



Professional Jamaicans for Jamaica, Inc.

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Early Childhood Education

Like clay, children are highly moldable in their preschool, kindergarten and early elementary years. Between the ages of five and eight, children are actively engaged in making sense of the large, confusing world around them. In this stage, it is important that children receive the educational guidance that urges them to explore and enthusiastically interact with their setting as they develop socially, physically, intellectually, creatively and emotionally. In this early stage of development, much learning is cultivated by play or playful learning. With the world advancing technologically by the day, new and innovative methods to engage young children and accelerate their development are emerging. It is up to the early childhood educator to seize on these developments as they work to cultivate a life-long sense of curiosity and exploration in the future leaders of tomorrow.

The Problem:

Research shows what concerned parents, educators, and social workers know from daily firsthand experience: Many children begin life with measurable indicators of socio-economic disadvantage, or risk factors that are often overwhelming. Most children age 0-5 are born with two or more of these risk factors, poverty being the most prevalent. Without successful interventions involving parents and caregivers, many of these children, by kindergarten, are in danger of falling behind other children in their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. The farther behind children are when entering kindergarten, the more difficult it will be for them to catch up, and the lower the likelihood that they will grow up to be successful young adults. The result is an enormous loss of human potential and high cost to taxpayers.

The Solution:

Today we know more than ever about how much the first five years shape a child's life. Economic, education, public health, and neuroscience research clearly point to the need for increased public investment in quality early learning for children as an effective approach to prevent serious negative outcomes such as homelessness, poverty, and incarceration. Likewise early learning leads to positive benefits earlier in life, including higher education levels and academic achievement. As a nation, however, Jamaica has failed to invest adequately in our children's earliest years. Supporting the critical components of quality early learning, including high standards and support for parents and childcare and pre-kindergarten programs, offers the greatest potential to ensure that all Jamaica's children have the opportunity to be successful throughout their school years and beyond.

Our Strategy:

Our mission is to work with others to ensure that every child in Jamaica has the opportunity, from birth, to be successful in school and in life. While high-quality early learning is critical to all children, our investment strategy is to focus on children who have multi-risk factors that can jeopardize school-readiness and to reach

them where they spend the majority of their day-either at home with a parent or guardian or in a licensed childcare facility. Using this existing infrastructure, we will help create a variety of high-quality early learning environments by providing support to parents and by transforming childcare from current low-quality custodial care to effective centers that will help parents prepare children socially, emotionally, and cognitively by age 5 to succeed in school and life. Over the next 10 years, we will work in partnership with other public and private entities to help our less fortunate children gain access to affordable, quality early learning.

The Impact:

Professional Jamaicans for Jamaica, Inc. has designed an early learning strategy which we hope will make a positive contribution in the lives of our children, their families, and communities in Jamaica. We will evaluate our efforts by measuring results on two fronts:

- Significantly increase the school-readiness rate among the less fortunate children entering kindergarten.
- Reduce the gap between low-income and high-income children rate of school-readiness.