

Parents need to learn more about issues of at-risk students

By RON FANFAIR

There is an urgent need for parents to learn more about the educational issue of at-risk students so they can make incremental changes in their children's attitudes towards their learning opportunities and ultimately academic success, says educator and community worker, Pelagia Holder.

This is one of her recommendations in a new report titled, *At-Risk Students Attitudinal Expressions Towards Their Learning Opportunities: Implications for Intervention Programs*, unveiled last week at the East Scarborough Boys & Girls Club in the Kingston/Galloway community.

"We need to educate parents about this educational issue to help them gain an understanding of the influence of the problem on students' academic achievement and future successes," said Holder who recently graduated with a Masters degree from Central Michigan University.

"This can be done through community organizations like Regent Park Community Health Centre and the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough with the design and delivery of free half-day parent or family seminars and workshops. Parents may not know how to help their children if they are not aware of the problems or have no tools to help them effect change."

Holder said the study was done to explore whether the attitudinal expressions of at-risk students towards their learning opportunities could provide educators with guidelines about affective factors to consider



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when designing and implementing programs and selecting teaching strategies to help them learn.

born Holder, who is a Business Analyst at Shared Information Technology Services for the Toronto Community Care Access Centres.

"The spiraling of the at-risk student issue seemed to indicate that there may be critical affective learning factors that are not currently being addressed in programs for at-risk students because of the focus on improving literacy and numeracy skills," said the St. Lucian.

"It was determined that if at-risk students could provide educators and other stakeholders with insights on how to further help them learn, the educational system can take an extra step towards their quest to respond to the needs of at-risk students."

A total of 56 Grade 9-12 at-risk students from the East Scarborough Boys & Girls Club Stay in School program and Regent Park Community Health Centre Pathways to Education program participated in the study using the School Attitude Measure (SAM).

"Generally, the results showed no significant differ-

ence in the attitudinal expressions between genders and therefore did not indicate a need for gender-specific intervention strategies," said Holder. "However, the results revealed implications for intervention on all five scales of the SAM, with implications for intervention being more pronounced on three of the five scales."

The scales included Motivation for Schooling, Academic Self Concept-Performance Based, Academic Self Concept-Reference Based, Student's Sense of Control Over Performance and Student's Instructional Mastery.

Descriptive statistics were used to translate students' responses to determine their measure of positive attitudes on the SAM five scales.

Program helps Jamaicans reconnect with heritage

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housing program dedicated to building homes in partnership with needy families.

Grace Kennedy launched the internship program in 2004 to help second and third generation Jamaican university students in the Diaspora enhance their professional skills while reconnecting with their heritage. The company's Chief Executive Officer Douglas Orane conceived the idea for the program while helping a family member, who was attending an American university at the time, fulfill his dream of scaling Jamaica's famous Blue Mountain.

Company employees host the selected candidates who will get hands-on experience in a wide range of industries while being exposed to a variety of cultural activities.

"Jamaal and the rest of the participants will be working in Kingston, but travelling through the country at weekends through the Heritage Pathway program that will expose them to Jamaica's heritage by educating them on historic sites, natural and human resources and the beaches," added Burch-Smith.

The program has been reduced this year to facilitate just six students as compared with eight last year.

