

IT for Dominica Summer Institute A Briefing

In Brief: IT for Dominica has served students and educators in Dominica and Canada for nearly 20 years. During this time, a primary focus has been preparing teachers to effectively integrate information technology into classrooms. The program has been highly successful. Dominican educators have well received the program and Alberta teachers have expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to work directly with talented teachers on this Caribbean island. Although the country remains financially challenged, the program has witnessed significant headway.

September 18, 2017 changed the lives of Dominicans. The strongest hurricane to hit the island in over 150 years, Hurricane Maria, devastated everything standing. Over the past two years, life and infrastructure have been rebuilt in Dominica through resiliency. As part of the rebuild, in November 2019 the IT for Dominica Foundation, working with the Rotary Club and Dominican Ministry of Education, shipped, delivered and installed wireless technologies and over 1000 Chromebooks to 23 schools serving 2700+ students.

As the IT for Dominica Foundation prepares for next year's Summer Institute, we are seeking educators who have a strong base of knowledge in integrating information technologies into classrooms. They understand the relevance of technology in students' lives and have demonstrated abilities in bringing meaning to integrating technologies for improving learning.

The Foundation is seeking educators who are team players, working closely with other members of the IT for Dominica Institute team to maximize learning over the course of the two-week program. They are committed to serving the best interests of Dominican learners and are willing to explore cross-cultural opportunities. Finally, these educators are flexible. They know how to work in a context of change.

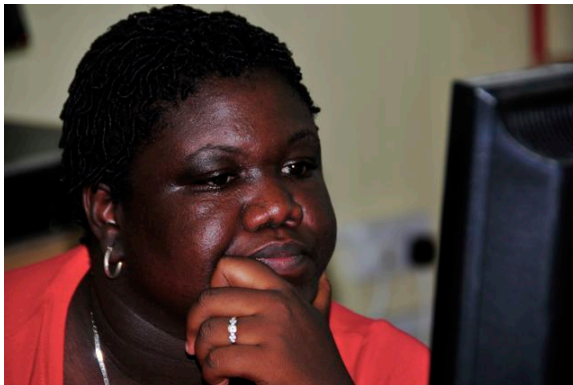


We are seeking talented teachers, team players who can flexibly apply their talents in our July 2020 Summer Institute. This could be you!

Please contact Dr. Maurice Hollingsworth at m.hollingsworth@alumni.uleth.ca for more information. (If you prefer a telephone conversation, please leave a phone number at this email address. He would be pleased to speak with you!).

Full Description: IT for Dominica, an Alberta volunteer non-profit, has been serving students and educators in Dominica and Canada for nearly twenty years. To date, the professional development arm of the program has taught almost one thousand Dominican teachers, preparing them to meaningfully integrate information technologies into their classrooms. Through the generous support of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), members of the ATA from across Alberta have volunteered their time to teach in the Commonwealth of Dominica. Additionally for the last several years, IT for Dominica has been pleased to welcome the knowledge of a Dominican instructor.

Talented teachers work closely with educators in the Commonwealth of Dominica for a two-week period. Dominican educators participating in the program represent a range of grade levels and subject areas. Each of the mentor teachers share their pedagogical applications of technology in the classroom and, in turn, gain valuable cultural understandings from their Dominican colleagues. Feedback from both Canadian and



Dominican teachers has been very positive across the years. Examples of anonymous feedback from Dominican teachers, as part of the teacher evaluation process, include the following comments:

- *{Teacher name} did a wonderful job. She brought me up to speed and I was able to master the concepts in no time. She is an awesome educator, very knowledgeable in her field of ICT.*
- *The instructor was beyond expectation. {Teacher name} is very warm, informative and always willing to help. I would like to encourage her to continue being the person that she is with great attributes. To the organisers of the IT for Dominica Summer Institute, Hats off! Job well done.*
- *This needs to be continued in the years to come. Its really educational and there is so much more to learn. So much that we do not know, all that was taught was so helpful.*
- *{Teacher name} is an exceptional, excellent instructor who demonstrates a high level of professionalism in the way she instructs/teaches. She's very approachable, open and treats everyone equally. She's Lovely! :) The course was brilliant and very informative.*



- *{Teacher name} is indeed a great, and fantastic teacher. The way she teaches gives you that desire to always want to be in the classroom. If I had to do it again I would definitely want to be in her class. She is one in a million.*

Feedback from Canadian Teachers has proven equally positive across past years. The following comments are representative of feedback from ATA members while on-island or reflecting upon their experience after return from Dominica:

- *There are only a handful of moments in my life that I can clearly identify as being profoundly 'life-changing', but within that elite group falls the time I spent teaching in Dominica. Beyond a simple instructional experience, the process was rejuvenating on a deep, human level. I have never worked as hard as I did during those two weeks when I provided technology instruction to a diverse group of participants. But no matter the challenge, I always left my classroom smiling, excited for what the next day would bring.*



- *Dominica - the beauty of this island is only overshadowed by the beauty of its people. After this first week of classes, I have been gifted with mangoes and sugar apples by my students. Two of my students graciously agreed to share their experience with the other teachers when I discovered their experience with a few of the tools. It gave both "Google Classroom" and "ReadWorks.org" more power to have had it reinforced by "real teachers in the trenches" actually using them in Dominica. It turns out that a few of the Alberta favourites are favourites here as well.*
- *Thanks for the opportunity to visit such a beautiful country with such beautiful people. It was a little crazy at times, but a rich and rewarding teaching experience that I wouldn't trade!*
- *Overall, it was a great experience, incredible people, beautiful country and a great learning opportunity. I thoroughly enjoyed teaching the course for two weeks, despite some technology challenges.*



- *Even with the challenges, the rewards are abundant. Canadians have a reputation of being nice but I think that we have nothing on the Dominicans! Everyone here is so nice and always willing to help! The teachers want to learn and are very appreciative of our being here. They are also so understanding when things don't go exactly as planned.*

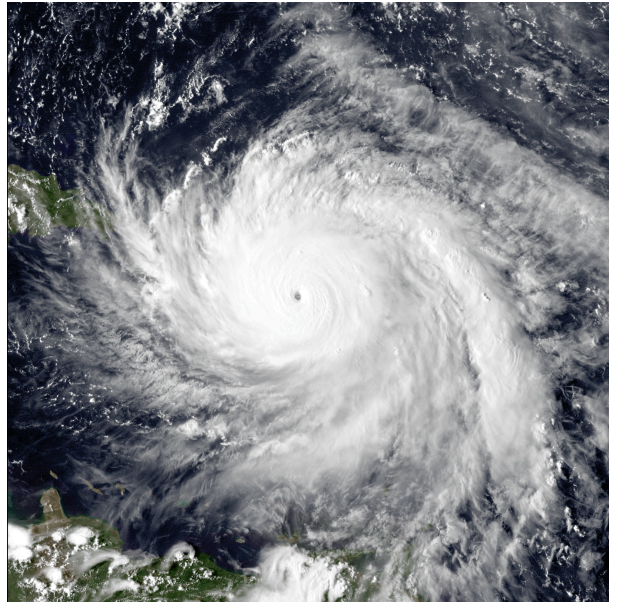
- *Dominica is an incredibly beautiful and endlessly fascinating place. There is always something to discover here, and the people are friendly, energetic, outgoing, and enthusiastic. Teaching Dominican teachers about technology has reminded me of things I had forgotten. ... At*

first when we discussed this project, part of me was reluctant because I was concerned about the cultural implications of coming into Dominica as a Canadian to lecture teachers about a topic they may already be familiar with. Being here, however, has made me see the experience less as didactic and as more of a cultural exchange. I truly think that we are providing a service that is required and appreciated, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to participate!

Importantly for educators in the Commonwealth of Dominica, the Summer Institute has worked closely with the Dominican Ministry of Education, the Dominica Association of Teachers and Dominica State College. The program is an inherent part of the annual Dominican professional development offerings.

Partnerships have served as a cornerstone enabling the IT for Dominica Foundation to conduct this important and ongoing work. The Alberta Teachers' Association and the Alberta Teachers' Association Local 19 have been core Alberta members for many years.

Devastation: September 18th, 2017 witnessed the most devastating hurricane to hit the Commonwealth of Dominica in the last 150 years. Category 5 Hurricane Maria engulfed this Commonwealth country and when finished had decimated eighty to ninety percent of all infrastructure – with the island's 80 schools as no exception.



In the two years following Hurricane Maria, through the support of the international community, Dominica has made significant strides in re-establishing school structures. In November 2019 the IT for Dominica Foundation, working in partnership with the Dominican Ministry of Education and the Rotary Club, have helped re-establish learning technologies in schools. Through this program, wireless technologies, networks, and a thousand Chromebooks have been installed in 23 Dominican schools, serving over 2700 primary students.

Given this significant shift in access to learning technologies and the Internet, in classrooms, a focus for the 2020 IT for Dominica Summer Institute will be effective educational use of Chromebooks, Google resources, and associated online resources to best serve learners in the Commonwealth of Dominica. We are seeking talented educators to share their expertise in this domain with teachers in Dominica.

The 2020 IT for Dominica Summer Institute provides opportunity to work with talented educators in a beautiful context – the Commonwealth of Dominica (West Indies). You are invited to apply to become a member of an elite group of educators applying their knowledge of technology integration in educational settings.

IT for Dominica Summer Institute FAQs:

How long is the program?

The program operates across a two-week period with instruction occurring from Monday to Friday. Classes begin at 8:30 each morning and operate until 1:30 each day. The 2020 program operates from July 13^h to 24th.

What language is spoken?

English is the primary language, although a dialect of Creole is also spoken.

What costs are covered by the program?

All costs associated with offering instruction are covered. This includes coverage for volunteer teacher expenses for airfare, ground transportation, hotels, and meals.

How many members are on the team?

Typically five members are on the team: one Dominican educator and four Alberta educators. As well, one of the four Alberta educators will serve as program-lead. This teacher will have worked previously in the IT for Dominica Summer Institute.



Given the strength of Maria, what are the risks of hurricanes during the next Summer Institute?

Summer Institutes are planned during the “hurricane shoulder season” to reduce risks. This does not guarantee avoidance of hurricanes, but significantly reduces risks based upon historical averages. The risks in the month of July are substantially less than later in the season, particularly relative to the months of September or October.

Can I speak with other educators who have participated in the IT for Dominica Summer Institutes?

Absolutely. We have over forty talented alumni members who would be pleased to share their experiences with you.

Note: This program is generously supported by a number of partners including the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). We appreciate their support for all associated travel and accommodation costs. Alberta participants must be members of the ATA.

For additional information, please contact Dr. Maurice Hollingsworth at m.hollingsworth@alumni.uleth.ca.

