
Cuban teachers to help expand Spanish literacy in Jamaica

30/08/2017



Nineteen Cuban teachers will begin practising in Jamaican schools when the new term begins next week, as the Government steps up its drive to expand Spanish literacy among the population.

The group is now completing two days of orientation at the Altamont Court Hotel in New Kingston, courtesy of the Schools Operations Unit in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between the governments of Jamaica and Cuba, making it possible for the recruiting of the teachers who are expected to impart their knowledge in a range of subject areas, including chemistry, maths and Spanish.

At yesterday's opening session, Permanent Secretary Dean-Roy Bernard said the agreement has proven to be quite valuable to the country.

"This agreement has benefited us greatly over time. The benefits have not only been at the primary level but also at the tertiary level. We are hoping to really have our people speaking multiple languages," Bernard said.

"Spanish is the priority of other languages for us because we are surrounded by Latin America. We also have as neighbours Cuba and the Dominican Republic, so this is the time that we must invest in the language, and what we are doing is getting the assistance in the way forward."

Bernard said that anecdotal checks highlight the need for improvement in the pass rate of foreign languages.

"The performance in languages is not where we want it to be at this time and so there are some improvements that we need to have. We are depending on you to bring the teaching skills, not only to interpret and to assist with the language, but to bring your teaching skills," he told the gathering.

LEARNING ABOUT JAMAICA

There are approximately 650,000 students enrolled in more than 3,000 institutions across the country, ranging from infant to tertiary level. Of that number, 995 are primary or preparatory schools, while there are 180 high schools.

Meanwhile, Dr Grace McLean, chief education officer, thanked the teachers, who she said have left their own country to come to Jamaica to assist in building the capacity of Jamaicans to create a better nation.

"We are grateful for you taking up the offer. It will not only provide us with the expertise that you are taking from your country, but it will also assist you in learning about Jamaica," McLean told them.

She is expecting the Cubans to leave behind best practices that will be useful in educating Jamaican children.

Under the MOU, the Cuban teachers will be in Jamaica on a three-year tenure, which may be extended.
