map of Haiti Retrieved from: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/images/results.aspx?ex=2&qu=Haiti#mt:0>
- Ocumpaugh, Jaclyn. (2011) *Language News – Haitian Creoles and Education*. Retrieved February 14,2012 from <http://lingeducator.com/2011/08/24/language-news-haitian-creoles-and-education/>Haitians: Their History and Culture – Cultural Orientation Resource Center. (n.d.) *Implications for the American Practitioner*. Retrieved February 14,2012 From <http://www.cal.org/co/haiti/hedu.html>
- Ricks, Thomas. (2010) *Haitian Watch: Education After the Quake* Retrieved February 14,2012 From [http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/01/29/haiti\\_watch\\_education\\_after\\_the\\_quake](http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/01/29/haiti_watch_education_after_the_quake)

M.Ed. in TESL Program  
Nancy Cloud, Director  
Educational Studies Department  
Rhode Island College, HBS 206 #5  
600 Mt. Pleasant Avenue  
Providence, RI 02908  
Phone (401) 456-8789  
Fax (401) 456-8284  
ncloud@ric.edu

The M.Ed. in TESL Program at Rhode Island College  
is Nationally Recognized by TESOL and NCATE



REACH  
INSPIRE  
CONNECT