



# Haitian Project News

The Louverture Cleary Schools Network—Transforming Haiti through Education

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## Deepening Roots and Branching Out Through Language

by Amanda Haluga (THP Director of Charism and Missionary Program)

Louverture Cleary School has been an innovator and trendsetter in Haiti since its opening nearly four decades ago; its approach to teaching languages is just one example. Recognizable and impactful as students, employees, community members, and citizens, perhaps one of the more apparent attributes of a Louverturian is their fluency in four languages—Kreyòl, French, English, and Spanish.

Haiti has two official languages: Kreyòl (also known as Haitian Creole) is the familial language spoken in Haitian homes and French is the language of academia and business. Historically, in school, only French was spoken, written, and read.

LCS Dean of Academics Myriam J. (LCS '10) received a bachelor's degree in secondary education with a minor in English and Spanish instruction at Université Quisqueya with a scholarship from LCS's Dulcich Center for Career Advancement, and even wrote

her thesis using LCS as a case study for effective immersive language learning. Notes Myriam, "It was in 1979, thanks to the educational reform, that Kreyòl was officially introduced in schools. The purpose of the teaching of Kreyòl in Haitian schools is to allow students to discover the mechanism of operation of the



LCS Dean of Academics Myriam J. (LCS '10) teaching class.

Kreyòl language, to use a language that is rooted in the culture of the Haitian people, to help in the use of Kreyòl in formal situations for its promotion and integration, and to promote Creole cultures and values in the field of literature, theatre, music, and more."

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## THP Highlights

**The Value of an Education:** Haiti has not been spared from the cost-of-living crisis rocking the globe. Expenses due to general inflation, as well as material and shipping prices, are continuously rising. As a result, the cost of educating one student for one year at LCS has increased from \$1,900 to \$2,100—which includes their education, books, meals, and housing. By comparison, in the U.S. the average annual rate of educating one student at a private five-day boarding school is over \$53,000. Thank you for knowing LCS continues to be a wise and valuable investment in Haiti!

**New School a Beacon for THP:** Earlier this year, THP staff had the pleasure of presenting to a 10<sup>th</sup> grade Global History class at Beacon High School in Manhattan that was studying the Haitian Revolution. About a month prior, a student in the class found THP's website after being inspired to research the current economic situation in Haiti and how she could help. She coordinated the presentation to her class and even decided to organize a bake sale to support THP. We hope to continue working with this school and its impressive students and faculty to support Haiti together.

**Happy 35th Birthday, LCS!** LCS began as a response to one of the greatest needs in Haiti: education. Once just a school with a handful of students and big dreams for the future, in just 35 years LCS has now become one of the very best secondary programs in Haiti, feeding, housing, and educating 360 bright and enthusiastic students. LCS has graduated over 800 alumni who are working to build a brighter future for their country. Now with plans underway to build the 10-school LCS Network...what amazing things will the next 35 years bring?

### LCS Staff Spotlight

I am Chrislie R., I am from the LCS Class of 2014. I started working at LCS as junior staff in 2018. In 2022, I started working as the assistant campus minister in addition to teaching *Rheto* (U.S. 12<sup>th</sup> grade) and *Philo* (U.S. 12<sup>th</sup> grade +1) religion classes. Being in this role at LCS is one of the best things that happened in my life. I have the chance to impact the students, and to take part in their education and leadership growth. I get to serve my community and my country through my school, and this is a gift from God.

I love to look out for the well-being of those around me. I try to make sure that every student knows that they are seen and cared for, that they have someone they can turn to when things go wrong. I've had the opportunity to support students who have had a hard time, it's really amazing to know that you've helped someone deal with an emotional issue or a difficult time.

Human emotions are complex. Every student I have had the chance to support has faced their emotional

problem in a different way. I read books, articles, and watch videos so I can support them accordingly. I am also well supported by my supervisors. They always find time to advise me on how to better help the students.

I am leading three clubs this year. The Stress Reduction Club, which I facilitate with (THP Chief Program Officer) Aimée Maier and (THP Director of Charism & Missionary Program/LCS Campus Minister) Amanda Haluga, is a club where students come to manage their stress through activities. Students come to Craft Club to evacuate their stress through artwork and learn and share their skills with each other. I started this club in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic as a response to the limited activity at school in this period. This year I have 40 participants. They are excited about the exposition of all our art work for the celebration of the school's anniversary



At right, LCS Campus Minister and religion teacher Chrislie R. (LCS '14), stands with students.

this spring. The Spiritual Club is where students come to explore their faith. In this club we pray, read scriptures, and share our understanding on it.

During my time as a student at LCS, I have learned to live in community and to serve and care for those around me. I had access to a quality education. I acquired leadership and life skills. My education at LCS prepared me for all the work that I am doing now. I had amazing staff and teachers that contributed to the staff I am now, and I am grateful for that.

### Deepening Roots

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Recognizing Kreyòl as a language worthy of being studied, written, read, and recorded did more than expand the linguistic horizons of students; it recognized and validated their history and culture.

Due to Haiti's location, adding English and Spanish to the study of Kreyòl and French further bridges the gap with its geographical neighbors and opens doors for global commerce and collaboration. Myriam notes that "the geographical location of Haiti in the context of Latin America, the Caribbean and North America, as well as the intensification of exchanges between

these peoples, have made it imperative for Haitians to master English and Spanish, which are certainly an instrument of access to international knowledge and understanding."

LCS teaches all four languages in the classroom, with French as the basis for subjects like mathematics, sciences, and history in keeping with national curriculum resources. English and Spanish classes are reinforced by U.S. Missionary Teachers and LCS alumni also instructing religion, economics, computers, and physical education in those languages.

Perhaps the most immersive learning is done outside the classroom through extracurricular activities and, most notably, the language of the week program. LCS

assigns one of the four languages to each week on a rotating basis which the students must speak at all times outside of class, such as passing between classrooms and at play time. This allows students to use languages more colloquially and instinctively, and to gain confidence in their use.

As Myriam remarked in a 2015 interview about her university thesis, "At LCS, students can practice the language and not just memorize it. They read books and develop the ability to think in English.... My proposition is that every school in Haiti use a model like LCS, so that in seven years, or less, students will have learned English and Spanish and have the language skills they need to be successful in the global community."

# Celebrating and Inspiring Haiti's Young Women

by HPN Staff

The Louverture Cleary School community has always been counter-culture in Haiti, modeling the change it wants to see in the country. It is a reliable, accountable employer and educator, recognizes the dignity in all types of work, and cares for the environment by being one of the first in Haiti to adopt solar technology and properly manage resources and waste.

And, perhaps most importantly, it creates equal opportunities for males and females.

The school was a trailblazer in ensuring girls had access to secondary education in the Port-au-Prince area by implementing policies early on that led to gender parity in its student body. Historically, boys in Haiti were more likely to be enrolled in school and granted job opportunities while girls were often relegated to working in the home. In addition to cultural biases about gender, the cost and limited availability of education forced families to choose which of their children would attend school. In 1996, the LCS student body was only 15 percent female.

School leadership addressed this disparity by implementing an affirmative action policy, ensuring that at least 40 percent of each incoming class was female. Within only a few years, it became far less necessary to adjust the admission process as word spread about the success of the school's female students. More girls applied to LCS each year, and since 2006, the student body has been slightly over 50 percent female.

Still, that was not all LCS would do to challenge gender bias and inequality. THP Chief Program Officer Aimée Maier recalls the inception of the school's girls empowerment program, "Celebrate Women," which remains an

impactful and enduring activity today. "The 'Celebrate Women' program began during my 1998-99 Volunteer year. The idea and name were driven by Volunteer Moira Feeney and grew from the knowledge that, at that time in Haiti, males had more access to education than females did. Today, 'Celebrate Women' is one of the many examples of how LCS stands apart in its commitment to challenging norms which value the education and contribution of males above females."

Throughout the years, the "Celebrate Women" program has provided seminars and retreats for the empowerment of female students led by the strong female leaders in the LCS staff, junior staff, and U.S. Volunteer (Missionary) community. Empowering themes, mantras, songs, talks, and activities help girls to develop self-confidence, build teamwork, and grow as leaders.

A parallel program at LCS called "Man Up" also helps ensure that male students view their female counterparts as capable individuals and equals.

As LCS Principal Marjorie M. (LCS '07) notes, "What I like the most in 'Celebrate Women' is that it is an activity which gives us a way to teach girls to become better citizens for the future. It helps them to know themselves better, to value themselves, to accept who they are, and to focus on their goals, not to act as others want or society thinks they should. It is a way to reinforce self-confidence and help them know their rights and worth."

The most recent "Celebrate Women" retreat took place in February right before Carnival break. Girls in the *Twazyèm* (U.S. 10th grade) and *Segond* (U.S. 11th grade) classes remained at school after Friday dismissal for an overnight retreat led by

a remarkable team of female staff members, the majority of whom are LCS alumnae and were formed in the "Celebrate Women" program themselves.

LCS Assistant Campus Minister Chrislie R. (LCS '14) participated in "Celebrate Women" activities as a student and now leads the retreats for a new generation of students: "'Celebrate Women' is important to LCS and Haiti because we want to empower our young girls so they can be the best version of themselves. In this activity we celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women all over the world. Our girls find models they can look up to, women that inspire them, women that show that they can accomplish great things in life. It is important for LCS and Haiti because it promotes gender equality. We want our future women to find their place in society and to use their full potential."

At a time when women and girls are being terrorized by gang violence in the country, it is especially important that LCS perseveres in providing a top-notch education and formation to Haiti's young women. "Celebrate Women" equips Haiti's future female leaders to exemplify the school's values, achieve their career goals, and make a difference in their country, all while believing in themselves.

Ultimately, the slogan for this year's retreat says it best: "I am beautiful, smart, talented—and that makes me the BEST, and no one can take that from me."

*A version of this article recently ran as a Community Update in honor of International Women's Day. If you would like to join our Community Update list and receive periodic updates on our students, activities, and the LCS Network, email THP at development@haitianproject.org today!*

# LCS Community

## LCS Student Views

### Rébecca L. Rhéto (U.S. 12<sup>th</sup> grade)

Hello, I am Rébecca L., and I am in Rhéto (U.S. 12<sup>th</sup> grade). I really like to read and listen to music. In my family we are four: my mom, my dad, my brother, and me.

When I was in primary school, a friend of my mother told us about Louverture Cleary School. I've been at LCS since 2017, which makes six years that I'm part of this community. I'm interacting with people who help me to move ahead. I don't consider LCS like a place where I'm going to school, but like a family that I'm part of. LCS helps me to accept and serve others so that they can do the same for me.

LCS's education and Charism (spiritual identity) make me feel special and like I can discover the true version of myself. I feel special because people at LCS are interconnected like a puzzle. Each little piece is precious. Without one, we will not be able to build our safe society. At school I'm part of the Debate Club, Art Club, Independent Women Club, and the Stress Reduction Club, and also my favorites the Theater Club, Medical Club, and Book Club. My favorite classes are biology and religion.

I have [role] models at LCS. First of all, my best friends are always caring for me. Also, my economics teacher and my debate coach inspires me a lot. Also, my religion teacher is always

smiling and making sure that things are going well.

In the future I would like to be a doctor, because I cannot stand to see when people are suffering. I also want to cultivate my acting talent so that I can make patients laugh.

I would like LCS to stay safe so that it continues to create light for the world.

### Stephenson B. Segond (U.S. 11<sup>th</sup> grade)

My name is Stephenson B., I am in Segond (U.S. 11th grade), and I am 16 years old. My favorite colors are blue, black and red. In my free time I dance and play football (soccer).

In my family there are my mother, my sister, and my two brothers. I am the youngest. I was in elementary school when I learned about LCS from one of the students there.

Education at LCS means a lot to me. It teaches me how to give for free. For example, I give my time to the *Koukouy* program (LCS's early childhood development program) by teaching the participants. This reflects one of the pillars of the Charism of the school, "What you receive for free, you must give for free (Matthew 10:8)." The school also



LCS Rhéto (U.S. 12<sup>th</sup> grade) student Rébecca L. (left) and LCS Segond (U.S. 11th grade) student Stephenson B. (right)

teaches me to be the change I wish to see in the country, and we have another saying from Mahatma Ghandi: "Be the change you want to see in the world."

My favorite things at LCS are the languages English and Spanish. I practice a lot to be better at them. I also have some teachers that inspire me, like my computer teacher. My favorite class at LCS is *informatique* (computers). Computers for me are the best thing in the world.

This year, I just want to be a better person, a better student, better at everything.

For the future I hope to be an *informaticien* (computer scientist). I begin to work on that by practicing every day. Since I was in 7th grade at LCS until now when I'm in Segond, I always have 100/100 in *informatique*, just because I love it.

Thanks for giving me your time to read this. May God bless you all.

### Did you know there are many ways to support The Haitian Project?

Visit [www.haitianproject.org/donate](http://www.haitianproject.org/donate) to give today or for more information regarding **recurring donations, memorial gifts, planned giving, corporate matching gifts, gifts of stocks, bonds and mutual funds, IRA qualified charitable distributions**, and more. You can also contact us at 401-351-3624 or [development@haitianproject.org](mailto:development@haitianproject.org) to learn how your tax-deductible donation can provide talented young men and women at Louverture Cleary School with a top-notch, tuition-free, secondary education steeped in service and civic-mindedness!

## A Family Force for THP

By Angela Mascena, THP Director of Institutional Advancement

Many of The Haitian Project's supporters have been believers in THP's mission since the beginning—for almost four decades now. Equally incredible and vital to the Project's success are community members like Jeannemarie O'Brien and her family, who have catapulted from brand new supporters to one of THP's most engaged donor families in just four years.

Jeannemarie grew up on Long Island, New York, in an Irish Catholic family. "We were *really* Catholic," she reflected. "It gave a sense of community. At 5 p.m. Mass, you would see everyone you knew."

Jeannemarie's future husband, Yves Casimir, was also attending Mass 1,900 miles away with his parents and seven siblings in his hometown of La Colline d'Aquin, Haiti. "There wasn't much to do on a farm in Haiti," Jeanne-marie mused. "You can picture the eight of them parading off to Mass—it was exciting."

Years later, Yves followed his family to New York and studied psychology at Long Island University in Brooklyn. He worked for the New York City Housing Authority, helping elderly people in housing crises.

Meanwhile, having attended Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts and Fordham Law School in New York, Jeannemarie was also living in the city. The two met on a street in Soho in 1993 and were married in 1999.

As for why they chose to support THP out of the many charitable initia-

tives in Haiti, the decision came down to two factors. The first is a steadfast belief in the power of education. "Education was always my father and mother's high priority," Jeannemarie explained. Her grandfather had shoveled coal and died of emphysema fairly young. After attending Catholic school in Brooklyn, both of her parents had the opportunity to go to local colleges. "Catholic schools have been a real salvation for immigrants," she added.

One generation later, Jeannemarie is a corporate mergers and acquisitions lawyer at Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz, one of the top law firms in the U.S. "I really bought into the idea [of education], seeing it as being the answer [for Haiti], as opposed to sending T-shirts or food. We decided that this seemed sensible," she shared.

The other factor that led Jeanne-marie to choose THP is trust.

"Years ago, I had done a lot of work with Fleet [Bank] when Brian Moynihan [early THP board chair, current CEO of Bank of America] was there. I remember reading about Brian and this organization. It always stayed in the back of my mind," she recalled. "When the [2010] earthquake happened, everyone was asking me what they could do to help, and I dug into it more. There's so much corruption and diversion with NGOs in Haiti, and I knew I could trust the organization."

In the last four years, Jeannemarie



Jeannemarie O'Brien (right) and Yves Casimir (center) with their children Yves, Jean-Luc, and Isabelle (from left to right).

and Yves have provided direct financial support, hosted an event to introduce friends to THP, and helped their youngest son, Jean-Luc, organize a book drive at his high school and host an online fundraiser for THP's annual *Back to School* campaign.

"I thought, this is easy for me to do for an organization where relatively small amounts make a real difference. If you got just a handful of people giving, it makes an impact," she explained. "Through the *Back to School* campaign, we raised almost enough money to send a student to LCS for an entire year. Imagine if 10 Catholic school students did that every year."

Investing in Haiti's future is important for Jeannemarie and family, who still have relatives there—including Yves' 87 year-old mother who doesn't want to live anywhere else.

"The misconception is that everyone in Haiti wants to leave Haiti," Jeannemarie said. "I don't think that's true. I think people want to have their beautiful home back."

### We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song!—John Paul II

Pope John Paul II continued this thought, saying we search for "a joy that comes from faith, that grows through unselfish love, that respects the 'fundamental duty of love of neighbor...'" We at The Haitian Project thank you for your support of our students and community at LCS, the LCS Network, and a totally new day for Haiti. Let the promise of being an Easter people embolden and inspire our work together. *Happy Easter!*

# Investing in Those Who Have the Least

by Jimi Grondin, Director of New School Development

*"(M)ore poor children and youth should be given the chance to study in higher levels of education so that in the long term, as future parents or educators, they can help pull the next generation out of (learning) poverty."—Transforming Education with Equitable Financing, UNICEF, January 2023*

Investing the most in those who have the least has been one of The Haitian Project's guiding principles since its beginning. THP has always focused on the formation of Haiti's future servant-leaders so that the country may realize a brighter future built by and for Haitians themselves. A recent report by UNICEF validates this mission.

Using data compiled from 102 countries, the report compares educational funding among nations by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the allocation of funding by family income level. The report finds that in the 33 highest-income countries with data, 17 percent of educational resources reaches the poorest fifth of households, while 23 percent reaches the wealthiest fifth of households. In the 18 lowest-income countries of the data set, however, those numbers are 11 percent and 42 percent, respectively.

Across the board, funding is skewed to the wealthiest, but as a country's GDP shrinks, the gap widens—to a point where the poorest receive only six percent of public education funding.

There are multiple reasons for the disparity in low-income countries. The poor often live in rural, underserved areas. They lack access to school-readiness programs and schools in general. When the poor are in school, they are more likely to be in lower-level programs which receive less funding per capita than upper-level programs. Students from the poorest households tend to leave school earlier to work or because their primary education was insufficient to take them on to secondary school. (In low-income countries, only 12 percent of secondary students are from the poorest fifth of the population.) All these factors compound to put downward pressure on educational opportunities for the poor.

While Haiti has around 15,200 schools for 1.5 million primary-aged children, low

education quality, and centralization of the schools in the capital are serious issues. On the secondary level, Haiti has only about 2,190 schools to serve 1.6 million children. These schools are even more centralized in the capital, with more than half located in the Port-au-Prince area. This lack of affordable, quality, decentralized secondary education remains a huge obstacle on Haiti's path to development.

The good news is that THP has been clearing that path for nearly 40 years. Serving the brightest students from the most disadvantaged households, LCS has become one of the best secondary schools in the nation. Its tuition-free program ensures that a top-notch Catholic education and formation is accessible to those least able to afford it. Community outreach efforts like the *Koukouy Sen Kle* early childhood development program and *Lekòl Ankourajman* literacy classes improve educational access for the whole neighborhood. In a country where only one percent of secondary students go on to university, LCS's scholarship program supports over 100 LCS graduates and community members at any given time.

In one of the first ever Haitian Project newsletters from 33 years ago, founding member Charlie Wharton wrote: "[The Haitian Project] is dedicated to delivering, at no cost, the best quality education to deserving students who otherwise would not be able to attend school. The students ... are exemplary; we believe that some may become future leaders of Haiti. At the very least, these students will be able to help other Haitians become literate and develop the nation. Indeed, some of them may become teachers and open other schools like LCS and thus assist their country in reaching its potential."

And, after almost four decades, THP has not veered from its mission. In a country where less than five percent of children graduate secondary school, THP is building a network of 10 schools to reach the underserved. This network will graduate generations of civic-minded, motivated alumni and address every course of action recommended by the UNICEF report.

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### Mission Statement

The Haitian Project through its support of Louverture Cleary Schools, a national network of tuition-free, Catholic, co-educational secondary boarding schools in Haiti, provides for the education of academically-talented and motivated students from Haitian families who cannot afford the cost of their children's education in order to maximize their potential and enable them to work toward building a Haiti where justice and peace thrive.

To donate, visit:  
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