



An Introduction to
L'Ecole de Choix / The School of Choice
Mirebalais, Haiti

2013

Prepared by Laura P. Hartman and Ione Cassens
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L'ECOLE DE CHOIX

A Program of The School of Choice Education Organization

Rte. de Saut d'Eau, Mirebalais, Haiti
1240 N. Lake Shore Dr. Chicago, IL 60610 USA

About L'Ecole de Choix / The School of Choice

L'Ecole de Choix represents a vastly different type of school on the Haitian socio-economic landscape.

Choix is a trilingual elementary school in Mirebalais, Haiti that offers a high quality education for children living in the most extreme conditions of poverty in Haiti with a focus on leadership development, honoring Haiti's strong values of liberty and dignity.



Principal: Dr. Mary Clisbee clisbee@Nova.edu +509-3170-4696
Board Chair: Prof. Laura Hartman LHartman@depaul.edu +1-312-493-9929

L'Ecole de Choix is a program of the School of Choice Education Organization,
a U.S. 501c3 tax exempt organization and an Illinois non-profit entity, FEIN 45-4277736



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Creating Access. Building Capacity. ***Our Distinctive Educational Environment***

L'Ecole de Choix is the **only rural school in Haiti** that

- ✓ Teaches Haitian students in a trilingual environment on the basis of ethical decision-making, responsibility, while modeling and teaching about leadership
- ✓ Provides enrichment activities equivalent to Haiti's best schools – especially for students who would otherwise have no access to an education of this caliber
- ✓ Encourages students to learn leadership by practicing leadership in school
- ✓ Offers teachers who have university degree and teaching certifications
- ✓ Maintains a technology lab, meals, an on-site nurse, a world-class curriculum, clean water, athletics, arts and more.

L'Ecole de Choix: Basic Facts

What: Trilingual elementary school located in Mirebalais, Haiti (Central Plateau).

Students: 183 children, ages 4 through 12

Grade Levels: Begin in kindergarten and will continue through high school as the students progress (currently through 4th grade)

Faculty: Trilingual teachers have university degrees and teaching certifications

Principal: Ed.D. Educational Leadership, Masters in Physical Education

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Choix was established to respond to a specific challenge facing the Haitian educational system, and therefore the economic system that evolves from it:

We are the only rural school in Haiti specifically oriented toward developing leadership skills for Haiti's leaders of tomorrow.

Ecole de Choix combines the strength, esteem and pride of Haiti's history of liberty, freedom and justice with a progressive education firmly grounded in a Dewey-based pragmatism that honors the primary role of education in civil society.

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Why is education the answer?

Every \$1.00 invested in quality early childhood education

returns more than \$17.00 to the community

by increasing the likelihood that children will be literate, enrolled in postsecondary education, employed and less likely to be school dropouts, dependent on welfare, or arrested for criminal activity.

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**“Early childhood investments make more sense than spending on venture capital funds, subsidizing new industries such as biotechnology, building new stadiums or providing tax incentives for businesses.”
- U.S. Federal Reserve Bank**

Positive Gains: Local. National. International.

Not only is enhanced and high quality education valuable for the local community, it has a significant positive impact on the larger socio-economic environment for Haiti overall. More and better education empowers people to help themselves and thus helps to improve governance and to **reduce corruption**.

A concerted effort for higher quality primary education combining national and international forces has been found to be the most promising route out of poverty and toward sustainable development.



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Ecole de Choix Vision

L'Ecole de Choix is anchored by the principle that a quality education provides individuals with the fundamental tools to affirm individual dignity through the choices they make. Choice and autonomy grant us our dignity; and it is that dignity that assures each of us the very heart of our humanity, both in the way we are responsible for ourselves, as well as for the communities in which we live. It is in this way that education becomes the pathway to our humanity.

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Ecole de Choix Mission

The Mission of the School of Choice is to provide a trilingual quality education – with a focus on leadership development and communication skills - to children living in the deepest conditions of poverty in Haiti, while affirming their individual dignity and autonomy through the choices they make. The Choix education is based on the sense that education is a right, not a privilege, but one that is coupled with a responsibility to ourselves, to our communities and to our country.



Ecole de Choix Values

Each member of the Choix community is a leadership model for each other.

As the Choix facility is designed to be a model from a physical perspective, the behavior of each individual within our community is a leadership model for each other. Members of the Choix community are leaders for each other and for their country, and act in ways that demonstrate acceptable behaviors for the entire community. One of the tenets of the Choix facility is its mixed age, cross-program and inter-generational environment. The adults and older students shall always feel the burden of serving as a role model while the younger students shall always feel the burden of living up to high standards.

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Each member of the Choix community is responsible for each other.

The Choix community is a model of leadership responsibility and accountability. We treat others as we would have them treat us. In doing so, we maintain a responsibility for our community members; caring about their well-being and trust that they shall care about us.



Choix community members are inclusive and respectful of individuals and of difference.

As is true for our country, within our community, difference shall be celebrated as an extraordinary value that is recognized for the benefit it can bring to our environment, and the breadth of learning that it represents. Individual opinions shall be sought and heard; and space for debate and challenge will be a core priority in the education process. It is the policy of L'Ecole de Choix not to discriminate against applicants, students or staff on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation.

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Choix community members honor education as a privilege while also recognizing the responsibility it brings.

In Haiti today, an education earned at l'École de Choix is unattainable for many Haitians and thus should be treated with respect, as the truly precious value that it represents. Moreover, as learning occurs, the growth in capacity for the students brings with it an increase in responsibility. Each person is expected to use their learning to lead, to act, and to be an agent of change. With these abilities come responsibilities and Choix has significant expectations of its students.

Learning at Choix is the most fun a kid can have with her or his day!

Not despite the above values, but because of them, the environment at Choix is one where students cannot wait to arrive at school each day! It is a place of change, of inspiration, of excitement and bewilderment, of fascination and of new ideas. Learning is an adventure that each student participates in while discovering what her or his mind can do when challenged, what choices become available when allowed to dream, and the excitement in these infinite possibilities.



Choix will serve as a paradigm

Choix is initially a paradigm for the Mirebalais educational network, ultimately, and for educational institutions throughout the region with respect to both the quality of education it delivers and its strong pedagogical methods. At all levels, Choix demonstrates values and processes that bolster the Vision of the school and further inspire others to be open to limitless possibilities, to follow their dreams and to become constructive, contributing citizens.

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Our Bottom Line

We are committed to complete integrity and transparency in all that we do and with all of our stakeholders. We are focused on accountability, specific metrics, performance-based reporting – with regularly reported results.

Partnerships

L'Ecole de Choix has established sister school programs with Chicago's quality school programs in order to create mentor relationships and leadership models; to allow greater access to educational opportunities for these children, to allow for the replication of progressive and innovative approaches to education; and to build educational capacity between Haiti and Chicago for children who otherwise would have no vision of a future, much less one that involves economic leadership, since many are refugees to the Central Plateau still living in fields and who have never before had the chance to attend school.



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The School of Choice and its partnership with exceptional educational programs is based on an unwavering belief that we can impact the lives of all partners involved, while achieving the promise of an economically robust future for Haiti, by preparing at least a small group of students with an exceptional leadership education from a young age. Choix presents the chance to enhance, deepen and ground an enormous impact on the educational relationship between Haiti and Chicago, along with the edifice of Haiti's economic future. These several hundred students absolutely will graduate to provide a source of quality leaders for positions throughout Haiti in industry, ministries, top elected positions, and hopefully NGOs, schools and truly, anything they wish! These children can and will be leaders of the next generation.



The School of Choice Education Organization

The School of Choice / L'Ecole de Choix is managed by the School of Choice Education Organization, a U.S. tax exempt 501c3 organization based in Chicago, Illinois. The School of Choice Education Organization is responsible for operations of the school, as well as all fund-raising, oversight of design, development, building, maintenance, and management of L'Ecole de Choix. The School of Choice Education Organization is also involved in the selection, training, and work with indigenous non-profit organizations, wherever possible, and also maintains primary responsibility for the coordination and oversight of the school's school meal program. As the morning snack and midday meal may often serve as the only meal of the day for many of the students attending Choix, the provision of meals at Choix is of paramount priority in our planning.

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For More Information

Information about L'Ecole de Choix (the School of Choice) can be found at:

- Our Website: www.EcoledeChoix.org or www.SchoolofChoice.net
- Our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/SchoolofChoice
- Our FaceBook page at www.facebook.com/ecoledechoix.

For additional information, please contact our Board Chair, Laura Pincus Hartman, at LHartman@depaul.edu.



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Athletics



We learned this past week that, based on our recent performance, four of our Choix students have been invited to **represent Haiti** at the **Central American and Caribbean (CAC) Age Group Championships**, an invitation-only international track and field athletics event for young athletes organized by the Central American and Caribbean Athletic Confederation (CACAC). Athletes from all of the nations of Central America and the Caribbean Islands will attend in Curacao in June. The event has served as the *début* of many future stars of the region such as Olympic and World Championship medalist Debbie Ferguson of the Bahamas, 2003 World 100m champion Kim Collins of St Kitts and Nevis, and Usain Bolt, who won the 200m event in 2002.

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