

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT THROUGH DEBATING
SCOTIABANK PARTNERS WITH DEBATEMATE JAMAICA



WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS: Debaters of St. Michael's Primary School, show off their gold medals, as they pose with Mrs. Hope McMillan Canaan, Public and Corporate Affairs Manager at Scotiabank, at the DebateMate Competition held on Wednesday, March 29 at the Boy's Town All Age School. St. Michael's emerged the overall winner with over 280 points, while Boys Town All Age earned some 240 points for their efforts. St. Michael's A Team opposed moot #1 - Should we pay children to go to school?" While the B Team proposed the moot#2 "Should parents be held responsible for their children's crimes?" St. Michael's is one of two schools sponsored by Scotiabank in the recently held competition

Jamaican youth from two Kingston based schools in the inner-city are learning to build self confidence, express themselves verbally, practice teamwork and conflict resolution thanks to a partnership between the DebateMate Jamaica Project and institutions like Scotiabank.

The most recent display was on Wednesday, March 29 when Boys Town All Age hosted their opponents, St Michael's All Age, for a DebateMate Competition.

After over two hours of fierce debating based on the moots "Should we pay children to go to school?", and "Should parents be held responsible for their children's crimes?", St. Michael's Primary School emerged the overall winner with over 280 points, while Boys Town All Age earned some 240 points for their team's efforts.

The arguments were sound and sometimes very entertaining. St. Michael's first speaker, Jayden Hutchinson expressed the view that paying children to go to school is: "...absolute rubbish and a waste of money; it is a distraction as they buy foolishness like toys and sweets". Diedrianna Plummer, St. Michael's rebuttal speaker, whom the judges voted as best overall speaker in the competition, in her summary emphasized that "Money is not all; and education is the key to success."

The judges also had high commendations for Javon Dunbar the third speaker of the opposing Boy's Town Team, who expressed the view, that if children were paid to pay attend school, this would provide supplemental income for poor families.

Following the medal presentations, St. Michael's first speaker, Jaydene Hutchinson reflected on his school's Scotiabank sponsored participation in the DebateMate project saying "I have more confidence in myself, I know how to conduct a discussion instead of an argument without any violence." Jaydene who just sat the GSAT, is hoping to attend Campion College. One of his team mates, Diedrianna Plummer, the rebuttal speaker, also expressed positive views about the project: "I feel excellent. We worked hard and did a lot of teamwork. If not, we would not be here now." Diedrianna who recently sat the GSAT exam is aiming for Immaculate High.

Margot Jameson, DebateMate Jamaica's Fundraiser, praised Scotiabank for their sponsorship of the project. "We are very grateful for Scotia's assistance. As a result of training these students, we have seen a difference in their development and confidence levels. We see them expressing themselves in more positive ways."

According to St. Michael's Primary mentor, Charles Frost, "you haven't seen energy until you have witnessed a DebateMate session at St. Michael's Primary. The students have been exhilarated by the Debate Mate programme in their school and as the teachers there say the students' confidence has been soaring through the roof". St. Michael's is at the top of the league table for the DebateMate Urban Debate League - Primary Schools' section.

DebateMate has been in Jamaica for the past 4 years. The programme trains youth according to the PEEL system (Point Explain Example Link). Mentors are university students, and they train primary and secondary students in British Parliament style debating. This non-profit entity which was founded in the United Kingdom some nine years ago, came from the recognition that there is a need to boost confidence among youth who live below the poverty line.

Scotiabank is sponsor for both St. Michael's Primary, and Holy Trinity High School.

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